English Language Awareness of Distance and Face-to-Face Learners in Turkish Higher Education

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Abstract
The main aim of the current study is to explore the profiles of language awareness of distance and face-to-face EFL learners. The study sheds light on the need to consider the effects of language awareness in distance and face-to-face education as language awareness is essential in foreign language learning in both education types and needs to be improved to make learners know much about how to use English. The main question addressed by the research is whether there are any differences between the language awareness of distance and face-to-face EFL learners regarding course type, gender, and age. The context of the study is Türkiye, where English is taught as a foreign language in higher education institutions. The study uses a survey method and includes 157 distance learners and 225 face-to-face, 382 learners attending a state university in Türkiye. The study’s results unveiled significant differences between distance and face-to-face language learners regarding language awareness. There was an apparent disparity between distance-learning and face-to-face approaches in linguistic awareness and communicative awareness, as the face-to-face learning group scored significantly higher in these dimensions. While distance and face-to-face learners had close scores in the dimensions of cultural awareness and metacognitive awareness, the findings revealed that face-to-face learners scored somewhat higher, which helps to explain how the physical classroom setting may have some influence on learners’ cultural sensitivity and metacognitive awareness. The results suggested that distance education learners should improve their consciousness about language and have the necessary instruction to enhance their language awareness.

Keywords: Distance education, face-to-face education, foreign language learning, higher education, language awareness, language teaching

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Introduction

With the help of advancements in technology, distance education has increased its effectiveness and applicability in the field of education worldwide. Recently, online learning has become necessary due to the pandemic and natural disasters such as earthquakes. Distance education has also gained prominence in foreign language education in higher education institutions along with traditional face-to-face education with the spread of the internet and computer use. It is an essential part of language education to offer flexibility in time and space, which face-to-face education does not provide. Distance education also "reaches a broader student audience, better addresses student needs, saves money, and more importantly uses the principles of modern learning pedagogy" (Tucker, 2001, p. 1). As these kinds of education primarily try to provide effective teaching and learning on behalf of learners, it is evident that learners are at the center of both education types, so it is crucial for learners having distance or traditional face-to-face education to be aware of their learning. At this point, raising learners' language awareness becomes vital in foreign language education as it helps learners understand the knowledge and mechanisms of the target language (Bourke, 2008; Tulasiewicz, 1997). Therefore, the present study mainly aims to investigate the profiles of language awareness of distance and traditional face-to-face EFL learners. The study is significant as language awareness is essential in learning a foreign language in both distance and face-to-face education and should make learners know much about how to use the target language. The research objectives of the study aim to give a more realistic picture of how EFL learners differ in language awareness levels regarding course types, age, and gender.

From the above observations, it is evident that language awareness is a significant subject in foreign language learning in distance and face-to-face education. Nevertheless, there needs to be more empirical studies that compare the distance and face-to-face EFL learners' language awareness levels among Turkish EFL learners, so the current study seeks to fill this gap in the literature on distance and face-to-face foreign language education. With this aim, the current research addresses the following research questions to find out proper responses:

1. What are distance and face-to-face EFL learners' profiles regarding language awareness?
2. How does language awareness of EFL learners differ regarding course types such as distance and face-to-face instruction, gender, and age?

Literature Review

Distance Education

Researchers describe distance education in many ways. They define it as “any form of learning in which the teacher is not present at the same time or place as the student” (Hassenburg, 2009, p. 1). Similarly, they describe distance education as a type of technology used in education that supports independent and individual learning, and it provides flexibility in time and space for the learners (Uşun, 2006, as cited in Erdoğan, 2020). Some characteristics of distance education distinguish it from face-to-face education. These are “two-way communication, influence of an educational organization, learner as individual or privatization of learning, teacher-learner separation, participation in an industrialized form of education and use of media” (Keegan, 1980 as cited in Bollinger, 2017, p. 49). Among the benefits of online distance education are providing greater flexibility in learning and saving time, money, and logistics. However, self-discipline and internet connection are among the requirements for distance education implementation as it lacks
human interaction (Behzadi & Ghaffari, 2011). The differences between traditional face-to-face and distance education have often occurred in literature. Those who support distance education consider face-to-face education as teacher-centered, unchangeable, static, and inflexible (Fitzpatrick, 2001, as cited in Tucker, 2001), while distance education is more student-centered, providing a more flexible learning environment in terms of time and space (Cabi & Kalelioglu, 2019; Mather & Sarkans, 2018). It explains that the students and the teacher are in the same place in face-to-face education and learning and teaching occurs at the same place and time. Ramnarine (2018) defines face-to-face education as a “traditional classroom environment where the instructor and the students are not separated by geographic space or time.” (as cited in Bi, Javadi, & Izadpanah, 2023, p. 13740). From these explanations, it is evident that these types of education differ in many ways. In online distance learning, learners need to make more effort, find a chance to direct their learning, and raise their consciousness of language (Wang & Zhan, 2020).

Language Awareness

At the end of the 1950s, the concept of awareness appeared with the help of Hawkins and Halliday, who considered that the goal of language teaching should focus on assisting the students in mastering the target language and dealing with the subjects of language itself in general. If learners know the language they wish to learn and understand how it works, they will improve (Wright & Bolitho, 1993, as cited in Jung & Chan, 2007). There are many definitions of language awareness (ALA, 2012; Barjesteh & Vaseghi, 2012; Borg, 1994; Carter, 2003; Griva & Chostelidou, 2011; Ellis, 2012). Language awareness is “the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language” (Carter, 2003, p.64) and “the understanding of an empathy with the challenges faced by the learners of an additional language” (Ellis, 2012, p.15). According to The Association for Language Awareness (2012), language awareness is “explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching, and language use.” Besides, it is “a mental attribute that develops through paying motivated attention to language in use, and which enables language learners to gradually gain insights into how languages work” (Barjesteh & Vaseghi, 2012, p. 1). It includes awareness of structural patterns and phonological, morphological, and pragmatic awareness (Griva & Chostelidou, 2011). It is also described as an approach that aims to improve individuals’ awareness of learning and explicit understanding of language “by involving them in discovery-oriented tasks” (Borg, 1994, as cited in van den Broek, Oolbekkink-Marchand, van Kemenade, Meijer & Unsworth, 2019, p. 60). According to Borg (1994), language awareness emerges in case learners self-reflect and continue to talk in their language production, and it "should be continuous, taking language as a vital and changing phenomenon, instead of unchanged facts of language knowledge” (as cited in Huang, 2022, p. 674).

There are many advantages of awareness in teaching foreign languages. Firstly, language awareness assists in developing users' performance and competence and makes it possible for them be an effective tool for transactions in the context of their mother tongue. Secondly, it enhances the knowledge of the language learning processes and acquisition by facilitating “the study of modern foreign languages by drawing learners’ attention to similarities and differences with their mother tongues, for example in the recognition of patterns” and thirdly, “encourages the acquisition of linguistic sensitivity…. To other languages…”(Tulasiewicz, 1997, p. 394). One of the reasons behind the importance of language awareness can be the applied perspective of it. That means that assisting learners in internalizing, investigating, and comprehending the target language
is very important to teachers. The second reason is related to the individual investigation of the L2 supports the learner to understand “how language works and thereby enriches and extends one’s knowledge of the language… by noticing and reflecting on the linguistic data all around them” (Bourke, 2008, p. 15). Similarly, integrating language awareness in foreign language classes improves learners’ knowledge and experiences concerning related culture and language elements (Farahian & Rezaee, 2015). Thus, students can enhance their self-awareness of why they learn English at universities through learner-centered activities with the help of instructors (Kang, 2022).

There are three components of language awareness: learning awareness, communicative awareness, and linguistic awareness. To be more specific, learning awareness refers to thinking, learning, problem-solving, and the capacity to manage these strategies and interpret them; communicative awareness is about knowledge, including the functions of language, while linguistic awareness consists of linguistic abilities and skills (Rampillon, 1997, as cited in Kaya, 2010). In addition to these components, cultural awareness related to “perceptions of our own and other people's cultures,” which were “likely to be internal, dynamic, variable, multi-dimensional and interactive” (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, as cited in Kaya, 2010, p. 39). It is necessary to increase cultural awareness about the learners’ own culture and the target culture in that learning a foreign language is an intercultural experience. Moreover, this helps learners know different languages and make contact with other realities (Longo, 2008, as cited in Barany, 2016).

Empirical research has investigated language learners’ awareness from different perspectives in the context of higher education, and mixed findings have been reported (Amjadiparvar & Zarrin, 2019; González Castell, Codina Espurz & Jara Jiménez, 2023; Huang, 2022; Jung & Chang, 2007; Saka & Asma, 2020; Umida & Abdulkhay, 2023; Vesna & Vedrana, 2012; Yang, 2013). Amjadiparvar and Zarrin (2019) examined the correlation between EFL learners’ awareness and the variables of achievement, motivation, and gender. Specifically, female students outperformed male students, following language awareness, achievement, and motivation. In another study, Yang (2013) examined how to enhance learners’ awareness when learning English for Specific Purposes. For this reason, Yang (2013) created a Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning Community (CSCL) to include teachers and students from various countries in intercultural communication. He concluded that the language awareness of the participants was encouraged when they assessed their language performance and monitored the accuracy of their language usage during intercultural communication. Intercultural aspects of the CSCL community promoted the participants’ language awareness since they obtained expressions from various contexts and cultures on the levels of textual, lexical, and syntactic organization (Yang, 2013). Vesna and Vedrana (2012) examined students’ learning and linguistic awareness. The students studied German, French, Italian, and English foreign languages at an elementary school. The research demonstrated that the participants could use grammatical, lexical, and phonetic parts of language properly, but there were significant individual differences. Saka and Asma (2020) explored the levels of English language teaching students’ intercultural awareness regarding different variables such as grade, gender, and being abroad. The research findings demonstrated that the participants’ intercultural awareness did not significantly indicate any changes regarding their grades, genders, or being abroad. Jung and Chang (2007) aimed to raise learners' language awareness by employing scaffolding as an instructional strategy. The study displayed that the learners’ attitudes towards the target language were affected positively by raising language awareness. Moreover, the learners’ awareness of the target language increased when they
could apply the scaffolding strategy when they learned an activity and the instructor paid deliberate attention. According to Huang (2022), students’ language awareness could improve if they engaged in activities and took control of their learning. Umida and Abdulkhay (2023) examined whether integrating digital technologies into EFL classrooms could increase learners' motivation and awareness. The findings indicated that learners' active participation and linguistic awareness could be positively affected by incorporating digital technologies in EFL classrooms through enhancing collaborative interaction and autonomous learning. González Castell, Codina Espurz, and Jara Jiménez (2023) explored the impact of explicit strategy instruction and awareness-raising on EFL learners’ written and oral production in a multilingual context. The research findings displayed a positive effect of awareness-raising and explicit instruction of compensatory strategies in learners’ oral production right after intervention.

In Türkiye, different studies explored language awareness from different perspectives (Bilgin, 2017; Cesur & Ertaş, 2018; Dönmez, 2022; Keskin, 2023; Tüzel & Akcan, 2009). Cesur and Ertaş (2018) examined the pedagogical content knowledge of the prospective language teachers in an ELT department of a Turkish state university. The study findings suggested that EFL teacher education programs should seek to increase prospective teachers’ awareness to improve their content knowledge, investigate the reasons for the problems they encounter in their classes, and think of effective strategies to deal with these problems as they were not aware of their ability to overcome the difficulties. Similarly, Keskin (2023) investigated prospective ELT teachers’ language awareness at a state university in Türkiye. The results revealed an average level of participants’ language awareness in teacher and analyst areas. Besides, the concept of teacher language awareness needed to be integrated into the curriculum of teacher training programs in higher education to solve the awareness-related problems and to enhance the quality of language education in Türkiye. Bilgin (2017) investigated pre-service teachers’ views on language awareness in a Turkish state university. The results displayed that the participants thought that meta-linguistic knowledge of a teacher, effective teaching, and using correct methods related to language awareness. The study suggested that teacher training programs could integrate language awareness to improve pre-service teachers’ language awareness. Tüzel and Akcan (2009) studied how to increase prospective English teachers’ language awareness in the context of English as a foreign language. The results indicated that the participants shared similar problems, such as the authenticity of the classroom language, using language according to students’ proficiency, and explaining unknown words to students. Language awareness training including discussion meetings, semi-structured interviews, feedback sessions, and classroom observations affected the participants’ use of target language positively. Dönmez (2022) explored university preparatory class students’ L2 writing anxiety and the impact of language awareness activities on it. The findings indicated that raising language awareness could have a significant effect on dealing with students’ L2 writing anxiety.

**Method**

The current study intends to identify the profile of EFL learners’ language awareness in terms of gender and age and determine the difference, if there is, between EFL learners' language awareness levels in distance and face-to-face education. The current study designed a descriptive general survey research with a quantitative method to give responses to the research questions.
Participants
The present study carried out at a state university in Türkiye in the 2016-2017 academic year. The university's Senate unanimously allowed faculty members to teach English through online courses in 2013. Since then, the university has offered online courses for students to study English. The School of Foreign Languages' instructors teach English for three hours each week, with the goal of students finishing the course at the A1 level according to the Common European Framework. The participants comprised three hundred eighty-two students; one hundred ninety (49.7%) were females, and one hundred ninety-two (50.3%) were males. They were all first-grade students aged between 17 and 34, with a range of 19.8 (SD=2.08). Of the participants, one hundred fifty-seven learned English through online distance education at the same university by the same teachers.

In contrast, two hundred twenty-five participants studied English as a foreign language through traditional in-class instruction in the School of Foreign Languages. Three hundred eighty-two students from different academic departments including the faculties of dentistry, pharmacy, education, arts and sciences, fine arts and design, law, economics and administrative sciences, engineering, and medicine were randomly chosen. The researchers informed the students of the study's goal and that participation was voluntary. The individuals' mother tongue used to deliver the surveys.

Research Instruments
The data obtained through a questionnaire developed by Kaya (2010) (Appendix A). The questionnaire evaluating learners’ language awareness consisted of sixteen items under four sub-dimensions: Linguistics Awareness (six items), Communicative Awareness (four items), Cultural Awareness (two items), and Learning Awareness (four items), and delivered to the students face to face. Cronbach's Alpha Analysis calculated the reliability coefficient of the scale and found to be 0.89, which was considered highly reliable. The participants took a Likert-type scale in their native language (Turkish) following the aim of the research. The participants marked the appropriate option for them among “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “undecided”, “agree” or “strongly agree”.

Research Procedures
The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential analysis using a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. After the analysis, the results illustrated tables in the findings section. The statistical significance level was α<.05 for all the analyses. In the context of the research, first, data normality was assessed through graphical methods, including histograms and Q-Q plots, as well as statistical Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. After confirming a normal distribution, parametric statistical analyses such as t-tests and Pearson Correlation were employed to answer the research questions.

Results
The mean scores regarding four dimensions of language awareness, namely linguistics awareness, communicative awareness, cultural awareness, and learning awareness, were calculated and compared to analyze the data. The researchers used the interpreting procedure designed by Best (1981) to interpret the results obtained from the data as in Table One.
The first research question asked to understand the profiles of distance and face-to-face EFL learners regarding the four dimensions of language awareness. For the data analysis, the mean scores of the learners were calculated and compared in terms of these four dimensions. Table Two shows descriptive statistics of language awareness of face-to-face and distance education learners.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of face-to-face and distance education learners’ language awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Dist Ed</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>Ff Ed</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Sd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dist Ed</td>
<td>Ff Ed</td>
<td>Dist Ed</td>
<td>Ff Ed</td>
<td>Dist Ed</td>
<td>Ff Ed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dist. Ed. Refers to Distance Education
Ff. Ed. Refers to Face-to-Face Education

Table Two indicates that the students from both groups seem to feel moderately competent in all dimensions of language awareness, namely communicative, cultural, learning, and linguistic, considering the mean values. When compared the mean scores of both groups, both groups generally show similarities. However, participants from face-to-face education have higher scores in all dimensions of language awareness than those from distance education, as illustrated in Table Two.

The second research question asked to determine whether the language awareness of EFL learners differs regarding course types such as distance and face-to-face instruction. To find whether there are statistical differences between the two groups regarding the four dimensions of language awareness, an independent samples t-test conducted, and exciting results were found, as demonstrated in Table Three.

Table 3. Mean scores, standard deviation, and range of language awareness scores in terms of course type as distance and face-to-face education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Type of education</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>t/F Value*</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic</td>
<td>Distance Edu</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>1.678</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Face-to-Face Edu</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>Distance Edu</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Face-to-Face Edu</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Distance Edu</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Face-to-Face Edu</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Distance Edu</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Table Three, despite the similarities between the mean scores of both groups, dimensions of “communicative awareness” and “cultural awareness” are statistically significant. Specifically, the participants of the two groups report that they can assess and respond to others' intentions, thoughts, and feelings while communicating, employ some strategies, and use English appropriately according to the context at moderate levels. Additionally, moderately interested in how their own culture and the target culture differ and are connected, the students are aware of the cultural load of English. However, students of face-to-face education seem to feel more confident in the dimensions of communicative and cultural awareness. Linguistic awareness and learning awareness of the participants from distance education and face-to-face education groups did not differ statistically. Specifically, they moderately pay attention to grammar and how it works; they can read and make sense of various English texts. The participants also consider that they can be in charge of it and reflect on their learning at a moderate level.

The second research question also asked whether there was a difference between the language awareness of distance and face-to-face EFL learners and gender. To understand if there was a difference between gender and language awareness, an independent-measures t-test applied the data collected from the students, and the findings were displayed in Table Four.

Table 4. *Mean scores, standard deviations, and range of language awareness scores in terms of gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Awareness</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>t/F Value*</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistics Awareness</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative Awareness</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Awareness</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table Four, the results indicate that gender is not a significant factor in any of the dimensions of language awareness.

Finally, the second research question also asked to determine whether there was a significant difference between the language awareness of distance and face-to-face EFL learners and age. Concerning the effects of age on students' language awareness, Pearson correlations were conducted, as indicated in Table Five.

Table 5. *Pearson correlations between language awareness scores and age*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistics Awareness</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative Awareness</td>
<td>-0.81</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Awareness</td>
<td>-0.80</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated in Table Five, similar to the findings of gender, age is not a significant factor in both groups as there is no relationship between age and any dimensions of language awareness.

Discussion

The findings revealed several conclusions using the statistical analysis of the data. First, the first research question concerned identifying distance and face-to-face EFL learners' profiles regarding language awareness. The current study does not intend to measure or evaluate correct or incorrect respondents' knowledge compared to a standard but rather to examine their answers and compare within two groups and reveal their commonalities or differences. This study provides a general background to language awareness and gives a general situation of EFL learners' language awareness. Hence, research findings showed that students from distance and face-to-face groups have an average level of language awareness in all dimensions. This finding supports some other studies conducted in the Turkish EFL context, with pre-service English teachers receiving their courses through traditional face-to-face education (Cesur & Ertaş, 2018; Keskin, 2023).

Moreover, when compared the mean scores of both groups in all sub-dimensions of language awareness, a remarkable result emerged: Face-to-face English language learners had higher mean scores than distance learners. Although the scores are close to each other and there is no significant difference, face-to-face students expressed higher levels of language awareness in every dimension. Studies in the literature show that language awareness activities can be integrated into lessons to increase language awareness levels of learners. For example, two experimental studies indicated that language awareness levels of pre-service English teachers and EFL learners in preparatory classes were increased through language awareness activities (Tüzel & Akcan, 2009; Dönmez, 2022). In this case, students at the point of language learning should familiarise with language awareness activities to increase their awareness of language awareness.

Firstly, an apparent disparity was demonstrated by the contradiction between face-to-face and distance-learning approaches, particularly in the sub-dimension of Linguistic Awareness. This finding highlights the possible influence that direct interaction and personal proximity have on the development of language awareness in the conventional classroom setting. Face-to-face training facilitates interactive conversation and provides direct exposure to spoken and written language structures, contributing to face-to-face learners' strong performance in the linguistic domain. These results empirically support the discourse on successful language education and motivate more research into how instructional approaches affect learners' linguistic awareness.

Secondly, the face-to-face learning group scored significantly higher in the "Communicative Awareness" sub-dimension. This finding supports that face-to-face instruction's physical presence and interactive nature contribute positively to developing communicative language awareness. The higher scores in this sub-dimension among face-to-face learners may be attributed to the dynamic, real-time linguistic interactions in traditional classroom settings, fostering a more immediate and contextualized grasp of communicative distinctions. Such insights contribute meaningfully to the ongoing discourse on effective pedagogical strategies in foreign language education, emphasizing the multifaceted role of instructional modalities in shaping students' language awareness.

Thirdly, “Cultural Awareness” is the sub-dimension where the scores of both groups are closest to each other. However, the results show that on this dimension, face-to-face learners scored somewhat higher, which helps to explain how the physical classroom setting may have some influence on cultural sensitivity and awareness. This superiority might be because
conventional classroom environments are holistic and interactive, allowing real-time involvement with various cultural contexts. Face-to-face learners had a higher level of cultural awareness, which shows that direct interpersonal interactions and shared physical space work together to provide a more sophisticated knowledge of cultural factors interwoven within language usage.

Finally, the statistics show that students who received face-to-face instruction also scored higher in this particular area. The difference suggests that the physical classroom setting, which marks direct interpersonal contact and instant access to instructional materials can enhance learners' metacognitive awareness and reflective involvement with the language learning process. The better learning awareness performance of face-to-face learners highlights the complex interaction between cognitive aspects of language acquisition and instructional modes.

Regarding the second research question, it addresses the effects of some demographic variables and whether distance and face-to-face education students differ regarding language awareness. The starting point of this research question is assuming that learners with a high level of language awareness would be in a strong and secure position to accomplish various tasks in their EFL studies. The study indicates that face-to-face class learners have higher levels of language awareness in all dimensions. Besides, they differ significantly in “Communicative” and “Cultural Awareness” dimensions in favor of face-to-face class learners. More specifically, face-to-face class learners are moderately aware of using English and several strategies in communication appropriately according to the context. They are also interested in how their culture and target language differ and are connected. As Carter (2003) stated, language awareness contains sensitivity toward the cultural properties of language. The study displays that distance EFL learners are less sensitive than face-to-face EFL learners regarding cultural awareness. It is necessary to monitor the accuracy of language use during intercultural communication to raise the learners’ language awareness, as suggested by the previous study (Yang, 2013). Integrating language awareness in learning a foreign language is essential to enhance the experiences and knowledge of learners regarding related language elements and culture (Farahian & Rezaee, 2015). Consequently, the findings indicating the direct and significant relationship between the two groups regarding communicative language awareness approve the previously claimed relation between communicative language teaching and language awareness.

In addition, the second research question also attempts to uncover whether there are any significant effects of such variables as gender and age. The study’s findings demonstrate no statistically significant difference between male and female students in terms of subdimensions of language awareness. This result aligns with the study's findings, indicating no significant difference exists between learners' intercultural awareness and gender (Saka & Asma, 2020). Nevertheless, this finding is inconsistent with the results of other studies indicating that female learners outperform males by motivation, achievement, and language awareness (Amjadiparvar & Zarrin, 2019).

Conclusion

The conclusion of the research is meaningful, indicating the failure of distance education EFL students' experiences to understand how the target language works. For this reason, distance education learners need extra help to develop consciousness about language and its role in their lives. Furthermore, the research implies a requirement for deliberate instruction to increase students’ language awareness in the EFL setting to make them more sensitive towards the language and develop tolerance for other languages and nations. The findings also suggest that future
research can address integrating language awareness activities into EFL studies of distance education EFL learners.

The current research aims to deal with the issue of language awareness of distance and face-to-face learners. Nevertheless, it is limited to only first-year students studying at various departments of a state university in Türkiye, decreasing the generalizability of the research findings. Further studies with a larger sample of participants from other grades in other educational settings can be done. In addition, it requires future investigation using qualitative data collection instruments, including keeping diaries, semi-structured interviews, or observation to authenticate the results. Furthermore, a more in-depth investigation of the mechanisms underlying the observed differences can contribute to targeted improvements in language teaching methodologies. In addition, it suggests to focus research efforts on improving pedagogical approaches to increase language awareness in distance education and optimizing language teaching practices for different learners. Finally, it suggests that the platforms or learning management systems used in distance education should be structured to facilitate interactive features, instant communication, and discussion forums similar to those accessible to face-to-face students.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Language Awareness Scale by Kaya (2010)

1. I pay attention to grammar and the way it works.
2. I am aware of the phonetics and phonological facts of English.
3. I can read and make sense of a variety of English texts.
4. I can produce written English texts across different genres.
5. I can understand the ways vocabulary is used for a variety of purposes.
6. I can easily assess others’ feelings, thoughts, and intentions in communication.
7. I can easily respond to the other’s feelings, thoughts, and intentions in communication.
8. I can easily use a number of strategies in communication.
9. I can use English appropriately according to context.
10. I am aware of the cultural load of the English language.
11. I am interested in how the target culture and my own connect and differ.
12. I am aware of my learning style.
13. I can arrange my personal learning process in an effective way.
15. I can reflect on my own learning.