

# Dialogical Structure Experience in Basic Design Studio at Online Education

Derya Adiguzel Ozbek 

*Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design, Istanbul Kultur University, Istanbul, Turkey*

Received: October 16th 2021, Revised: November 23rd 2021, Accepted: November 26st 2021.

Refer: Adiguzel Ozbek, D., (2021), Dialogical Structure Experience in Basic Design Studio at Online Education, Journal of Design Studio, V.3, N.2, pp 261-270,

D. Adiguzel Ozbek ORCID: 0000-0002-6607-0103

DOI: 10.46474/jds.1010531 <https://doi.org/10.46474/jds.1010531>

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**Abstract:** In this study, the structure of the basic design studio that started with face-to-face education and had to end with online education due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was set over Bakhtin's dialogic concept, is discussed. The three main components of the basic design studio; studio space, studio process and studio content and the combination of these components have changed in the transition from face-to-face education to online education. With these changes, dialogic relations are defined in the basic design studio's setup that extends from the face-to-face to the online education, and a structure that is shaped not as a sharp transition but as a flow has been developed. The basic design studio structure, which is shaped by the concept of dialogue, is presented as an approach proposal for online education, which is still ongoing and is expected to continue.

**Keywords:** Basic Design Studio, Face-to-face Education, Online Education, Dialogic, COVID-19 Pandemic

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## 1.Introduction

The first year of architecture, fine arts, art, and design faculties is the place where creative and abstract thinking is first encountered. For this reason, the first-year education has a special importance and privilege. The basic design studio, which is the main element of the first-year education, is involved in the education of all disciplines dealing with different scales of the design field. The basic design studio is a process in which abstract and conceptual thinking is transferred through problem solving action.

The basic design studio is maintained with an understanding that is a continuation of the tradition that has been going on since the Bauhaus school. This understanding has recently started to diversify with different studies in the digital education environment and educational pedagogy (Sarioğlu Erdoğan, 2016). But its focus remains; How can students

gain creative and abstract thinking skills in the first year?

Abstract, conceptual and creative thinking skills, which are at the center of the basic design studio, are a process that develops with the interaction and communication of the teacher and the learner by experimenting, doing and even using hands (hands on) (Özkar & Steino, 2012) (Sarioğlu Erdoğan, 2016). Due to the content, process and method of the basic design studio, the transition to online education with the COVID-19 pandemic represents a more complex situation. With the quarantine measures, the studio has been tried to adapt to the online education approach with a very quick planning. The experience and practice-oriented nature of design education makes it difficult to adapt studio courses to online processes.

A new experience has begun for both the teacher and the learner in the transition from face-to-face education to online basic design studio training. In 2019-20 Spring semester, at A... University, a structure based on Bakhtin's dialogic concept has been designed as a tactic against both the sharpness of the process and the foreign nature of online education in the Basic Design II studio, which is mandatory in the education plan of the Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design.

The concept of dialogic, whose etymological origin is based on dialogue (Yıldız, 2014), and which we can call the science of dialogue, is the state of production in which the channels of communication and interaction are used in a flow, without turning to absolute goals, in the coexistence of differences (Adıgüzel Özbek, 2020). With these extents, dialogic learning is a method of progress by knowing that each shared dialogue triggers new thinking and cognitive processes.

The three main components of the basic design studio; studio space, studio process and studio content and the combination of these components have changed in the transition from face-to-face education to online education. With these changes, dialogic relations are defined in the basic design studio's setup that extends from the face-to-face to the online education, and a structure that is shaped not as a sharp transition but as a flow has been developed. The aim of this study is to present an alternative for the online studio approach by opening this structure to a miscellaneous discussion. In studies dealing with design studios, conducting the narrative or discussion through student studies creates an open sharing environment and provides a forward-looking archive. The focus of this work is the studio structure. Student works, which are studio outputs, are referred to as a component of the dialogic basic design studio structure. Furthermore, some more outsider parameters such as student experiences and other courses that affect the basic design course are outside the scope of this study.

## **2. Basic Design Studio Structure in Face-to-face Education**

Under the current conditions at A University, Basic Design I and Basic Design II courses, which are compulsory in the fall and spring semesters of the first year education of the Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design, are handled holistically and the academic year is planned as a whole. In this setup, the main goal of the Basic Design I studio is to discuss basic design principles through applications.

The Basic Design I studio is shaped by the basic design approach and way of thinking that has been going on since the Bauhaus school. The studio process was shaped by two-dimensional and three-dimensional studies and four practices aimed at developing abstract and conceptual thinking skills. In Basic Design I studio; The first two applications named "*point-line*", "*color-texture*" and the last two applications named "*solid-solid*", "*volume-form*" were constructed together. The first two applications are the experience of redesigning the concepts given through artists and art movements, extending from two dimensions to three dimensions. In the third application, using basic design principles such as rhythm, balance, contrast, and unity, a composition is designed in a defined volume, in which full-empty unity is considered. In the last application, the full-empty composition was shaped by considering volume relations and interactions. Each application was supported by seminars including conceptual expansions, reflections and examples from the disciplines of art and design, starting from the definition of the subject.

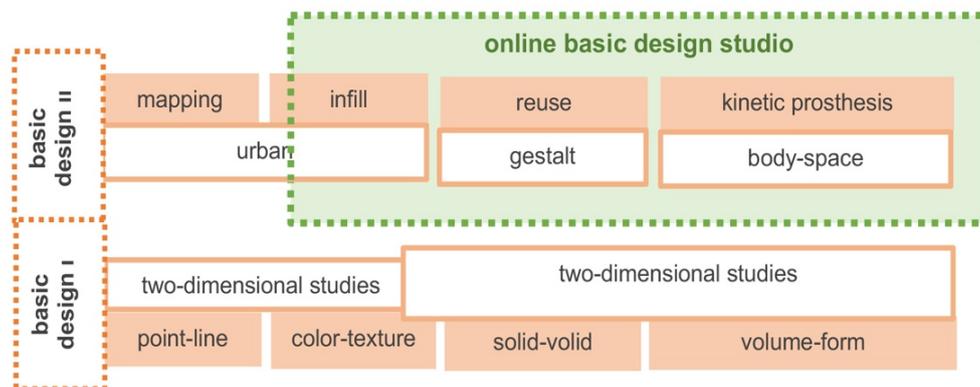
The Basic Design II studio is designed with problems that will open up the discussion of different concepts that will develop creative thinking on this knowledge. As in the Basic Design I studio, four applications were planned

and each application was supported by seminars in which the topics and concepts that were discussed. The first two applications are a continuation of each other, designed to represent the interaction and perception of the individual with the city through the concepts of city, urban experience, mapping, urban map, urban space, urban place.

In the first application, on-site experience trips were organized to Karaköy, Vefa and Kadıköy, and students were expected to represent these trips with mental maps. As Şenel stated, mapping refers to a dynamic and open-to-development representation between the mapped place or object and the mapper by redefining each other (Şenel 2019 and Şenel, 2014). For this reason, mapping gives an opportunity “to develop a sensitivity and a critical view of the continuous formation of the place by human existence, experiences and design actions” (Şenel, 2014). In the second application, it is aimed to develop an articulation application, that is, a kind of parasitic architecture or urban installation design proposal, for the urban spaces to be determined on the routes where the experience trip is organized. The practice of articulation in the urban space is the practice of settling in the existing space, which incorporates the concept of interaction and temporality of installation art with the space (Sözen, 2010), and the flexibility and adaptability of parasitic design

(Yorgancıoğlu and Seyman Güray, 2018). The third application includes the discussion of Gestalt perception and concepts, which are at the center of the first semester's basic design studio, through the concepts of recycling, reuse, and sustainable design. According to the Gestalt theory, the whole has a different meaning from the sum of the parts and is perceived as a whole (Sarioğlu Erdoğdu, 2016). The subject is a re-use design from electronic waste using Gestalt principles. The last application, the wearable kinetic prosthesis, discusses its application, movement, prosthesis, wearing actions and their interaction over the body. The definition of prosthesis in the medical literature is an item made and worn for the missing part of the body and its purpose is to correct a deficiency. In the basic design studio, the learners will develop a motion system design proposal that their body is missing and needs additionally.

The basic design II studio started with this setup, lasted for six weeks, the first application was completed, the second application seminar was given and the process was entered with the first discussions on the design idea. However, education was suspended as part of the COVID-19 pandemic quarantine measures. After a two-week obligatory break, the process was completed by switching to online training in the basic design studio (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Content Program of Basic Design I-II studios

### **3. The Dialogical Structure of the Online Basic Design Studio**

The transition process from face-to-face education to online education has been a new experience for both students and practitioners, which has taken place very quickly. In order to experience this sharp transition in flow, a structure proposal based on Bakhtin's dialogic view has been developed. In the transition, the three components of the basic design studio; studio content, studio space and studio process have changed. A structure has been constructed that defines dialogic relations for these three changing components.

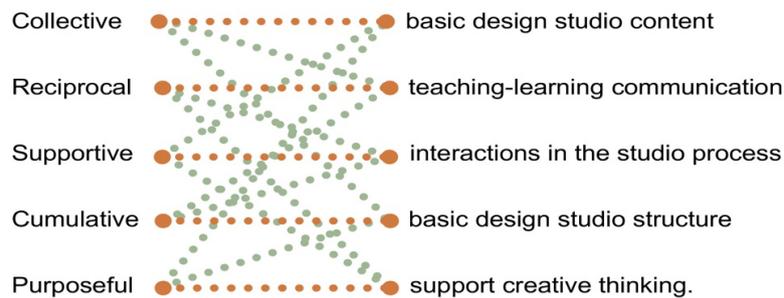
Bakhtin's concept of dialogue is a concept that takes its etymological origins from dialogue but expresses more than a dialectical dialogue. The dialogue expressed here goes beyond just saying what one thinks (Yüceer, 2020). Dialogue is the flowing experience of communication and relationships on a multidimensional and complex web of concepts. Dialogical communication, on the other hand, is freedom in a flowing state without being subjected to the pressure of goals and individual attitudes (Yıldız, 2014). Fisher states that each dialogue creates a new cognitive structuring area in the possibility of shared thoughts (Fisher, 2007). Interactions in dialogue are continuous and there are oppositions, struggles and associations in these interactions. With this aspect, it assumes communication between plural meanings and plurality of subjects (Adıgüzel Özbek, 2020).

On the other hand, dialogic education takes place when different perspectives open up dialogue spaces for the joint construction of knowledge (Reznitskaya, 2012 and Alexander, 2008). For this reason, dialogic teaching requires dialogic interaction, but not every teaching that includes dialogue can be defined as dialogic (Yüceer, 2020). Alexander (2008) bases dialogical education on five principles that aim at teaching and learning togetherness. These principles are; collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, purposeful. Collectiveness defines a common learning and inquiry space, that is, all participants, who teach and learn in the same environment.

Reciprocity, participants exchange ideas and develop alternative perspectives. Supportiveness, providing an environment in which ideas are freely expressed, knowledge production develops by helping each other. Accumulation, everyone interprets them within the framework of coherent thought and understanding, based on the contribution of each other. Purposefulness, the teacher structures the communication by considering the educational goals (Alexander, 2008).

It shows that the dialogical education model is an approach that supports the processes of discussion, thinking and asking questions over concepts, which is the main goal of the basic design studio. In the transition to online education, the studio space and the studio process have defined an area that is almost completely independent of the teacher and learner and difficult to predict because it is not experienced. However, studio content and its adaptation to online education are still under the control of the teacher and learner. In this context, the studio content is handled as a collaborative dialogue relationship. Strategies have been developed to increase partnership with the studio space and process.

The face-to-face basic design studio structure was handled as a data within the framework of the principle of cumulativeness, and in this context, the main framework of the practices in face-to-face education was preserved and shaped with new concepts that entered our lives with the COVID-19 pandemic. In the studio process, which interactions can be included in the studio process, which is transferred to the virtual within the framework of the principle of supportiveness, and how the teaching-learning communication should be shaped in line with the principle of reciprocity, has brought up the questions. The principle of purposefulness of all these strategies; necessities, constraints and changes are structured around how they can be handled as a creative phenomenon and how they can support creative thinking. As a result, the configuration of Bakhtin's five principles that are collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful, define dialogic



**Figure 2:** Basic Design Studio with Dialogic Education Principles

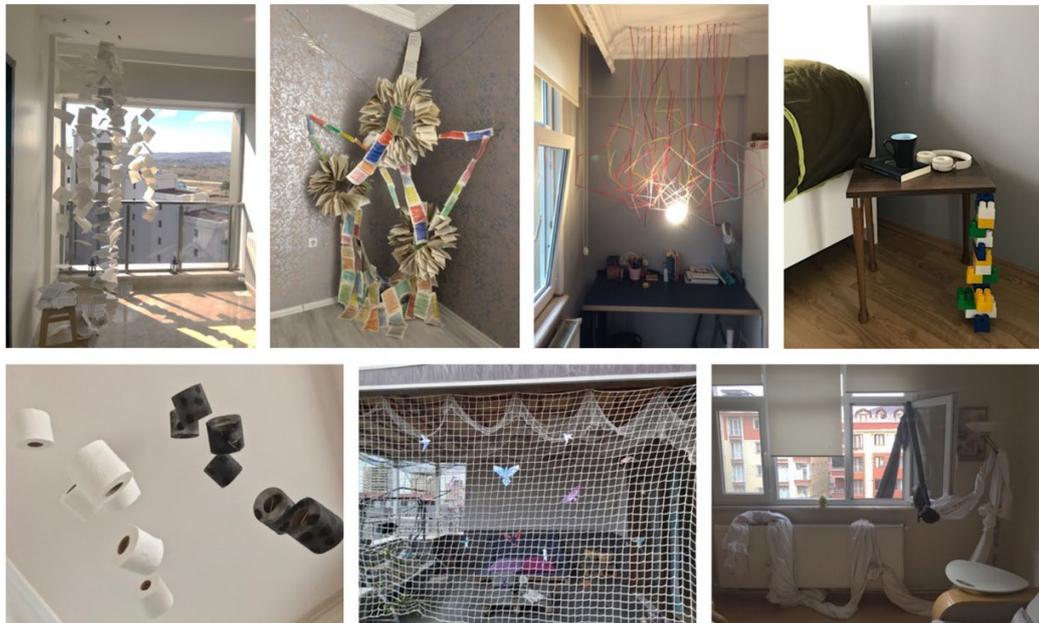
education in the basic design lesson was as in Figure 2.

### 3.1. Studio Content

The studio content has been shaped by establishing dialogic relations with the changes and new concepts that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to our lives. The pandemic has added "life fits into home", "stay at home" discourses, the concept of social distance, and new products such as masks and disinfectants to our daily lives. The studio content has been transformed by these new contexts, and in this process, it has been shaped by establishing dialogic relations with the studio space and the studio process.

After the first application was completed in face-to-face education, the second application, articulation to urban space, became "*Interior Infill*" in the online studio content. The dialogic context of the application with COVID-19 is to move the home to the center of life with the discourses "life fits into home"

and "stay at home". While the attachment function remains constant, the space to be infilled moved from the city to the home. Thus, it is aimed to establish dialogic relations by entering into a dialogue with the future house fictions that will be created by fitting the urban space into the houses. Designs have been developed by questioning our ways of articulating with COVID-19 on the discourses of "life fits into home" and "stay at home". The learners applied the home infill designs one-to-one with the materials they found at home; has represented these three-dimensional home installations in two dimensions on online platforms (Figure 3).



*Figure 3: Application of Infill to the Interior*

Thirdly, for the practice of refunctioning with Gestalt principles, the waste load created by the use of masks, disinfectants, and increased electronic equipment at home, which came into our lives with the COVID-19 pandemic, was evaluated. The learners shaped their reuse designs with the waste materials found at home. Re-use scenarios were produced by entering into dialogue with the new materials that came into our lives with the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, solutions and design approaches have been developed for materials that will define a serious waste load for the environment in the future (Figure 4).

The fourth and final application, the wearable kinetic prosthesis, has been changed to the

*"Wearable Social Distance Prosthesis"*. The concept of social distance, which is one of the important concepts of public interior design in the field of interior architecture, has become the limit element of everyday language and life. The concept of personal space in interior design and use has left its place to social distance. In the basic design studio, a dialogue was created with this change of the concepts of personal space and social distance. While the limits of personal space and body are important in the wearable kinetic prosthesis, personal space has expanded to social distance with the wearable social distance prosthesis. On the other hand, the position of other bodies to our body, as well as the limits of our own body, has come into question. As in the other



*Figure 4: Application of Re-use Practice with Gestalt Principles*

three applications, it is planned to produce the designs on a one-to-one scale or close to this scale with the materials available at home and the possibilities offered by the materials (Figure 5).

applied in the house on a one-to-one scale. Thus, the online education space is not limited to virtual spaces, chat rooms and online platforms; and the home space is also included in the education. In the last application, the

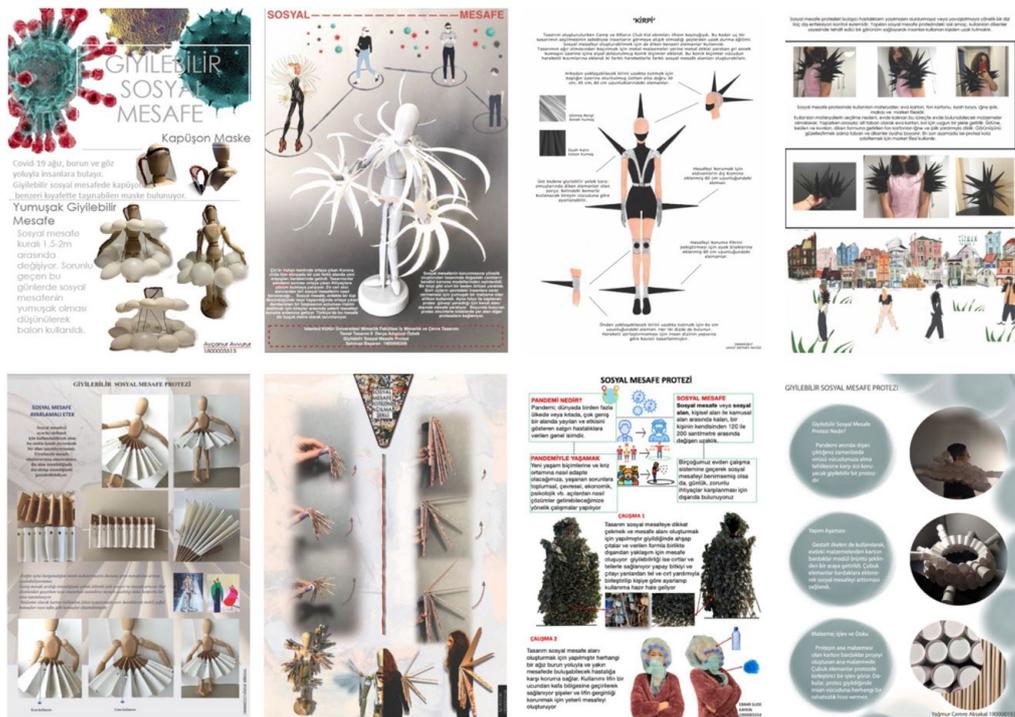


Figure 5: Application of Wearable Social Distance Prosthesis

### 3.2. Studio Space

The studio space, which is the other component of the basic design studio, has been moved from the physical space to the virtual space with online education. In this transition, software and digital platforms where synchronous lectures are made have defined the virtual studio space (Adobe Connect software and Cats platform specific to the Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design at A. University).

In the transition from physical space to virtual space, a dialogic relationship has been established and the concept of (un)limited space, where the boundaries are blurred, has been developed. In the first two applications of online education, the home space has been made a part of the studio space. In the first application, the house space and its potentials were evaluated and the design approach was

boundaries of their own bodies, the space defined by the body and the one-to-one experience of it were reshaped with the design idea.

The dialogic studio space is neither physical nor virtual. It is at the point where the dialogue between the virtual and the physical is established, where the relations are produced. In other words, besides online environments, the home defines a (un)limited space by determining its own place at the point where the space or body blurs its boundaries and the design idea takes root.

### 3.3. Studio Process

The third component of the studio is the studio process. The studio process is a layered process that includes the teacher-learner interaction, the time experienced in the studio, the production processes and representations

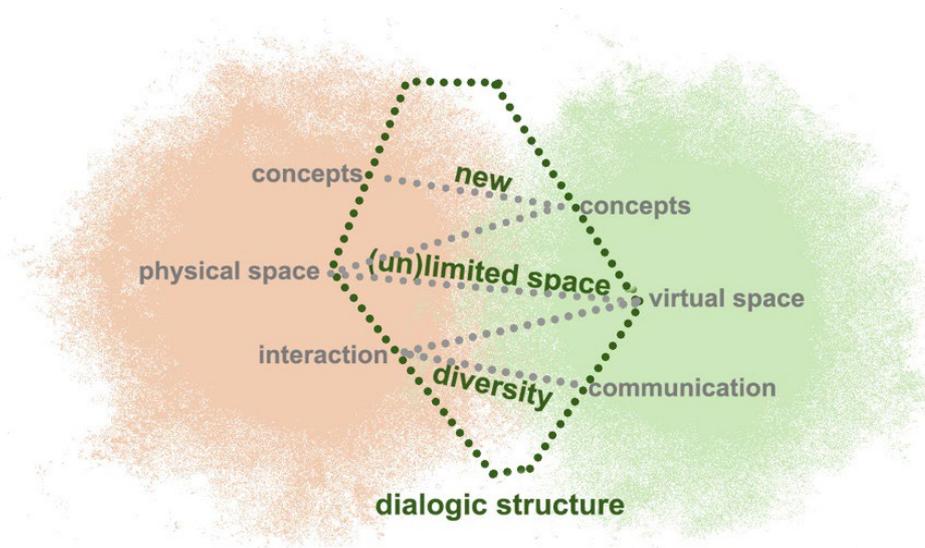
carried to the studio and outside the studio. The fact that all relationships in online education are limited to digital platforms has led to the exclusion of different interactions, while it has raised the question of which interactions can be included in the virtual. In order to overcome this question, diversified interactions were adopted to define the dialogic relations between the face-to-face education and the online setup of the basic design studio. First of all, the process that progressed with the unity of all teachers and students in face-to-face education continued in the same way on online platforms. All directors and students participated in the studio online on virtual platforms. However, a process was started in which the student represented and the teacher only interpreted. Co-production of the teacher and the student was excluded from the process.

The fact that the applications were produced exactly at home, for the home, enabled the students to enter into a dialogic relationship with the home space, but the representation of the applications by photographing caused the three-dimensional expressions to progress through two-dimensional expressions. While this situation led the students to different representation methods such as gifs and video presentations, it pushed the teachers to an interaction where the students could be actively involved in the production process in the chat rooms at different times. International guests were able to be invited to the seminars and online platforms where the speakers could attend only in accordance with the transportation and time constraints in face-to-face education. Thus, the diversified communication tactic open to the participation of international guests, in which the teacher and learner developed their own communication strategies, provided the opportunity to establish dialogic relations.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Due to the compelling reasons of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the basic design studio process, which started in face-to-face education in the 2019-20 academic year, was continued and completed online. This transition has been very challenging given the goals and scope of the basic design studio. A studio structure based on Bakhtin's concept of dialog has been developed in order to experience this sudden and definite transition in flow and to evaluate the process itself as a creative phenomenon. In the study, the dialogic structure of the online basic design studio is presented as an approach proposal for online education, which is still ongoing and is expected to continue.

The studio's structure was designed by considering the changing studio content, studio space and studio process in the transition to online education, in line with the dialogic education principles. The studio content, which is still under the control of the teacher and the learner, has been determined as the common dialogic point and the content has been expanded to include new concepts that have entered our lives with the pandemic and new materials added to our daily routine. In the transition from physical space to virtual space, the concept of limited (limited / unlimited) space supported by the dialogic structure of the studio content that includes the home space in the process has been developed. The social interaction nature of the studio process was limited to the communication interfaces of virtual platforms. In order to overcome this situation, the concept of dialogic and diversified communications, which are the basis of dialogic education, have been adopted. This mentality of the structure is shaped as in Figure 6.



**Figure 6:** Dialogical Basic Design Studio Structure at Online Education

The inclusion of current concepts in the studio content enabled students to look at the pandemic and its contribution to our lives from a different perspective, while supporting their creativity and increasing their excitement about the subject. In addition, the fact that the house became a part of the studio space enabled them to look at their homes from a different perspective with the familiarity they experience every day. This allowed them to question their home and the idea of home. At the same time, the additions made to the house paved the way for the participation of the household in the process and created dialogic relations between the households. Thus, compulsory imprisonment at home has evolved into a dialogic structure that opens door to different experiences and in which daily experiences and places are questioned.

Questioning the contributions of the dialogic structure setup to abstract and creative thinking skills in terms of learners in the basic design studio will pave the way for the development of dialogic structure through multi-dimensional discussion. On the other hand, it has been seen in the process that flexible planning of the structure is required, considering that each learner's response to necessities and difficulties differs and learning orientation is different. The compulsory online

education process still continues. Undoubtedly, the most difficult courses in online education are design studios. It is thought that the dialogic structure approach, which is put forward specifically for the online basic design studio, may also provide data for other design studios and it is recommended to be developed with dialogic studio structures to be created specifically for other design studios in future studies.

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, the courses and studios included in the design education plans are expected to keep up with this digital transformation in a world that is digitalizing and changing day by day. In this context, the dialogic online basic design studio structure is presented as an approach proposal for these changes and digitalizations. Ultimately, this approach allowed the online basic design studio, which started out of necessity, for learners to think critically and to explore and overcome their own limits.

#### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank Basic Design I and II studio students for their participation and enthusiasm in this study. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Reyhan Uludağ Eraslan for being my colleague and sharing my passion during the studio classes.

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