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Research Article

**Organizational Problems Challenging the Capacity of Open Vocational High Schools in Dealing with the School Dropouts**

Adnan Boyacı<sup>1</sup>, Mehmet Fatih Karacabey<sup>2</sup>, Yakup Öz<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract**

Increasing the student enrolment in schools is very important in today's knowledge economy, which makes education systems one of the most prominent factors of economic development for all the countries in the world, especially the developing ones like Turkey. However, school dropout is one of the major obstacles in front of the advancements. Every nation has got a kind of structure in their education system to deal with school dropouts, particularly in secondary education level in which major dropout issues occur. In Turkey, open high schools constitute of the major alternative for the students who left formal high schools early and want to continue their education or to get a high school diploma. The aim of this study is to examine the organizational problems of Vocational Open High Schools in Şanlıurfa, regarding these schools as a backup system for school dropouts, based on the opinions of the school managers. Using a case study design, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the managers of open vocational schools in Haliliye, Karaköprü and Eyyubiye counties. According to the results of the study, organizational problems can be categorized into three main themes as administrative, academic and legal problems. At the end of the study, there are some suggestions to the authorities.

**Keywords:** *School dropout, secondary education, open vocational high schools.*

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## Açık Meslek Liselerinin Okul Terkleriyle Başa Çıkma Kapasitesini Zorlayan Örgütsel Sorunlar

### Öz

Eğitim sistemlerini dünyadaki tüm ülkeler için, özellikle de Türkiye gibi gelişmekte olan ülkeler için en önemli faktörlerden biri haline getiren günümüz bilgi ekonomisi toplumunda, öğrencilerin okullarını arttırmak çok önemlidir. Bununla birlikte, okul terki, eğitimsel gelişmelerin önündeki en büyük engeldir. Her ulusun, eğitim sisteminde, özellikle de önemli terk sorunlarının yaşandığı ortaöğretim düzeyindeki okul terki sorunu ile başa çıkmak için geliştirdiği çeşitli sistemler mevcuttur. Türkiye'de ise açık liseler, resmi liselerden erken ayrıldıktan sonra eğitimlerine devam etmek veya lise diplomasına sahip olmak isteyen öğrenciler için başlıca bir alternatif haline gelmiştir. Açık liseler bu bağlamda bir yedekleme sistemi olarak ele alınabilir. Bu araştırmanın amacı Şanlıurfa Açık Meslek Liselerinin okul terkleri ile başa çıkılması anlamında örgütsel sorunlarını, okul yöneticilerinin görüşleri doğrultusunda incelemektir. Araştırma durum çalışması olarak desenlenmiştir. Araştırmanın verisi, Haliliye, Karaköprü ve Eyyubiye olmak üzere Şanlıurfa'nın üç merkez ilçesinde bulunan açık meslek liseleri yöneticileriyle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre, Şanlıurfa'daki açık meslek liselerinin kapasitelerini daha etkili bir şekilde kullanmalarını engelleyen idari, akademik ve yasal sorunlar olarak üç temel tema ortaya çıkmıştır. Araştırmanın sonunda yetkililere bazı önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Okul terki, ortaöğretim, açık meslek liseleri.

## **Introduction**

In today's world, education systems have been playing a more vital role in the development of countries than ever before. As knowledge provides more added value than any other resources, the importance of education becomes more salient. In this context, aims and projects towards increasing the schooling rates in each level of the education system and enhancement of the average time spent in education are high on governments' political agenda, especially in developing countries.

These issues have been taking place in international policy documents and are also supported by supra-national institutions, which brings about the increase of expenditure and investments in education. According to the Dakar Framework for Action eight education goals are mainly on expanding and improving early childhood education, ensuring access of all children to compulsory education and young and adults to continuing education, improving literacy, numeracy and essential life skills are agreed internationally by the UNESCO partner countries (UNESCO, 2000). Also, United Nations member countries emitted Millennium Declaration about a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty the in the world and set up some goals. The related goal for education is "children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education" for development and poverty eradication (United Nations Millennium Declaration).

Besides, in such a global and changing knowledge economy era, borders have become more permeable and all nations in the world have become more open to new technologies and values (Youngs, 2007). In such a chaotic world, countries need better human resources having creative skills and ideas to survive and maintain their power (Boyacı, 2013). Hence, they need to equip the new generations with 21st-century skills emphasized in literature, national and international policy documents (Greenhill, 2010; Wagner, 2010) and tested by some international exams like PISA and TIMSS. What is expected from new generations in such a knowledge economy age is to generate new and innovative ideas, applications or products that have a broad capacity to affect people and produce an economic value (OECD, 2008). So, education systems try to raise students with needed critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills. However,



students who dropout from their schools due to various reasons constitute a major obstacle to the prospective benefits of education (Rumberger, 1987; Stearns & Glennie, 2006). In order to eliminate the undesirable outcomes of school dropout, countries have different solutions aiming school completion or constituting pathways for the workforce based on either formal or distant way of education.

### **Dealing with the School Dropouts**

Most of the school dropouts occur during the secondary education. Secondary education is an important level in the education system because it is a prerequisite for higher education. And graduating from a higher education institution increase the opportunities of earning more money for individuals. People with a bachelor's degree may be more effective in the development of their countries. According to OECD (2013), the unemployment rate of people who have a university diploma is 4.8%, but the unemployment rate of high school graduates is 12.8%. Hence, increasing the share of people holding an undergraduate degree is very important, especially for developing countries, figuring out the compulsory education covers secondary education in most of the OECD countries (2013), although the effect of compulsory education on the development of nations is controversial.

School dropouts occur in different ways in different countries. The main reason for that is differentiating of countries from each other based on the professional and technical courses, program diversification, institutional segregation and enrollment types that students are placed in different schools or tracks (Lamb & Markussen, 2011). Thus, they offer different programs and pathways to school completion:

- In France, during the democratization reforms of the 1960s and 1970s mixed type schools of lower secondary education has been transformed into a new type of school: the collège (junior high school) and that ensured the greatest access to senior high school and baccalaureate during 1980s. Apart from that, the General Transition Mission (MGI, Mission générale d'insertion) was established in 1992 and had a general goal as to reduce failure at school, prevent dropout and facilitate workforce transition which is closely related (Blanchard & Sinthon, 2011).

- In England, compulsory education is until the age of 16. After that young person can choose to remain in full-time education in school or college, studying part-time at college, entering full-time or part-time employment, entering government supported work-based learning – apprenticeship or a pre-employment program or may not choose any of the above. So, defining the school dropout or school leaving is an actual hard job for the UK. But, to encourage full-time participation of the young people, there is an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) worth up to £30 per week that young people whose parents/guardians earn less than £30,000 a year can apply (Sullivan & Unwin, 2011).
- In Germany, various programs and projects have been focused on preventing school dropout by trying to support individuals, to increase school quality, to improve teacher skills and counseling services at schools. These projects like ‘Learning Regions’, are useful for both enabling the transition to the workforce and completing the Secondary General certificate. In general speaking, dropout prevention programs and projects are organized to eliminate the dropout problems in micro (individual), mezzo (organizational) and macro level (system) policies. Individual-level is related to developmental support strategies for students, organizational strategies focus on the accountability regarding the legal, organizational and professional responsibilities of schools, training organizations and relevant personnel, and lastly the systemic strategies are about the institutional factors causing broad changes in the schools’ teaching and learning culture with a concentration on the historical, regional and political conditions (Reupold & Tippelt, 2011).
- In the United States, students drop out at secondary level because of individual and institutional factors. Individual factors are associated with students’ attitudes, behaviors, school performance and background; institutional factors are related to the students’ families, schools, and communities (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). There are mainly three approaches (programmatic, comprehensive and systemic) to respond the dropout crisis. Programmatic approaches consist of providing supplemental services to students within an existing school program or an alternative school program, either in an existing comprehensive high school or in a separate facility. Comprehensive approaches include school reforms changing school environment for enhancing student outcomes. According to this approach, there are two options either developing a comprehensive school reform (CSR) in the existing school or creating a new school or

adopting an external school model. Systemic approaches involve the changes in the whole educational system at federal, state or local level of government. (Rumberger, 2011).

### **School Dropouts and Turkey**

In Turkey, secondary education became compulsory for all citizens in 2012. It consists of four-year lower secondary and four-year upper secondary education (high school) level. There are distinct general directorates for vocational and general secondary education in upper secondary education level.

Along with the rapid economic development in the last 10 years, Turkey has focused on investing in human capital as the fundamental dynamic of medium and long-term development. In this economic context, important progress has been achieved in the quantity of educational services. Within this frame, the proportion of the budget allocated from public resources for all stages of education to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased from 2.25% in 2001 to 6.0% in 2012. The biggest share in the public budget has been allocated to education services for the last 4 years (TurkStat, 2016a). The share of research and development (R&D) expenditure in GDP have increased from 0.48% to 1.06% between 2003 and 2015 (TurkStat, 2016b). All these expenditures have turned into an increase in the number schools, classrooms, and teachers. Between the 2000-2001 and 2015-2016 educational year, the net schooling ratio, the number of schools, the number of teachers and the number of students in secondary education increased from 43,95% to 79,79%; from 6291 to 10550; from 140969 to 335690 and from 2362653 to 5807643 respectively (TurkStat, 2017). Despite the above quantitative advancements in the education system, school dropout is standing as a vital problem for the educational attainment of individuals.

In 2010, the graduation rate for secondary education was 54,5% in Turkey. In 2015, it was 73,4% (OECD, 2017). In OECD's conceptualization, the graduation rate is the presentation of estimated percentage of people who will graduate from a specific level of education over their lifetime. However, when age population and the number of graduate students from secondary education compared, there is a huge gap between individuals who didn't graduate. Table 1

shows the percentages of individuals graduated in the same age population by years in secondary education (TurkStat, 2017).

Table 1  
*Percentages of Secondary Education Graduates in the Same Age Population by Years*

Years	% In the Age Groups								
	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+
2009	27,90	24,03	17,78	15,08	14,96	11,56	8,48	5,99	3,74
2010	29,43	25,77	20,13	17,72	16,35	13,68	9,30	6,54	3,95
2011	29,66	26,89	21,90	18,87	16,80	15,20	10,05	7,21	4,27
2012	30,29	26,94	23,12	19,18	16,94	16,00	10,78	7,79	4,48
2013	28,60	25,07	23,13	18,78	16,72	16,32	11,45	8,30	4,67
2014	28,87	25,77	25,08	19,97	17,78	17,11	12,87	9,31	5,07
2015	28,37	25,74	26,05	21,07	18,65	17,19	14,31	9,97	5,44
2016	28,37	26,11	26,44	22,20	19,37	17,31	15,66	10,52	5,79

**Source:** Generated by authors using National Education Statistics and Address Based Population Registration System data from TurkStat. <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=kategorist> (Accessed on 11/22/2017).

Besides, school dropout leads to waste of investments made on education. Spending on education per student in secondary education in Turkey is 3268 US dollars in 2014 (OECD Education Spending). According to 2017 Performance Program of Ministry of National Education (MoNE), 5,47% of students in secondary education got out of formal education (PoSD, 2017). In the 2016-17 educational year, the total number students in secondary education are 5849970 (MoNE, 2017); so, 319993 students went out of formal education. Considering the latest OECD data on education spending, more than 1 billion US Dollars were wasted in 2017.

Despite the school dropout fact, Turkey provides and maintain the lifelong learning opportunities and this may be helpful for the transition to the workforce of dropped out students. In this context, one of the most important and organized institutions is public education centers. For all citizens from all the ages, there are reading-writing, vocational, social, arts, economic, sports and cultural courses for free. There are also other activities such as educational meetings, symposiums, conferences, festivals, panels, art shows. Besides, people can take modular courses for general and vocational-technical education with vertical and horizontal transitions.

The other one is the open schools. Open general, vocational and technical high schools are mostly chosen by young dropped out students. Actually, open schools are taken as a part of formal education by the MoNE. However, functionally, these schools deliver a kind of distance education, except some courses needed practice in the programs of open vocational and technical high schools.

### **Open High Schools in Turkey and Problem Statement**

Open High School was founded in 1992, and it provides high school education using distance learning technologies. In 1998 by Law No. 4359 open high school services were gathered under the General Directorate of Educational Technologies. After that in 2011 by the decree law No. 852 open high school operates under the Lifelong Learning General Directorate.

Open high school program content (curriculum) is the same with the formal education institutions. But, it operates differently and uses the basics of distance education. Besides, it is administrated directly by the MoNE. All educational institutions in Turkey are administrated by the MoNE centrally, but open high school all around the country are treated like just one school. It has central examination system and all exams for all open high schools are done at the same time in the whole country. There are 1.554.938 (26,6%) students in open high school and 219.492 of them are in open vocational high schools (MoNE, 2017).

Open schools have got an essential role in sustaining the student persistence in the secondary school system. Although, open schools are regarded as a part of formal education by the MoNE, they serve as an alternative to the formal education, especially for young high school dropouts. In this regard, open high schools have got a latent function as offering a second chance to high school dropouts to continue their secondary education and to get a high school diploma.

Similar to the open high schools, open vocational schools provide dropouts with the same opportunities, but they operate differently. Students in open vocational high schools take some courses in real teaching-learning environment because these courses are needed practice. Such courses are held in the buildings and ateliers of the formal (daytime) vocational high schools after the casual school day in the evenings and weekends. Such timing makes open vocational high schools vulnerable to several organizational problems; sometimes even more than a

similar formal high school. Lack of guidance in admissions and student affairs, inadequate amount of educational materials, lack of motivation among teachers, staff shortage, classes composed of students from different ages and backgrounds are some examples of these problems affecting the operation of open vocational schools and the process of teaching and learning (Çiçek, 2005). Besides, organizational problems also hinder the academic success of students. Traditionally, factors affecting student achievement can be categorized in two main items as student level (Coleman et al., 1966) and school level (Edmonds & Frederiksen 1977) factors. So, organizational problems of open vocational schools both jeopardize the positive effect of school level factors that contribute the student achievement and the chance of school completion of high school dropouts. Hence, the examination of the organizational problems of open vocational schools becomes prominent. However, there is a lack of literature related to this topic in Turkish context.

In this regard, the aim of this study is to examine the organizational problems challenging the capacity and the role of Vocational Open High Schools in dealing with the school dropouts based on the opinions of the open vocational high school managers. In this study, Vocational Open High Schools in Şanlıurfa province (Haliliye, Karaköprü, Eyyubiye) are selected. The main reason for choosing Şanlıurfa is its high rates of high school dropout and correspondingly high enrolments in open schools in Turkey. In Şanlıurfa, 1002 students of 121 open educational institutions are taking face to face education (Yüz Yüze Eğitim Veren Kurumların Kontenjan Bilgileri Ekranı 2017-2018).

## **Methodology**

This study focuses on the deep understanding of a complicated phenomenon and uses a deductive approach to reach the goal (Audet & Amboise, 2001). In this context, this study is designed as a case study which is used to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and in which multiple sources of evidence or data exist (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). A case study research is an empirical inquiry of the ‘target case’ deeply and extensively focusing on the questions ‘how?’ and ‘why?’ (Yin, 2003), or ‘a detailed examination of one setting, or one single subject, or one single depository of documents or one particular event’ (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

The target case or the setting in this study is composed of the open vocational schools in Şanlıurfa (Haliliye, Karaköprü, Eyyubiye) province. Haliliye, Karaköprü, Eyyubiye are the central districts of Şanlıurfa province. There are also some other open educational institutions giving face to face education like multi program high schools, schools for imams and preachers and vocational training centers. However, this study only focused on the organizational problems of open vocational high schools, so the single case study design is employed for this research (Yin, 2003).

### **Participants**

In the study, participants were determined by criterion sampling method. The selection criteria was that each participant must have at least 3 years of work experience as a manager in the same open vocational school. The criterion sampling method was applied because of the importance of work experience in the same school. Experienced school managers working in the same school for a while would be more familiar with the students and teachers, and the open vocational school system.

Participants of the study are composed of 14 school managers in Şanlıurfa in the 2016-17 educational year. There are eight open vocational schools in Haliliye, Karaköprü, Eyyubiye districts in total. However, one school manager and one vice manager were selected in seven open vocational schools. The other two managers were newly attended to an open vocational high school located in Haliliye district.

Characteristics of the participants are given in the below table. All names were coded as P1, P2, P3... P14, where P is for the participant.

Table 2  
*Characteristics of the Participants*

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Professional years in current school</i>	<i>Total professional years (as manager)</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>
<b>P1</b>	5	11	40	Male
<b>P2</b>	5	9	38	Male
<b>P3</b>	3	10	47	Male
<b>P4</b>	4	21	58	Male
<b>P5</b>	6	12	44	Male
<b>P6</b>	5	21	55	Male
<b>P7</b>	4	8	41	Female
<b>P8</b>	5	10	48	Male
<b>P9</b>	3	5	37	Male
<b>P10</b>	3	12	42	Male
<b>P11</b>	6	16	40	Male
<b>P12</b>	5	13	51	Male
<b>P13</b>	4	9	50	Male
<b>P14</b>	3	6	50	Male

### **Data Collection Instruments**

In the study, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews and they were tape recorded by the researchers. It's possible to control the course of the interview while maintaining the free speech of the interviewee by semi-structured questionnaires (Creswell, 2003) and they reduce prejudice and effect of the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). The questionnaire consists of 3 open-ended questions. For the study, 14 school managers from open high schools were interviewed. The interviews took place at each 3 school and lasted about 35 minutes.

Interview questions were prepared in accordance with the literature. Then, two interviews were performed with school managers. Then, interview questions were reexamined after having suggestions of two faculty members in educational administration field. At the end, the final semi-structured questionnaire form was created.

In addition to field experts' opinions, a consent form was prepared and given to the participants. Consent form consists of a text which states the purpose of the study, the participation is voluntary, and guarantees the recordings will be kept confidential. Asking field experts and the consent form is very useful for the trustworthiness or the internal validity; criterion sampling method and detailed results are also good for the external validity of the study (Merriam, 1998).



## **Data analysis**

The study employs a descriptive-analysis technique. Data were analyzed through the transcription of interviews, preparation of coding keys and comparison of coding and finally creating the themes by taking the opinions of field experts again (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 2002). Creating the themes in this order in accordance with the goal of the study, research questions, codes, expert opinions and literature and keeping them for audit trail makes the analysis more reliable (Merriam, 1998).

### **The transcription of interviews**

For this stage, everything was transcribed and written down on interview forms. Interview form is composed of two sections. First section involves personal information related to the place, date and hour, interviewee, interviewer, interview number and page number. Second section involves descriptive index, line number, interviewer comment and page comment. Everything was written in descriptive data section and then, coding keys were prepared.

### **The preparation of coding keys and coding**

In this stage, transcription was read and related principles were written in the descriptive index section. This was done by the researcher and an expert in the field. The expert and the researcher both developed descriptive index independently. Based on the descriptive index, both the researcher and the expert marked the suitable theme for each purpose and then compared the coding and then reliability analysis was done.

### **Comparing coding and reliability**

The researcher and the expert determined the consensus and dissension numbers. Here, if either the researcher or the expert marked the same theme or not marked any theme, this was considered consensus. If either the researcher or the expert marked the different themes for the same purpose, the marking that was done by the researcher took as a base but this was considered as dissension. The validity of the study is calculated by the formula  $\text{Validity} =$

Consensus/ Consensus + Difference of Opinion (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to this calculation, the validity was found 0.87.

## Findings

According to the research questions and results of the study, the opinions of school managers can be gathered into three themes which are ‘administrative problems’, ‘academic problems’ and ‘legal problems’.

### Opinions of School Managers on Administrative Problems

Concerning the administrative problems, participants were asked: “What obstacles do you face with during the school management process?” Opinions of school managers are varying, but they can be categorized as the problems of “human resources”, “school environment”, and the “administrative structure”.

First of all, all the school managers agreed on the problems of human resources management. However, they emphasized some different aspects. For example, P1 complained about the lack of service personnel by saying:

*“Our school is big and has five blocks. There is only one service personnel responsible for each block. And he works until the end of the formal high school. Students have their classes in the same buildings with the formal high school but in the evening. Most of the time the service personnel can’t clean the whole buildings. And we often find unclean classes.”*

And, P3 spoke of the lack of security personnel:

*“We have a huge campus because during the day there is a formal vocational high school and we use its buildings during the evening classes after 6:00 pm like all the other vocational open high schools in Şanlıurfa. During the daytime, there is only one security personnel at the entrance of the campus, but after that, he doesn’t stay for the evening.”*

Some other school managers emphasized the lack of administrative personnel and their workload. P2 said:

*“In our school, I am the only vice school manager responsible for the open high school and I also have to deal with some formal high school work. Especially at the beginning of each academic year during the admissions and at the end of each academic year we have a lot to do. So, during the academic year, I have to deal with both open high school work and the formal high school work. It is needed here another vice school manager.”*

Apart from that, some school managers expressed that the workload of the teachers is more than it should be because of that they haven't got enough teaching staff. P11 said that:

*“We have only evening classes in the open high school and most of the teachers don't want to work in the evening after their formal high school classes. The one working with us is generally the teachers needing extra money. Thus, of course, because of the few number of teachers and the long hours of working in the daytime in formal classes, teachers become tired and inefficient in the evening.”*

Secondly, school managers talked about the problems related to security and discipline problems in their schools. and P8 told about the discipline problems among students:

*“Most of the students attending open vocational high school are actually dropped out students. Mainly they dropped out because of failing in their previous courses back in formal high school or disciplinary problems. Most of them are unsuccessful in the formal high school and I think this made them unengaged to the school or education system. So, we have here students with problem behaviors and they often have no expectations from life. They just come here to get high school diploma.”*

Moreover, P10 and P6 emphasized the need of establishing a security system. P6 said: *“We have no security personnel for the evening classes and no cameras to watch people on a huge campus. At least we need a visual security system.”* Apart from that, P7 mentioned the drug abuse among students by saying:

*“We have some students using drugs. Sometimes, we saw some drug dealers during the evening time around the school. Sometimes, some students use drugs just nearby the campus and when we call the police for that, they also had trouble to deal with these students.”*

Thirdly, most of the school managers emphasized the need for a new administrative structure for open schools apart from the formal high schools. P8 spoke of the need for separate administrative and teaching staff for open high schools:

*“There are different students here in open high schools comparing the formal schools by age, job and marital status. So, we need teachers with different skills and more experience to manage these students in and out of the classroom.”*

Similarly, P2 emphasized the need for separate managers who only strive for open high schools. Moreover, P5 talked about the need for recruiting separate psychological counseling and guidance teachers for open high schools, figuring out the different characteristics of open high schools and the people in them.

### **Opinions of School Managers on Academic Problems**

Concerning the academic problems, participants were asked: “What obstacles do you face with during the teaching-learning process?” Opinions of school managers are varying. All of them agreed that there are some problems with “teaching-learning environment”, and three of them mentioned the problem of “division selection” of students. “Information technology (IT) problems” are also mentioned.

Regarding the problems related to teaching-learning environment, three of the school managers talked about the lack of learning materials. For example, P3 said that:

*“We use the same classes used by formal high school students. During daytime, they use materials, tools, and some other things. But, for the evening we often find a mess and even we can't find a material that we need because it has been used before us.”*

Moreover, four of them mentioned the need for separate buildings, apart from the formal education buildings. P4 mentioned: *“We need a separate building instead of using the formal high school buildings, we need our own classes for students to do extra work individually. And we need our own materials.”* Besides, five of the school managers mentioned the student absenteeism. According to them, few students attain the classes regularly:

*“We lost most of the students that we registered at the beginning of the academic year because most of our students work in daytime (have a job) and study in the evening classes, which causes students not to track classes regularly.”*

According to five school managers having a job produces negative results for most of the students who are working. P12 detailed the negative results of having a job by saying:

*“Most of our students are adults and they have a family life, work life in addition to school life, which leads to lack of energy for school and enthusiasm for learning. Since they have to work all day long and come to school in the evening, they come to school unprepared with a lack of motivation, which makes our job more difficult”.*

Similarly, P7 mentioned:

*“Nearly half of our students work in a different job during the day time, and this makes them tired when they come to school in the evening. Having a job is bad for their academic achievement but, on the other hand, they want to support their family’s income”.*

Once again all of the school managers agreed on the problems of class homogeneity. The classes are made up of students from different age groups, backgrounds, expectations, needs and so on. They deal with the problems of classes composed of different age groups. For example, P14 talked:

*“Some of the students are older, some of them are younger and that’s why their expectations and learning styles differ from each other. Some are working and they come to class just for the sake of coming without any preparation for the class. Some of them haven’t got enough basic computer skills or study skills, which makes it very difficult to motivate them and address them all.”*

The last problem for this subtheme is the timing of classes. Classes generally in the evening, and most of the time, this is thought as a good situation for the students having a job. However, four of the school managers mentioned about evening classes are not efficient at all. For example, P13 said that:

*“For students, for teachers, and for us the timing of the classes is one of the important problems in our open vocational high school. It creates extra workload for me as vice principal and for teachers. Also, students are bored when they come to school in the evening, especially the ones who work during the daytime in a job.”*

The second subtheme of the academic problems is about the division selection of students. Frankly, there are no criteria for the selection of division, so students can choose which division they want. And this situation produces some problems. According to P1:

*“Some divisions offer more job opportunities, so all of the students want to choose these divisions and they become overloaded. We can’t find places for all students. This situation also causes lots of vacancies in other divisions. Then, we have to close some divisions and that is bad for students who want to choose those divisions.”*

Thirdly, all of the school managers dealt with the IT system problems. All of them complain about the problems of archiving the students’ data. For example, P9 told that:

*“Especially, we have problems with the old-age students since their grades are not in the open high school IT system. Grades are only in the written documents they took when they leave formal high school. So, we have troubles related to transfer of grades of those students. Also, we have troubles about the following the student attainment because the IT system is a new system and doesn’t work efficiently.”*

Moreover, P10 emphasized the problems with the integration of open high school IT system with the e-school system of formal education by saying:

*“We have troubles to reach the information about new coming students to open vocational high school, because the new IT system doesn’t work in a parallel way with the e-school system of the formal high school.”*

### **Opinions of School Managers on Legal Problems**

Concerning the legal problems, participants were asked: “What obstacles do you face with during the process of implementation of school rules or regularities?” Opinions of school managers are varying. All of them agreed on there are some problems with “lack of regularities for student discipline”, and three of them mentioned “degree equivalency problems.”

Firstly, all school managers mentioned the negative results of lack of regularities for student discipline. In open high schools, there are no discipline regulations for students like in formal high schools. In this context, P8 said:

*“We can’t apply any discipline punishment to the students like in formal high school because of the open high school regulation. Sometimes we face with misbehaviors of students or any action that require a discipline punishment but we have no legal option in return.”*

Secondly, three school managers talked about the degree equivalency problems of the open high school students. Degree equivalency is an important issue to pass the courses or replacing of the previously taken courses in formal high school. P11 mentioned that:

*“Students are accepted to open vocational high school when they leave from any level of formal high school. There is no age and grade limitation. So, when the time comes to which courses they should take, they don’t want to take any courses they took before and they don’t want to be responsible for these courses again. The decision about it is taken by the councils of teachers, which is different in each open high school. Then some councils accept what student want, some don’t, which creates confusion in the system. So, we need a regulation about it, but we don’t have it yet”.*

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

When they first started to education in 1993-1994 academic year, there were 17.454 students, in the whole country in open schools (MoNE, 2015). Yet, today, there are 1.554.938 students in open high school, 219.492 of them are in open vocational high schools, and, 319.993 students went out of formal education (MoNE, 2017). In this context, open high school has been an important part of the whole education system and it has a capacity to work as a backup system for dropped out young generations to continue to higher education or their transition to the workforce. Although open schools can be considered as a chance for the future of Turkey and the disadvantaged young generations, they have some accumulated problems through the years. In this study, we focused on the problems of open vocational schools which can be regarded as a second chance for dropped out students. According to the findings of this study, in order to increase the capacity of open vocational schools in dealing with the elimination high school dropouts mainly three organizational problems come forward as administrative, academic and legal.

Similarly, Parsons (1967) proposes that there are technical, administrative and institutional control levels in order to solve the organizational problems in schools. The technical level

consists of the teaching-learning process. The primary purpose of schools is to provide education for individuals. For this reason, school administrators, teachers and all stakeholders involved are responsible for resolving problems related to the educational process. Administrative level concerns the management of the school. Principals are the top managers of the school. School principals allocate resources and coordinate the workload. They motivate teachers and increase the loyalty, commitment, and trust of the teachers. Institutional level connects the school with its environment. The school needs the support and the legitimacy of this community. It is necessary for school administrators and teachers to fulfill their duties in the school and to get rid of unnecessary repression of individuals and groups outside the school (Korkmaz, 2007, Open Schools/Healthy Schools).

When compared with the Parsons' administrative control level, participants complain about the lack of human resources, security problems originated from the school environment and inefficiency of the current administrative structure, figuring out the administrative problems in open vocational schools. All the personnel in open vocational schools are selected from the current formal vocational schools. Considering the late worktime and the extra workload on teachers and managers, some of the personnel in open vocational schools actually doesn't want to work in these schools, despite the extra income. Such a work timing also makes these schools open to security problems. With the addition of the lack of security personnel, these schools become more vulnerable to security and discipline problems. According to the findings of this study, lack of regularities related to discipline of students are addressed as a part legal problems because there is not any kind of discipline regularities in open vocational schools as in their counterparts in the formal secondary education. However, such an inadequacy may result in inefficiency in the administration of student affairs in open vocational schools, considering the student-teacher and peer relationships.

Considering the technical control level, academic personnel, teaching material, student, the timing of classes and IT system factors are related to academic problems emphasized by the participants. Students in open vocational schools are very diverse by means of age, marital status, work status and socioeconomic levels. The timing of classes is in the evening and weekends. There is no separate teaching material for the students, which sometimes causes the lack of these materials because they are used in formal vocational school in daytime classes. Most of the students of open vocational schools are also working in the daytime and come to



the evening and weekend classes. Student archives are not well documented because of the IT system problems. All these factors together may result in a low academic quality in teaching and learning process, considering the effect of school and student level factors on student achievement (Edmonds & Frederiksen 1977; Coleman et al., 1966). As a part of the legal problems, the degree equivalency problems occurred during the transition of the student from formal high school to open vocational school, which can be regarded as another factor contributing this low academic quality, since the lack of regularities on academic equivalency and recognition of past courses and grades.

As a part of Parsonian institutional control level, there are no findings in this study. However, quality of education in and the public opinion on open vocational schools are a matter of question, considering their huge number of enrollments. According to the EUROSTAT, the early leaver rate (% of the population aged 18-24) from education and training in Turkey is almost 35% in 2016 (Early leavers from education and training). Similarly, according to MoNE 2017 Performance Program, the rate of early leavers and out of school students are 34,81% and 5,47% respectively (PoSD, 2017). Even if the number of enrollments of open high schools (26,6%) is considered only, open schools are becoming an essential part of the formal education system, especially in dealing with the early leavers and out of school youth. Hence, most probably, starting from today and in the near future, the academic quality, organizational effectivity in the open vocational schools and their contribution to students' academic and work-related goals will be popular in the discussion of educational problems in the public conscience, raising questions about the legitimacy of open vocational schools.

### **Suggestions**

Below results and recommendations can be constituted for the problems of open vocational schools in Şanlıurfa:

- The main reason for the administrative problems is the lack of a special administrative structure for open vocational schools. Currently, managers, administrative and teaching personnel, buildings and the educational material in the formal vocational school also constitute the managers, administrative and teaching personnel, buildings and the educational material in the open vocational schools. Hence, there is the same structure for different functions, and the system uses the same resources. A specialized

administrative structure focusing on the education in the open vocational schools in Şanlıurfa, would make easier the management of the school as an organization and the management of curriculum.

- Academic problems indicate the need for a holistic management of teaching-learning process before, during and after the transition of students from formal high school to the open vocational high school. Besides, open vocational schools require more skillful and capable administrative and teaching personnel because of the diverse student context. So, there should be some criteria defined with a regulatory framework for the selection of teaching and administrative personnel. Also, recruiting the psychological counseling and guidance teacher for the students is needed.
- There is an obvious gap related to discipline regularities in open vocational schools. Moreover, there are some problems related to transfer of grades, recognition of past courses and division selection based on the lack of regularity frameworks. The main reason causes such lack of regularities needed in open schools as a whole is again the lack of regularities in the law. When thinking of the operating system of open schools, they are either distance or open education institutions, however, at the same time, they are regarded as the part of the formal secondary education. Such a duality in the operation of open vocational schools creates gaps in the regularity framework. Hence, there is a need of redefinition and to constitute a new identity for open vocational schools.

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Research Article

## **An Examination of Cyberloafing Behaviors in Classrooms from Students' Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

Cyberloafing behaviors in education refer to students' behaviors of using technology (e.g., smartphones, laptops, and the Internet) for non-academic purposes during classes. Although there exist many studies on employees' cyberloafing tendency/behaviors, such studies are pretty limited in the field of education. Thus, the main goal of the current study is to investigate undergraduate students' cyberloafing behaviors in terms of instructor and student-related issues. In this qualitative study, the participants consisted of 228 undergraduate students in a state university. The participants were provided with open ended questions related to their possible cyberloafing behaviors. Content analysis was used for data analysis. The results were categorized under four themes: teacher related cyberloafing behaviors, suggestions for minimizing teacher-related cyberloafing behaviors, student related cyberloafing behaviors, suggestions for minimizing student-related cyberloafing behaviors. The results show instructors' communication styles and their teaching preferences lead students to cyberloafing behaviors. Furthermore, students' personal issues and lack of motivation resulted in misbehavior.

**Keywords:** *Instructor-student, cyberloafing, teacher candidates, higher education.*

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## Sınıfta Siberaylaklık Davranışlarının Öğrencilerin Bakış Açılarında İncelenmesi

### ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı yükseköğretimde öğrencilerin siberaylaklık yapma sebeplerini “öğrenci” ve “öğretmen (ders hocası)” kapsamında incelemektir. Nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden faydalanılan bu araştırmanın çalışma grubunu, 2015-2016 eğitim-öğretim yılı güz döneminde bir devlet üniversitesinde okumakta olan 228 sınıf öğretmeni adayı oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcılara yöneltilen açık uçlu sorular sonucunda elde edilen veriler içerik analizi yöntemi ile değerlendirilmiştir. Bulgular dört ana başlık altında irdelenmiştir: öğretenden kaynaklı siberaylaklık davranışları, öğretenden kaynaklı siberaylaklık davranışlarını minimize etmek için öneriler, öğrenenden kaynaklı siberaylaklık davranışları ve öğrenenden kaynaklı siberaylaklık davranışlarını minimize etmek için öneriler. Elde edilen veriler doğrultusunda katılımcılar öğretim elemanının iletişim becerilerinden ve seçtikleri öğretim yöntem ve tekniklerinin kendilerini siberaylaklık davranışına yönlendirdiğini ifade etmiştir. Ayrıca kendi kişisel sorunlarının ve motivasyon düşüklüklerinin de benzer sonuç doğurduğunu söylemiştir.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* Öğretmen-öğrenci, siberaylaklık, öğretmen adayı, yükseköğretim.



## **Introduction**

Information and communication technologies are being used widely in daily, professional and academic life, in home, work and school environments. Technologies such as desktop and notebook computers, tablets and mobile phones (smartphones) have become indispensable tools for individuals to perform working/learning tasks and satisfy their personal needs. On the other hand, with the introduction of the internet into professional life, it has become an issue for debate that employees may use the internet for personal purposes instead of performing workplace tasks.

In the literature, usage of company resources for personal reasons that are not directly related to the objectives of the company was generally defined as cyberslacking or cyberloafing (Blanchard and Henle, 2008; Bock and Ho, 2009; Lim, 2002; Philips & Reddie, 2007; Whitty & Carr, 2006). Cyberloafing may include activities such as reading personal e-mail, chatting online, shopping online, conducting banking operations, visiting adult websites or gambling/betting online (Blanchard & Henle, 2008; Ugrin, Odom, & Pearson, 2008; Vitak, Crouse, & LaRose, 2011).

Rapid advancement of technology has also affected educational environments. Notebook computers, smartphones and wireless internet technologies are being used widely, especially in higher education environments. These technologies have benefits such as facilitating communication between the student and the instructor, providing access to course materials, offering course-related applications, and testing students. However, as in the case of workplaces, while students are expected to perform their learning activities when access to technology becomes easier in learning environments, they may also use these technologies for purposes other than course-related activities.

The first definition of cyberloafing in Turkey was provided by Kalaycı (2010) in the literature on the field of education. Accordingly, cyberloafing is students' tendency and/or behavior of using technology for non-academic purposes during classes. For example, cyberloafing may be defined as a student using the internet to read sports news, play games, check their e-mails or check their social media account while the instructor is teaching how a chart is drawn in Excel in a computer library.

Notebook computers and smartphones have become indispensable tools in higher education due to their various advantages (Lauricella & Kay, 2010; Weaver & Nilson, 2005). However, studies have also revealed that usage of notebook computers / smartphones at school and especially the opportunity to use wireless internet at universities lead students to display behaviors that are not related to the courses (Brubaker, 2006; Fried, 2008; Gerow, Galluch & Thatcher, 2010; Hembroke & Gay, 2003; Kalaycı, 2010; Lauricella & Kay, 2010; Li & Chung, 2006; Yaşar & Yurdugül, 2013). In other words, if students perform their personal tasks instead of the (internet-based) learning tasks they are responsible for, their learning interactions become absent, and/or their learning is incomplete, and this situation results in reduction of the course's effectiveness and efficiency. On the other hand, some researchers concluded that cyberloafing does not always lead to bad results. These studies reported that internet provides a flexible environment by reducing stress, therefore, it helps increase productivity in the job/task, contributes to creative thinking skills, improves social relationships, and leads to more active participation in learning environments by making access to information easier (Anandarajan & Simmers, 2005; Belanger & Slyke, 2002; Blanchard & Henle, 2008; Kose et al., 2012; Lavoie & Pychyl, 2001; Oravec, 2002; Polzer-Debruyne, 2008; Schraw, 2007; Seymour & Nadesan, 2007; Stanton 2002; Ugrin et al., 2008; Vitak et al., 2011).

In a study that was conducted without focus on the positive and negative effects of technology on students, Ergün and Altun (2012) aimed to reveal the reasons for cyberloafing behaviors from the students' perspectives. As a result, they revealed five themes: motivation, the setting, instructor, attitudes towards the course, and time. The literature review by Kalaycı (2010) investigated the factors that lead people to cyberloafing in two categories as individual variables and external variables. The study by Galluch and Thatcher (2007) in the scope of the Technology Acceptance Model found that interactions among students, structure of the classroom and course content were related to the cyberloafing behaviors of students.

Although many studies on the cyberloafing behaviors of employees in the workplace may be found in the literature, such studies are very limited in the field of education (Kalaycı, 2010). To this end, with the purpose of filling this gap in the field, it was aimed to investigate the learner-based and instructor-based reasons for students' cyberloafing behaviors and how these behaviors may be minimized to increase focus on the course from the perspective of students.

## Method

### Research Design

This study, which aimed to investigate the reasons for prospective teachers' cyberloafing behaviors that are related to the learner and the instructor, used the qualitative design of case study. Qualitative case studies allow in-depth investigation of a case in question by a set of variables using a comprehensive approach (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2011).

### Participants

The participants were determined by the method of random sampling for the sake of speed and practicality (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2011). The data were collected from 228 students who were registered in the Elementary School Teaching Program at the Faculty of Education of a state university located in the east of Turkey in the fall semester of the academic year of 2015-2016. While all students in the sample had smartphones, 78% used these to connect to the internet and 48% of the participants had notebook computers. The demographic information about the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics on the Gender and Class Level of the Participants*

	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
1st year	48	77.4	14	22.6	62	27.2
2nd year	43	72.9	16	27.1	59	25.9
3rd year	31	58.5	22	41.5	53	23.2
4th year	34	63.0	20	37.0	54	23.7
Total	156	68.4	72	31.6	228	100

### Data Collection

The participants were asked four open-ended questions which were prepared based on the studies conducted by Ergün and Altun (2012) and Galluch and Thatcher (2007). With these questions, the students were asked to state their learner-related and instructor-related reasons for focusing on extracurricular activities through various technologies. Additionally, they were

asked about recommendations for instructors and the students themselves for minimizing such behaviors. Firstly, at the stage of preparing these questions, the language validity and content validity of the questions were checked by receiving expert opinion (one faculty member from the department of Turkish Instruction and two faculty members from the department of Computer Education and Instructional Technologies). For the purpose of checking content validity, the questions were directed to five students of another department in the same faculty, and it was confirmed that the questions were clear and comprehensible in terms of content.

The researchers visited each classroom at different times to collect the data and distributed the forms that contained the questions to the students. The participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary, their names were not required, the data would be used only for the purposes of this study, and their information would never be shared with the third parties. It took around 25-30 minutes for participants to fill out the forms.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were transferred to the electronic environment. While transferring the data, a specialized coding scheme was used to determine the order and class level of each participant (P3\_38 – 3rd year, Participant 38). The data obtained were analyzed using the qualitative research method of content analysis. Qualitative data analysis consists of three basic stages as organization, summarization and interpretation (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008). The main process in content analysis is to gather similar data under certain concepts and themes; and then interpret them by organization (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2011). All the data obtained from the responses of the participants were analyzed under four main themes and additional sub-themes and codes: learner-based reasons, recommendations for students, instructor-based reasons, and recommendations for instructors. For reliability of the study, coding was made independently by two researchers. An overall inter-rater reliability of 92% was obtained for the categories. For the disagreements, the agreed consensus was used.

## Findings

### Findings about Instructors

The data on instructor-related cyberloafing reasons are presented in Table 2. Six sub-themes were determined. These were; pedagogy-related issues, personal traits, issues related to classroom management, limited field knowledge and lack of breaks. The most frequently stated issues among the themes were issues related to pedagogic efficacy.

Table 2  
*Instructor-Related Cyberloafing Reasons*

	Class			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
Issues related to pedagogic efficacy	33	30	28	24
Teaching the course in a monotonous, boring and uniform way	23	29	24	24
Not using different teaching methods and techniques	6	3	3	5
Not leading students to be active	6	2	2	2
Coming to class unprepared	2	2	4	-
Personal traits	6	14	5	8
Issues related to communication skills	10	6	1	9
Not using suitable tone of voice	10	6	1	9
Classroom management	6	3	8	9
Failure to achieve command of classroom	3	1	8	2
Not walking around in classroom	1	2	1	6
Focusing on same group of students	2	-	-	1
Limited field knowledge	-	1	6	5
Lack of breaks	4	3	3	2

The participants stated that they get very bored of the class and turn to different things when the instructor teaches the class monotonously. The responses of first and third year students P1\_8 and P4\_43 about the instructor's teaching of the class monotonously and uniformly are given below:

*"I can get very sleepy when instructors talk about the subject for hours and process the class in a monotonous way." [P1\_8]*

*"They teach the class monotonously because they consider the traditional approach on the attention of the classroom." [P4\_43]*

Fourth year student P4\_36 had a similar response:

*"They teach the class in a monotonous way." [P4\_36]*

The participants stated that they get bored by an instructor teaching the class in a boring way and they started to dislike the course. The responses of the first and second year students P1\_7 and P2\_10 about the instructor's teaching of the class in a boring way were as seen below:

*"The course instructor's boring way of teaching affects the student's prejudice about the course and [the student] starts to dislike the course." [P1\_7]*

*"If a teacher is boring while teaching, the student deals with other things because they don't enjoy that class." [P2\_10]*

The participants stated that the class is very boring when the instructor does not make it interesting. Second year student P2\_35 said:

*"Instructor of the course not making it sufficiently interesting, ordinary way of instruction." [P2\_35]*

The participants stated that they get distracted from the class and they did not want to listen to it in times the instructor does not use different teaching methods and techniques. First year students P1\_3 and P1\_6 stated the following:

*"They do not teach the subject by using different methods such as video, audio, images or supplementary instruments." [P1\_3]*

*"If they do not teach in an excited manner and do not use different techniques, the student may be distracted and does not want to listen to the lecture." [P1\_6]*

P4\_18 had a similar response:

*"When they do not use different methods and techniques..." [P4\_18]*

The participants stated that they get bored and turn to different things as the instructor does not involve them in the class. The responses by first and fourth year students P1\_27 and P4\_13 were as the following:

*"They cannot get students to focus and make them active [ly involved], this is why students are interested in mobile devices." [P1\_27]*

*"If they are too harsh and forcing you to be disciplined and not allowing anyone to speak or participate in the class, the student may get bored and pay attention to*

*something else." [P4\_13]*

The participants stated that class flow is very disorganized and boring when the instructor comes to the classroom unprepared. Third year student P3\_17 stated the following:

*"The instructor coming to the class unprepared." [P3\_17]*

The participants stated that the personal traits of the instructor also affected the class. First, third and fourth year students P1\_54, P3\_9, P4\_11 stated the noteworthy insights below:

*"High ego and belittling students." [P1\_54]*

*"Lack of elocution skills." [P3\_9]*

*"Abnormal outfits, hairstyle, having an accent." [P4\_11]*

The participants stated that when the instructor does not use a suitable tone of voice, it creates distraction and as they speak in the class with the same tone of voice, students get sleepy. First and second year students P1\_4 and P2\_5 stated the following:

*"Causing the student to get distracted or feel sleepy by teaching the class with constantly the same tone of voice." [P1\_4]*

*"Not getting attention of students by sudden bursts, meaning sudden increases in their voice at a moment of calmness." [P2\_5]*

Fourth year student P4\_16 had a similar response:

*"Tone of voice staying the same." [P4\_16]*

Regarding classroom management, the participants stated that the instructor cannot achieve discipline in the classroom, they do not walk around in the room and instructors always focus on the same students. First year student P1\_27 stated the following:

*"The instructor not being able to become dominant in the classroom. Because when the instructor is dominant, students also focus on the class and there is no problem as they do not turn to different things." [P1\_27]*

Likewise, the participants stated that when the instructor does not walk around and stays in the same place, this creates a comfortable setting for them, and they turn to doing other things. Third and fourth year students P3\_9 and P4\_12 stated that:

*“As they teach the class in front of the desk only, this creates a comfortable environment for us to use mobile devices.” [P3\_9]*

*“The instructor sitting in their place, teaching from a fixed position without walking around. No eye contact with students leads us to other things.” [P4\_12]*

The participants stated that instructors have limited knowledge about the content. First year student P1\_53 stated that:

*“They do not have sufficient knowledge.” [P1\_53]*

The participants stated that lack of breaks leads to distraction and gets students' attention away from the class. First year student P1\_41's statement was noteworthy:

*“The instructor might be too boring, like block classes. This can distract the student and so the student resorts to activities unrelated to the class.” [P1\_41]*

Likewise, fourth year student P4\_17:

*“They do not give any breaks.” [P4\_17]*

Table 3 shows the possible solutions that would prevent cyberloafing activities that are instructor-related. In general, lack of pedagogic skills that the participants especially complained about became prominent here as well, and the participants stated that instructors should improve themselves regarding this issue.

Table 3  
*Solutions for Instructor-Based Reasons for Cyberloafing*

	Class			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
Pedagogic skills	40	40	40	43
Interesting and fun teaching	29	23	11	21
Using different methods and techniques	9	15	25	24
Making students actively involved	11	8	14	14
Coming prepared	2	3	5	1
Classroom management	5	6	9	8
Achieving discipline in the class	4	4	8	4
Walking around in the classroom	1	2	1	5
Personal traits	8	8	5	6
Communication	7	2	1	9
Using tone of voice well	7	2	1	9
Giving breaks	6	5	1	-
Enriching field knowledge	3	1	4	3



## Findings about the Student

The data on learner-related cyberloafing reasons are presented in Table 4. Eight sub-themes were determined. These were; personal problems, disinterest in the course, disliking the course, distractibility, coming to the classroom unprepared, lack of motivation, disliking the instructor, not getting used to the setting. The most frequently emphasized sub-theme was the personal problems of the student.

Table 4  
*Learner-Related Cyberloafing Reasons*

	Class			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
Personal problems	17	27	18	15
Personal issues	8	15	12	6
Lack of sleep	8	7	1	7
Illness	1	6	4	3
Fatigue	-	1	-	4
Disregard, indifference for the course	10	15	7	9
Disliking the course	13	6	9	5
Distractibility	7	11	8	4
Coming to the classroom unprepared	9	5	5	2
Lack of motivation	4	1	4	9
Disliking the instructor	3	1	3	4
Not getting used to the setting	7	1	-	-

Personal issues were the most frequently stated problems among personal problems. The participants stated in general that psychological, family, financial-spiritual problems led to distraction from the class. First and third year students P1\_2, P1\_15 and P3\_3 stated about personal issues that:

*"There is incompatibility between the subject I am studying and I." [P1\_2]*

*"[A student] may dislike the subject or have come to that city or university because of the pressure from others." [P1\_15]*

*"There may be problems that the student cannot get out of their head, other issues in their mind." [P3\_3]*

The participants said lack of sleep may prevent listening to the class. First year student P1\_9 said:

*"I am in sleep mode in the classroom." [P1\_9]*

The participants stated that, in the case of their lack of interest in the class, the disturbance created by peers who disregard the class may also lead others to get distracted from the class. The first, second, third and fourth year students P1\_42 and P2\_22 stated the following:

*"If the classroom is uninterested in the class, everyone gets distracted, fails to concentrate and tries different options." [P1\_42]*

*"As the interest in, desire for and positive attitude towards the class are low, both the course and the instructor move away from us." [P2\_22]*

The participants stated that their peers who do not like the course turn towards different activities. First year students P1\_7 and P1\_31 stated the following:

*"If the students do not like that course, they will be prejudiced against it, and if they do not do what is needed, their minds go elsewhere, and this separates the student from the course entirely." [P1\_7]*

*"If the student says they do not like and cannot manage this course, of course, they will not listen. If not listening to the class, they would deal with mobile devices." [P1\_31]*

Similarly, second year student P2\_6 said:

*"I dislike the course." [P2\_6]*

The participants stated that they could not focus on the class because of distractibility, and therefore, resorted to cyberloafing via mobile devices and the internet. Third year student P3\_7 said:

*"I cannot focus on the class because of distractibility and I turn to different things." [P3\_7]*

The participants stated that they turn to different things in the case that they arrived at the classroom unprepared. First year student P1\_44:

*"I use my mobile device when I come to the class unprepared." [P1\_44]*

The participants stated that they get distracted from the class and start dealing with other things in cases of lack of motivation. First and fourth year students P1\_3 and P4\_51 had noteworthy

statements:

*"After a point, at most 30 minutes, my concentration is disrupted, and I turn to different activities." [P1\_3]*

*"Lack of motivation leads the student to deal with other things." [P4\_51]*

The participants stated that they did not like the course if they did not like the instructor, this way they did not care for the class and they did not participate in it.

Similarly, they stated that they turn towards mobile devices as they cannot get used to the class setting. First year student P1\_23 stated the following:

*"I always feel the need for mobile devices and use them as I have not completely gotten used to the class and the city and sometimes I need to get rid of my loneliness." [P1\_23]*

Table 5 shows the possible solutions for preventing learner-related cyberloafing activities. The participants, in general, stated that they have no opportunities to turn to other activities when they are interested in the class and they are listening to the class.

Table 5  
*Solutions for Learner-Related Reasons for Cyberloafing*

	Class			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
Listening to, being interested in the class	15	17	8	9
Coming to class prepared	16	14	4	6
Turning phones off	6	3	10	2
Keeping away from social media	6	-	2	2
Achieving motivation	4	1	-	5
Liking the course	7	-	1	1
Getting enough sleep	3	4	-	2
Concentrating	2	1	1	1
Adapting to the setting	3	1	1	-
Being in agreement with friends	3	-	-	-

## **Results, Discussion and Recommendations**

The opinions of the prospective teachers on the learner-related and instructor-related reasons for cyberloafing are discussed here.

### **Instructors**

The definition of effective teaching has been investigated in all disciplines and by several researchers in detail (see Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999; Jang, 2008; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). It is known that the lead role in training qualified individuals is the teachers in the education process (Büyükkaragöz & Çivi, 1999). For effective education teachers should improve themselves scientifically and academically, but this is not enough (Açıkgöz, 2003). This is because however much knowledge teachers might have about the subjects they will teach, they cannot be successful in their profession as long as they cannot transfer it to their students (Erden, 1999).

Several studies (Cerrah, Özsevgeç, & Ayas, 2005; Matyar, Denizoglu, & Özcan, 2008; Nazlıçiçek & Akarsu, 2008; Uşak, 2005) concluded that teachers and prospective teachers in different fields have insufficient knowledge required by their profession. Studies conducted at different periods revealed that teachers mainly use one method and they are inadequate in enriching the education process by combining different methods. Emiroğlu (2002) reported that teachers cannot go further than traditional options in selecting and using teaching methods.

The participants in this study stated that instructors taught the course monotonously and boringly, and did not use different teaching methods and techniques. They stated that, because of this, they did not listen to the instructor, but they turned towards different areas (mobile phones, notebook computers and internet) and carried out cyberloafing behaviors. Therefore, it is important to train instructors to be employed in the education system before and during their service properly, not only in terms of the quality of education services (Şişman, 2011) but also because it prevents students from cyberloafing behaviors as they cannot turn towards different things.

Studies reported that teachers are inadequate in body language usage among communication skills (Çalışkan, 2003; Yeşil, 2006). This study also observed parallel results. The participants stated regarding the personal traits of the instructor that they had complaints about; issues related to communication skills, failure to use tone of voice, issues related to class management including not walking around in the classroom and being able to dominate the class. They stated that, because of this, they did not listen to the instructor, but took part in cyberloafing behaviors.

Achieving effective teaching in our schools is dependent on presence of qualified teachers (Seferoğlu, 2004). For effective teaching, teachers' knowledge of the field, pedagogical knowledge, personal traits and class management skills are seen to have a key role. In this context, future studies aiming effective teaching and qualified education should focus on issues of pedagogical knowledge and communication skills of teachers, and issues related to classroom management.

## **Students**

According to the literature, personal issues, disregard for the course, not listening to the instructor and coming to the classroom unprepared are among the most frequently encountered undesired behaviors (Atici, 1999; 2004; Bulucu, 2003; Ding, Li, Li, & Kulm, 2008; Greenlee & Ogletree, 1993; Little, 2005). This study also observed parallel results. Some undesired behaviors are observed due to personal problems and these lead students to turn towards different activities and show cyberloafing behaviors. Studies reported that reasons for such behaviors include health problems of students (Schweitzer, 1996) and family issues (Bilgin, 2000). This study found that the participants were concerned the most with personal problems and among these personal problems, especially health issues and family problems.

Defining variables in future studies and working with different samples may provide important contributions to the literature. Additionally, future studies may focus on the concept of motivation. The relationship between variables that affect motivation and cyberloafing behaviors may be investigated by focusing on the motivation of the instructor and/or the student. For example, the ARCS model developed by Keller and the Hierarchy of Needs by Maslow may be accepted as the theoretical framework and the basic elements that form these models may be analyzed as variables.

The findings obtained from this study include recommendations for teachers. First of all, considering that today's students use technology intensively, teachers should also have sufficient knowledge about technology. By integrating technology in their classes with this knowledge, for example, they may show their students how the internet can be used for educational purposes. The second recommendation is that teachers organize their way of teaching the class to actively involve students. They may use various games, videos and different teaching methods to keep students' motivation high, and therefore, support their learning. This way, tendency of students to turn towards unrelated activities during classes may be reduced.

Consequently, it was seen with this study that there was agreement between the variables in the literature that have already been discussed and that define qualified teachers and the complaints by the prospective teachers that were outlined here. Considering that usage of smartphones, notebook computers, wireless networks and other mobile technologies is increasingly becoming prevalent and the structure of a learner (for example, their internal and external motivation) is constantly changing in connection to this, it is expected that the findings of this study will light the way for future studies.

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Research Article

**Applicability of CLT and Postmethod Pedagogy in Iranian Context of ELT:  
Expert Teachers' Perspectives**

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**Abstract**

After all the methods and approaches of English Language Teaching (ELT) have been through, today in 21<sup>st</sup> century there are two current controversial ways of English language teaching named as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Postmethod pedagogy with the former labeled as being an approach belonging to method era and the latter an outcome of the belief in moving beyond the methods. This paper is concerned with the common mainstream of ELT in Iran and aimed to explore the preferred way of English language teaching in this context. After a careful review of literature regarding the present debate, the study adopted a qualitative research design including observation and semi-structured interviews. The participants of the study were five experienced English language teachers teaching at five well-known language institutes in Iran. The findings of this study help teachers' self-understanding of their teaching styles. Additionally, it helps decision makers and teachers to know the reasons behind choosing specific ways of ELT which work better in this particular context. Moreover, some practical implications are suggested to teacher education programs.

**Keywords:** *English language teaching, communicative language teaching, postmethod pedagogy, experienced language teachers.*

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## İran Bağlamında İngilizce Öğretiminde İletişimsel ve Yöntem-Sonrası Dil Öğretim Yöntemlerinin Uygulanabilirliği: Deneyimli Öğretmenlerin Bakış Açıları

### Öz

İngilizce Öğretimine (İÖ) yönelik tüm yöntemler ve yaklaşımlar ele alındıktan sonra, günümüz 21.YY'da İÖ'ne yönelik İletişimsel Dil Öğretimi (İDÖ) ve Yöntem-Sonrası Durum olmak üzere tartışmalı iki farklı güncel yöntem bulunmaktadır. Bu yöntemlerden ilki yöntem çağına ait olarak ele alınırken ikincisi yöntemlerin ötesine geçen bir inanın çıktısı olarak ele alınmaktadır. Bu çalışma İran'da İÖ'ndeki yaygın ana akımı incelerken, bu bağlamda İÖ'nin en tercih edilen yöntemini keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Güncel tartışmalara ilişkin alanyazın derinlemesine incelendikten sonra araştırma, gözlem ve yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeleri içeren nitel araştırma yöntemi ile desenlenmiştir. Araştırmanın katılımcılarını İran'da tanınmış beş farklı öğretim kurumunda görev yapmakta olan alanında deneyimli beş İngilizce öğretmeni oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın bulguları öğretmenlerin kendi öğretim stillerini anlamalarına yardımcı olacaktır. Ayrıca çalışma, sözü edilen bu özel bağlamda hangi İÖ yönteminin seçileceğine ilişkin nedenleri belirlemede karar vericilere ve öğretmenlere yol gösterecektir. Buna ek olarak çalışmada, öğretmen eğitimi programlarına yönelik bazı pratik uygulamalar önerilmektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** İngiliz dili öğretimi, iletişimsel dil öğretimi, yöntem sonrası dil öğretimi, deneyimli dil öğretmenleri.

## Introduction

The history of English language teaching and learning has been the ground for many methods and approaches while each attempting to suggest the right best method for language teaching. The suggested methods and approaches by researchers are classified by Kumaravadivelu (2006) to three categories. First, there are language-centered methods believing that learners' proficiency in second language happens by gaining mastery over predetermined presequenced linguistic features and structures. The next category named as learner-centered methods assume that learners preoccupation with both notions and functions of language leads to their communicative competence. Finally, there are learning-centered methods which aim to provide opportunities for learners to participate in interaction with the use of tasks (i.e. focus on meaning leads to communicative competence). Communicative language teaching as an offspring of learner-centered methods has gained much popularity around the world due to its emphasis on communicative competence that is the ultimate goal of language learning. The comprehensiveness of this method turned it to be considered as an approach (Richards, 2001) comprising main sets of principles (Bell, 2003) to be adopted in classrooms. However, Kumaravadivelu (1994) believes that methods driven from all aforementioned categories are not purely practiced in the classrooms since they are not outcomes of real classroom experience. He continues, "even syllabus designers and textbook producers do not strictly follow the underlying philosophy of a given method, and more importantly, even teachers who are trained in and claim to follow a particular method do not fully conform to its theoretical principles and classroom procedures" (p. 30). Regarding deficiencies of method restrictions, Kumaravadivelu (1994) proposed postmethod pedagogy to respond to the need for an optimal way of English language teaching. The emergence of postmethod pedagogy while claiming the 'death of method era' and undoubted popularity of CLT as a method have caused a controversial debate among researchers right from the advent of postmethod to the present time. In fact, postmethod advocates believe that their strategies are derived from real classroom experience while CLT has already found its way to language classrooms through the widespread use of imported commercial coursebooks for a long time (Tajeddin, 2005). In the context of Iran in which CLT –as underlying method of commercial textbooks- is utilized as the best implemented offer for

English as Foreign Language (EFL) classes, postmethod pedagogy is only a familiar concept to graduate Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) students who have academically studied its parameters and strategies. However, being acquainted with either does not guarantee its complete implementation and application in real classroom practice. Regarding these two current controversial ways of English language teaching -CLT and Postmethod pedagogy, this study aims to explore expert teachers' knowledge and awareness of CLT and postmethod pedagogy underlying their real practice as well as understanding the reasons behind choosing the specific way of teaching language.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Due to limitations of Grammar Translation and Audiolingual methods in providing a real-life interactive social ground for language teaching and learning, TESOL professionals suggested CLT as a solution to the problem. To carry out CLT program, classrooms need to have a number of features (Brown, 2000; Brown, 2001; Chastain, 1988; Hymes, 1972; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Richards & Rodgers, 2001) that are listed below.

1. Communication is the mean to achieve the goal of communicative competence.
2. CLT classes emphasize on language use rather than knowledge about language. Therefore, there's much emphasis on fluency rather than accuracy.
3. Appropriateness of language in terms of using speech acts is prioritized over structural precision. Thus, CLT classes teach forms and rules of grammar implicitly and learners discover the rules.
4. Error correction needs to be implicit and minimal, and teachers have to be tolerant to errors as they believe learners are in the process of building their communicative competence.
5. CLT classes use authentic material and CLT teachers welcome learners' spontaneous reaction and response to language lessons. With this regard, meaning is negotiated and constructed among students and between students and teachers.
6. CLT classes flourish learners' autonomy as teachers encourage learners to interact as much as possible while admitting all risks it takes. Thus, learners are active participants

and not merely passive recipients. CLT classes are quite learner-centered. The role of the learner is defined as a negotiator.

7. Group work is highly suggested due to its significant role to prepare ground for communication.
8. Teachers act as facilitators of communication and monitor of learning process who direct learners to achieve communicative competence. They assure the course of communication and interaction between all the students in the classroom with the use of a range of activities and texts. Also, the teachers are considered not only as organizers of resources but as another member of learning group.
9. CLT classes comprise suggesting main sets of principles without prescribed methodology or techniques.
10. CLT classes implement alternative assessment preferably such as self-assessment.
11. CLT teachers grow thinking skills in learners as CLT believes that use of language should develop critical and creative thinking.
12. CLT classes integrate all skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening because in reality language is not used in discrete items.
13. In CLT classes, students diversity are respected and different ways of learning are offered through learning strategies.

It should be noted that since implementation of CLT from 1990s on, its principles have continued to advance and change due to new understandings gained from its application in practice. Concepts such as language learning strategies, critical thinking and alternative assessment have been added to CLT recently (Richards, 2006) in order to meet learners' needs in communicative approach to language teaching and helping to development of strong version of CLT.

Nevertheless, the unquestioned era of methods led researchers and professionals look forward to find the best methods or to question the concept of method itself. Richards (1990) believes that methods have serious limitations. The major problem is that methods impose teacher and learners' roles, class activities and processes on both teachers and learners as he states methods are "predetermined, packaged deal for teachers that incorporate a static view of teaching" (p.



37). However, the situation is different in the real classroom context as teachers are the ones who make differences in the classroom and not the methods and the methods used in the class result from teacher-student interaction. In this way, there is a shift from prescribed methods to beyond methods. Kumaravadivelu (1994) implied the end of method era by proposing the postmethod condition which aimed to construct theories derived from real classroom practice rather than imitating theories recommended by theorists and applied linguists. The desirable condition of postmethod is 'location-specific' pedagogy and postmethod attempts to find an alternative to method and not an alternative method (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Kumaravadivelu (1994) constructed a pedagogic framework that empowers the teachers with "knowledge, skill, attitude, and autonomy". The framework constitutes ten macrostrategies offered in terms of guidelines and general plan derived from real practice in the classrooms. The macrostrategies, he asserts, are not prescribed, predetermined methods, but a set of guidelines that could be adopted to any teaching situation in a particular context. The first macrostrategy is *maximizing learning opportunities* described as a social activity asserting that teachers need to create learning opportunities and use the learning opportunities created by learners. In this way, teachers and learners are managers of learning all together cooperatively.

The next strategy is *facilitating negotiated interaction* meaning that in the process of interaction "learner should be actively involved in clarification, confirmation, comprehension checks, requests, repairing, reacting, and turn taking" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Also, the teacher needs to give learners the freedom and encouragement to talk, react and respond. *Minimizing perceptual mismatches*, as the next strategy, emphasizes on narrowing down the distance between teacher intentions and learners interpretation. There are ten sources of mismatch between teacher intention and learners interpretation including cognitive, communicative, linguistic, pedagogic, strategic, cultural, evaluative, procedural, instructional, and attitudinal sources. Then, there is *activating intuitive heuristics* meaning that learners need to be at exposure of great amount of fruitful data while stimulating their problem-solving insights that helps them to understand new input implicitly.

The next macro-strategy is *fostering language awareness* which suggests a combination of consciousness raising and input enhancement to promote understanding in learners rather than memorization. Then, there is *contextualizing linguistic input* through which learners benefit from integration of syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse; they learn language as a whole not discrete elements in isolation. Derived from previous strategy, *integrating language skills*, as the next strategy stresses that language needs to be learned holistically through which both language ability and knowledge are fostered. Then, *promoting learner autonomy* requires students to learn to self-direct their own learning through the use of a range of strategies and by taking the responsibility for their learning.

The next strategy is *raising cultural consciousness* meaning that learners need to get the ability to interpret culturally relevant behavior. Learners' culture is as important and teacher's culture and learners' sociocultural awareness makes their learning process more manageable.

The final macro-strategy is *ensuring social relevance* highlighting the importance of learners' social and political background. Therefore, what learners are taught needs to be appropriate and corresponding to their own society since they use the knowledge in that context. At the end Kumaravadivelu (1994) states that the strategic framework should be treated "not as a fixed package of ready-made solutions but rather as an interim plan to be continually modified, expanded, and enriched by classroom teachers based on ongoing feedback".

This framework is shaped by three operating parameters named as particularity, practicality, and possibility. Pedagogy of particularity leads to "context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge" emerged from teachers' practice and raises critical awareness of local experiences; therefore, it is antithetical to the notion that there can be one set of pedagogic aims and objectives realizable through one set of pedagogic principles and procedures" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 538). Pedagogy of practicality encourages teachers to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize and it highlights 'teacher-generated theory of practice'. Pedagogy of possibility is concerned with learners and teachers identity, their sociopolitical awareness and the way individuals struggle to protect their own and collective identity. Therefore, language teachers cannot separate learners' linguistic needs from their social needs. These three parameters of the

framework of postmethod pedagogy along with the aforementioned ten macrostrategies characterize primary efforts to surpass the limitations of the concept of method.

### **The debate**

Language teachers always deal with finding right method that works best in the particular context of their classroom. Believing that teaching methods help teaching quality, language teachers have always hoped for development of effective methods. Methods provide teachers with a set of principles and strategies about the roles and responsibilities of teachers and learners in the classroom, the course material, and the way material is taught (Richards, 1990). On the other hand, postmethod opened a new different window to English language teaching with its rejection of prescribed methods. It hoped for teacher and learner autonomy through providing guidelines with the use of context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). However, another instance is not taking method and postmethod as different concepts. In other words, it is the way we define methods that leads us toward its acceptance or rejection. Although postmethod was an attempt toward a search for a new method -which postmethod advocates call alternative to method, it is again a method defined in sets of principles (Bell, 2003). While comparing postmethod principles to those of Communicative Language Teaching, we come to know that postmethod macrostrategies including negotiation, interaction, integrated language skills, learner autonomy, etc. resemble highly to CLT principles. Therefore, postmethod does not put an end to method rather it raises understanding of limitations of method and tries to restrict those limitations (Bell, 2003). Akbari (2008) objects the accordance of CLT and postmethod pedagogy as he states a close look at “CLT reveals that when the term *context* is used, it is at the microlevel of who is talking to whom, where, and about what, but context in postmethod terminology includes aspects of the real sociopolitical lives of the people involved in the learning process” (p. 644); hence, CLT lacks critical pedagogy and mostly deals with philosophical and ideological aspects rather than practical aspects. In this regard, postmethod pedagogy is suffering from lack of practicality in real classroom context due to several reasons (Akbari, 2008).

In the present ELT context, the system is quite top-down and administrative that does not allow teachers' autonomy –posed by postmethod- to grow and develop. In addition, even if the system does provide the opportunity, teachers may not have the time, resources and willingness to implement postmethod pedagogy. On the other hand, requirements for postmethod pedagogy need daring teachers to implement such pedagogy that, as a result, could cost their isolation from their discourse community.

On the other hand, postmethod pedagogy has been criticized in several ways by Tajeddin (2005). Postmethod is the outcome of post modernism just as other researchers believe so (Akbari, 2008; Bell, 2003) being a mixture of modernity and tradition. Post modernism itself is open to much criticism due to its inefficacy; therefore, admitting its outcome in education i.e. postmethod pedagogy is of problem. Furthermore, postmethod advocates insist on ten macrostrategies being bottom-up, however, Tajeddin says, those are quite top-down since they have not been derived from real practice of the classrooms. The psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and linguistic foundations of postmethod condition underlie the very concept of method. Postmethod techniques, procedures and guidelines, he asserts, fall within the category of method itself. Postmethod in many aspects is similar to Communicative Language Teaching as it is clear in the macrostrategies from which five of them are tools to communicative classroom. Therefore, methods are alive not only in practice, but also in theory as CLT principles are found in postmethod strategies. Besides, while method has found its way to practicality –which is quite clear in regular coursebook development- postmethod has not been implemented in practical terms such as syllabus design, material development, and language testing, and so on. The “dynamic, pluralistic, democratic era” of method enriched ELT with many sources and resources, however, postmethod pedagogy still heavily relies on” a single set, rather than competing sets, of principles” (Tajeddin, 2005). In this way, macrostrategies of postmethod pedagogy are again fixed and prescribed since they have not changed through time.

All in all, the debate on similarities of CLT and postmethod pedagogy revealed both efficacy of limitations of CLT leading to the claim that postmethod is the effective version of CLT in the future (Savignon, 2007). CLT is an approach that could not be separated from individual

identity and social behavior. The services CLT provided to ELT could not be questioned as its footprints are found in postmethod pedagogy, as well. However, ahead of communicative language teaching in the postmethod era, there are empowered teachers –being both practitioners and theorists- who could meet the language needs of future learners. To put it all together, savignon (2007) asserts, “a holistic, interactive, and learner-oriented CLT conception of language use and language learning can be implemented in classroom teaching practices” (p. 218) if only applied linguists, practitioners, and policy makers work together to make a collaborative critique on the present situation of CLT and overcome its limitations in postmethod era.

CLT has been the interest of the most commercial coursebooks being used worldwide for the aim of English language teaching and also English language teachers are encouraged to adopt CLT in the classrooms. Iranian context of English Language Teaching (ELT) and Iranian English language teachers are no exception of this issue. The target of CLT is facilitating communicative competence development through the use of communication and interaction among students and between students and the teacher in the classroom. However, regardless of the names and definitions, every way of language teaching – including methods, approaches and postmethod- defines the ideal situation and outcome of utilizing it in terms of the competencies it facilitates learners with. The practicality of every way of language teaching is determined by teachers as the real practitioners of the classrooms. Teachers decide on the applicability and efficacy of language teaching principles and strategies. The fact that Iranian language teachers and administrators welcome CLT does not prove its implementation in the real classroom context as there are many factors involved in calling the decision for using specific way of teaching including teachers' beliefs, cognition, prior experience, context, and teacher education programs (Borg, 2003). The present study aims to explore Iranian English language teachers' preferences in using specific ways of language teaching –with regard to the a la mode CLT and postmethod pedagogy, factors involved in choosing that specific way and their reasons behind the making the very decisions.

## **Studies in Iranian context**

Teacher education programs –either held at universities under the title of TEFL or at private language institutions under the title of Teacher Training Courses- in Iran are mostly oriented on theoretical and decontextualized content. The main focus of such programs is transmission of theoretical knowledge through lectures. Student teachers are not active participants in the process of learning how to teach English language as they focus on taking notes and memorizing what teacher educators present regarding the theoretical knowledge (Naseri Karimvand, Hessamy, and Hemmati, 2014). Teacher education programs in Iran are in serious need of holding practical teaching courses in order to provide the student teachers the opportunity to put their constructed theories into practice and reinforce the ability to do so.

Considering the statues of teacher education programs in the Iranian EFL context, there are a number of recent studies that have investigated the applicability and realization of postmethod pedagogy as an alternative to methods. Using a qualitative research design and interviews, Safari and Rashidi (2015) studied the application of post method pedagogy in Iranian EFL context. They came to the conclusion that while postmethod pedagogy has provided a rich theoretical understanding, it has not been successful in finding its way to practice. The parameters of particularity and practicality may have the chance to be realized in EFL teaching with great financial investment, instruction, and provision of resources, but the parameter of possibility with its sociopolitical factors and critical thinking demands is nearly impossible to be implemented. In the same vein, Kaimvand, Hessamy, and Hemmati (2016) conducted a mixed method study to uncover Iranian EFL teachers' perception on the applicability of postmethod and the facilitative and deterrent factors in implementing it. The results indicated that parameters of particularity and practicality were considered as moderately and greatly important by teachers while parameter of possibility was considered as rarely possible or impossible in EFL teaching. Furthermore, the results of the qualitative section indicated that language institutions and supervisors have a facilitative role in encouraging teachers to use postmethod pedagogy while time constraints and lack of interest on the part of students challenge the application of postmethod. Similarly, Mardani and Moradian (2016) investigated EFL teachers' attitudes towards application of postmethod pedagogy and the difficulties and

challenges they encounter. The data analysis of this mixed method research indicated that there is a gap between teachers' understanding of postmethod and its implementation arisen from factors including teaching experience, learners' disinterest, language institutions' constraints, and current interests and schooling that influence construction of theoretical knowledge and practical teaching.

Generally, studies conducted in Iranian EFL context deal with the application and realization of postmethod pedagogy in the context of classroom. The difficulties, barriers, and challenges that EFL teachers encounter are the interest of the studies conducted. However, the already fixed role of CLT in EFL classrooms has been merely ignored. It was mentioned earlier in the debate section that there are similarities between strong version of CLT and postmethod pedagogy. While CLT is already being implemented in language institutions, what postmethod pedagogy has added to the classroom procedure? What strategies of either teaching ways have found their way into classrooms? Do Iranian language teachers completely conform to either of the ways of language teaching? Are there other factors involved? These are the questions aimed to be answered throughout this study.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants of this qualitative study were five in-service teachers who are Ph.D. candidates in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). This study used purposeful sampling which assists in providing relevant and enough information about the issue the researchers aim to explore. Two of the participants had 15 years of teaching experience, the other two 13 years, and the last participant had 14 years of experience in teaching English language. All of them have been teaching English at well-known schools and language institutes of Tehran - Capital of Iran. Obviously, they have had side activities such as being professional translators of specific programs or have held compact business English courses. The following table demonstrates demographic information of the participants of the study.

Table 1.  
*Participants' Demographic Information*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Teaching experience</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Field of study</b>
<b>A</b>	Female	15 years	Ph.D. candidate	TEFL
<b>B</b>	Female	13 years	Ph.D. candidate	TEFL
<b>C</b>	Male	14 years	Ph.D. candidate	TEFL
<b>D</b>	Male	15 years	Ph.D. candidate	TEFL
<b>E</b>	Female	13 years	Ph.D. candidate	TEFL

In order to collect in-depth and reflective perceptions, this study required participation of mindful teachers who are knowledgeable about theories and experienced in practice of English language teaching. As Ph.D. candidates, the participants had well-developed awareness on and knowledge about theories and issues of English language teaching. Furthermore, they had much experience of practicing English language teaching at language institutes and schools- i.e. 13-15 years.

### **Research Design**

In order to obtain rich and in-depth data, this study adopted a qualitative research design that could deal with complexities of participants' professional teaching experiences. The experiences of participants were collected through the means of semi-structured interviews and direct observation of the ongoing procedure of their classrooms. Semi-structured interview with an open-to-talk environment helps ideas to emerge and flourish. It also maintains the direction of interview not to be diverted from the main topic of interest. The companions of this study participated in semi-structured interviews after we observed their classes, and their ways of English language teaching. The interviews were precisely transcribed later. The process of data analysis began with coding procedure. This content analysis process led to initial development of categories and codes applied to data later. The codes were then sorted and grouped to generate major themes while maintaining the interrelationships of participants' experiences and interpretations.



## **Procedure and Data Analysis**

The procedure of this study began with one by one observation of participants' classroom procedures. One session –nearly one and a half hours- of precise observation of each participants' classroom helped us in reflecting on companion teachers' preferable way of teaching. Totally, seven hours of direct observation were accomplished. During the observation sessions, we wrote memos and journals for better reflection, exploration, and further analysis of the observed ways of teaching. Observations were used as a tool ensuring us of the coordination of participants' words and acts. After the observation, we conducted individual face to face semi-structured interviews with teachers and audio-recorded the conversation. The interview questions were derived from principles of CLT and macrostrategies of postmethod pedagogy. The careful review of literature done before designing interview questions were of great value to shape and direct the questions. There were 10 questions some of which found probing questions during the course of interview. We gave the interview prompts to the participants in advance so that they could retrieve their knowledge about CLT and postmethod pedagogy and think about the probable answers to specific method-related questions. The interviews were conducted in Farsi –participants' native language, in order to get deep understanding of the situation and maintain participants' convenience. The interviews were precisely transcribed later.

The present study utilized direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and memos to collect the most relevant data and to ensure the notion of triangulation leading to trustworthiness of the study. Additionally, careful review of literature while gaining a precise understanding of the controversies of the issue at hand as well as observing the present situation of English language teaching in our local context provided a rich background to this study. We began data analysis with reading, re-reading, and highlighting the interview transcriptions and memos. Through the process of open coding, we found related meaningful data in interview transcriptions, notes and memos and highlighted them with colorful markers. Then, through axial coding, we tried to group the highlighted parts together and find the points of similarity. After we found relationships among the determined groups through selective data coding, themes were emerged out of data. This process is named selective coding and looks for

connection among groups (Dornyei, 2007). The relationships of themes and codes are explained later in this paper.

## **Findings and Discussion**

In the following parts, we will report on the questions and the salient responses through the categorization of the themes emerged from the data. It should be noted that the focus of the present study was not a confirmation to the presence of a specific kind of way of teaching; however, it aimed to explore that how experienced educated teachers with awareness and knowledge of principles of CLT and guidelines of postmethod pedagogy carry out the course of their classrooms.

### **Eclecticism is Present in Theory; Principled Pragmatism Happens in Practice**

The theories developed by theorists with a top down approach in prescription of methods to be implemented in the classroom cause a big gap between theory of theorists and practice of practitioners. In this way, teachers adopt an eclectic approach toward language teaching that is a kind of resistance and survivance toward maintaining faithful to theories (Akbari, 2007). However, participants of this study claim that their way of teaching is arisen from their understanding of the way teaching leads to learning achievement. Experiences including their experiences as teachers and learners, discussions with colleagues and in some parts academic knowledge gained at universities shape the very understanding. Such approach derived from direct activity of teaching is called “principled pragmatism” (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Participant A puts it this way:

*“What we do in the class is not eclecticism. Eclecticism requires being first knowledgeable about the methods and then selecting the appropriate-to-context ones. In my case, my teaching experiences tell me what way works in the class and what does not.”*

Participant teacher D with 15 years of teaching experience asserts the same issue this way:

*“In my opinion, eclecticism means having a theoretical basis behind whatever you select from methods in the classroom. But what I do is adopting a combination of my operating experiences that could be applied to most of my classes.”*

The participants of the present study believe that eclecticism requires them to have a theoretical justification behind every principle applied in the classroom. The situation is quite different for novice teachers with little professional knowledge as they randomly select techniques from different methods and use them in “unsystematic, unprincipled, and uncritical” way (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). The evidences show that whether teachers have theoretical principles behind eclecticism or they randomly combine techniques of various methods, both situations lead to restrictions in applying teachers' own teaching experience. In the following theme we discuss whether the academic knowledge gained in teacher education programs help teachers' efficiency or not.

### **Academic Studies Improve Teachers' Foundation of Theories**

Teacher education programs help student teachers to gain much knowledge about theories of language, language learning, and language teaching. The assumption is that the teacher educators transfer the knowledge and student teachers are on their own to apply the theories into practice as Day (1993) says, “students are said to be educated when they have been exposed to the scientific knowledge which the experts believe are the fundamental elements of a given profession” (p. 6). The scientific knowledge student teachers acquire during teacher education program lacks practical aspects. Language teachers need to be equipped with both knowledge of subject matter –i.e. language, and knowledge of teaching it. Participant C states the difference clearly this way:

*“The way language teachers are treated is just like the following situation: a graduate student of Physics starts teaching Physics to students at schools. Does this graduate student in this science know anything about rules and techniques of teaching a subject matter?”*

The participant teachers asserted that what they deal with in academic education at universities is abstraction and there are not enough instances to help them in practicing the knowledge. They believe teaching experiences gained before passing academic degrees help them more in practice. Participant B says her opinion as the following:

*“I should say that we, as educated language teachers, are dealing with two things: teaching language and teaching its theories of teaching and learning. Studying TEFL could end up us with being an instructor educating student teachers at universities. The truth is that what we learn in teacher preparation programs help us with the latter and it is not very helpful in becoming a language teacher.”*

However, participant teacher E with 13 years of experience believes that academic knowledge has helped her in different ways. She owes the knowledge about alternative assessments and ways of error correction to teacher education program. She asserts that postmethod assisted her to raise autonomy in her students and to have a good rapport with the students. Participant teacher B had more or less the same idea. She had clearly witnessed the differences between a teacher with academic knowledge record (such as M.A. or Ph.D. in TEFL) and a language teacher (who could have been studying other fields of study and were there busy with teaching only because of being fluent in English language). Teachers with academic knowledge are able to justify and rationalize the strategies, styles and techniques they offer to students and the learners find such teachers knowledgeable enough and trust them more.

### **CLT and Postmethod Pedagogy Face Barriers in our Context of ELT**

As we discussed earlier, some researchers believe that CLT and postmethod have many things in common (Bell, 2003; Savignon, 2007; Tajeddin, 2005). When the participant teachers of the study were asked the question of “To what extents is your way of teaching similar to postmethod pedagogy or CLT?”, the responses indicated the same fact as they believed both trends have things in common. For instance, the importance given to learner needs, communication, interaction, learners’ creativity, learner autonomy, waiting for learners to discover rules, teaching grammar implicitly, etc. are more or less the same in both trends. However, there are some issues with CLT, as they believe, it is designed for the ELT programs in countries which have ELT as second language (ESL) and not a foreign language (EFL). In the EFL context, language learners do not have access to target context. The emphasis on communication and interaction in CLT is only achieved in limited hours of English classes during the week. Moreover, the communication approach does not help young learners with low language proficiency. Additionally, the emphasis of CLT on using authentic material has been remained in a vague instance in terms of what authentic material is and who is in charge of developing such material. There are many situations in which the cultural issues stated in imported coursebooks designed by English language speakers abandon learners from talking or if the conversation runs, it is due to learners’ memorization ability and not a sense of closeness to the very context. In such cases, the interaction is initiated when the autonomous teacher directs the topic of discussion to the related local issues so that learners feel comfortable to keep the interaction going on.

The CLT does not lay much local flavor. The observation of participants of the study clearly indicated that when they use topics of learners’ interest, learners keep the hot discussion going on as if they are talking their native language or there are times that they give opinions in Farsi in order to impress others with their ideas. This is where ideas become more important than the language so negotiation and interaction are facilitated. To reach this stance, participant teachers devote one or two sessions of the term in getting to know the learners, their interests, favorites, and needs. Then, the classes are carried out according to the particular expectations of the learners.

On the other hand, postmethod teachers need to be very skilled and expert to implement the requirement of postmethod pedagogy (Naseri Karimvand, Hessamy, & Hemmati, 2014) as participant A mentioned:

*“Postmethod pedagogy requires very skillful teachers as to be jack of all things. Postmethod teachers do not act within restrictions of administrations, syllabus designers, and decision makers. But we are working within all these constraints.”*

The aforementioned restrictions influence the parameters of postmethod pedagogy directly. For instance, pedagogy of particularity is not practical to be considered with the existing limitations that teachers face in the course of their career. It seems really idealistic that a teacher could take into account every particular learner with particular needs in a particular context with the presence of much workload, time constraints and a full imposed syllabus to be covered. Participant teacher C believes that:

*“In our language teaching system, especially in the context of private language institutes, teachers are actors to the system and are not in charge of making decisions.”*

In the same vein, pedagogy of possibility is under question (Naseri Karimvand, Hessamy, & Hemmati, 2014, Safari & Rashidi, 2015).). The imposed syllabus and program by administrations do not open much space for teachers to develop critical thinking in students. Neither teachers themselves have been raised as critical thinkers as they were subjected to the same system. Our students are trained to be followers and not critical thinkers. Of course, participant teachers state reasons other than the mentioned one as participant A said:

*“Teachers prefer to maintain the authority in the class and do not like to be questioned by students. There is an unwritten rule for them that the stricter you hold the class, the more principled class goes on.”*

Teachers are the heart of postmethod pedagogy. They need to be autonomous, creative, and reflective (Akbari, 2007; Kumaravadivelu, 2008). Restrictions of language institutes and schools in covering the whole assigned designed syllabus within time constraints, too much workload, limited time of preparation for classes, low payments, learners' diversity as well as inefficiencies teacher training courses (TTCs) and teacher education programs tie teachers' hands in the post method pedagogy.

### **Teacher Education Programs and Teacher Training Courses Have a Vital Role**

Globalization has brought people around the world closer to each other and the medium of communication among diverse people and cultures is English language due to many reasons such as Western culture hegemony and academic imperialism (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Loomba, 2005; Pennycook, 1998). Therefore, English language teaching has turned to be a professional career today with constant developments. In this regard, ELT as a “field of

educational specialization... requires a specialized knowledge base obtained through both academic study and practical experience, and it is a field of work where membership is based on entry requirements and standards” (Richards, 2008, p. 160). Teacher education programs and teacher training courses have been responsible for preparing student teachers for language teaching. In our context, we are dealing with two situations. A) Teacher education programs held at universities such as TEFL and, B) Teacher training courses held by private language institutes. The participant teachers asserted that there are problems with both.

First of all, teacher education programs at universities work within transmission model framework (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). It means teacher educators deliver the theories of language, language learning and language teaching that have been put together by researchers in a package. Such model does not prepare teachers with needed practical classroom skills and techniques. Participant teacher C said that:

*“The models we have in our teacher education are imported models. They are bounded with theories and are not matched with our culture. We need to design localized models that tell teachers the way they should treat Iranian learners: adults or teenagers, and male or females.”*

There is a need to add local flavor to teacher education programs and moving beyond devotion of the whole courses to theories stated in imported academic books and giving teachers a voice to criticize and challenge the current situation of ELT and come up with new ideas and innovations that work best in our local context. Then, those personal theories could be challenged and reformed until it is ready to be implemented in the class of a reflective teacher (Akbari, 2007). Besides, practical courses are really missing in teacher education programs as participant E stated:

*“During the whole course of our graduate program (M.A. and Ph.D.), we did not have any courses for practical teaching or observing other classrooms and reflecting on them.”*

It seems that the apprentice-expert model (Day, 1993) that once had been so popular in the past, needs to be implemented in teacher education programs extensively due to student teachers’ needs and expectations. Apprenticeships and being assistant to expert teachers help a great deal to teachers in shaping their personality as teachers.

Second, the problems with teacher training courses held by language institutes have caused many problems for teachers with academic knowledge. Again such courses are devoted to language learning and teaching theories but in a much more concise form like 10 to 15 sessions. The participant teachers assured that such short programs could not deal with complexities of language teaching in any way. Usually, private language institutes ask their graduate learners to participate in the teacher training courses and start teaching English language in the very institute. The problems arisen here are related to such teachers’ lack of pedagogic knowledge like classroom management skills, content pedagogic knowledge –i.e. the field specific

knowledge of how to represent the knowledge of language to students so that their understanding is assured, and supporting knowledge such as knowledge of other fields helping language teaching like psychology, research method, etc. (Day, 1993; Richards, 2008). However, the way TTC courses are carried out mislead student teachers to think that having general knowledge of English is enough for language teachers and pedagogic and pedagogic content knowledge are not issues of concern.

### **Implications and conclusion**

The present study aimed to explore the way expert teachers with specialized knowledge of principles of CLT and guidelines of postmethod pedagogy -as two trendy ways of language teaching, carry out the course of their classrooms. The data analysis indicated that teachers do not conform to a single way of teaching and that the factors involved in choosing an appropriate way of teaching includes teachers' own prior and present experience, intuition, beliefs, cognition, discussions with colleagues, and learners' reactions and reflections. However, the academic knowledge could act only as an approval to the already implemented practice, but it is weak in making changes to their present practice; it may only add ideas to their own prior experience and knowledge. Teachers prefer to have "principled pragmatism" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994) rather than eclecticism. English language teachers face practical, cultural, and contextual constraints and barriers in applying either CLT or postmethod pedagogy.

Teacher education programs are in charge of helping teachers to deal with barriers and to device them with much freedom, autonomy and authority to question the present ELT program. In this way, teachers come up with new ideas and personal theories arisen from their own practice and experience because teachers prefer to use the methods and ways of teaching that help them with options while dealing with specific teaching contexts (Bell, 2007). As the evidences of data indicate, there is a need for conducting a comprehensive localized analysis of teachers' beliefs and cognition that could operate as a framework for Iranian English language teachers. Metaphorically, in the past, building a house could have been done simply by masons, but today's world developments require civil engineers and architects to take the responsibility of building apartments. Language teaching is no exception to that instance. While English language teaching is developing as a profession, we need to go forward and progress with that. Teachers with general English and content knowledge could be called as car drivers and teachers with academic and pedagogic knowledge of TEFL are like car mechanics. Today's condition of ELT requires language teachers to be both car drivers and mechanics. The results of this study offer implications to both teachers and teacher educators.

- a. English language teachers need to explore and revisit their beliefs, cognitions, and assumptions about language teaching and learning with the help of academic knowledge of TEFL, discussions with colleagues, students' reflection and their own reflection on their teaching. At the same time they need to keep their content knowledge updated.

- b. Local flavor cannot be eliminated from ELT programs in indigenous culture. For instance, participants of this study could not comment on CLT because its universal principles do not work in our local context. On the other hand, when it came to postmethod which has local color, the participants had too much to say.
- c. Teacher training courses and teacher education programs need to add courses related to practical teaching and observation of professional teachers' classroom. For instance, teacher educators could ask student teachers to observe 10 sessions of various teachers' classes, report on the way classes were conducted and manipulated and provide their own reflection of how and why the observations have shaped or reshaped their beliefs, cognitions, and experiences.
- d. Teacher education programs should really fill up the missing part of apprenticeships. This helps teachers to find and fix the initial ways of teaching rather than trying a trial and error approach toward teaching in real classroom context to see what works and what does not. Being teacher assistants help student teachers a lot in pedagogic knowledge such as classroom management techniques and strategies.



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