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**From the Editor**

Dear IJCER Readers,

Welcome to Volume 5, Issue 2 of IJCER

There are 6 articles in December 2018 issue. The first article is written by Mustafa POLAT. The title of the article is A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN ERRORS OF TURKISH, AZERBAIJANI AND SYRIAN STUDENTS IN ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS. This study compares the writing errors of Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian university students studying in English preparatory classes in the context of grammatical, lexical and spelling errors. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP LABORATORY: THE PROJECT'S SUCCESS FACTORS is the title of the second article by R.H. Bambang B. NUGROHO. This study analyzed success factors of transformational projects managed by Indonesian public leadership education and training participants, paying attention to the process of educating and training of prospective public project managers. The third article is entitled THE INCLUSION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM DESIGN by Shukran Abdul RAHMAN and Azlin ALWI. This study assesses the measures taken by universities in selected South East Asian countries when developing the competencies of students from other countries. The article by Cihat ATAR entitled SHOULD WE TEACH PRONUNCIATION EXPLICITLY IN L2/EFL CLASSROOMS? is the fourth article of this issue. This review article discusses whether explicit teaching of English pronunciation in second language and English as a foreign language classrooms is helpful for learners or not. The fifth article is BECOMING SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT-ORIENTED PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING by Azlin ALWI and Ruhaya Hussin. This article examines Malaysian students' perception of project-oriented problem-based learning and seeks whether students' perception improves after the implementation of this approach. The last article of the issue is entitled AN EVALUATION OF THE TRANSITION FROM TEACHING TO THE ACADEMIA by Abdullah BALIKÇI, Ramazan CANSOY and Hanifi PARLAR. This phenomenological article examines academics' experiences regarding the transition from teaching at MoNE schools to the academia.

Hope to meet you in the next issue of IJCER.

Regards,

Dr. Cahit ERDEM  
Editor



## International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research (IJCER)

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### **A Comparative Analysis of Written Errors of Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian Students in English Writing Skills**

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## A Comparative Analysis of Written Errors of Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian Students in English Writing Skills

Mustafa POLAT\*

Karabük University

### Abstract

This study aims to do a comparative analysis of the writing errors of Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian university students studying in English preparatory classes in the context of grammatical, lexical and spelling errors. The data of this qualitative case study were obtained from the 15 English preparatory class students from Turkey (N=5), Syria (N=5) and Azerbaijan (N=5). They were studying at A2 (pre-intermediate) level classes at the school of foreign languages of a state university in the northwest of Turkey. In order to get the information from the writing errors made by the students, 60 pieces of their writing portfolio papers were collected through the document analysis technique. The research data were analyzed through the content analysis. The results revealed that Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian students have some differences in terms of both the number and the types of writing errors. On the other hand, Turkish and Azerbaijani students also have a great number of similarities, but they differ from Syrian students in almost all types of errors. In the light of the results of the study, it has been concluded that most of the errors resulted from the mother tongue and culture-related negative transfers are frequently encountered ones in the teaching process of writing skills.

**Key words:** Foreign language education, Writing skill, Errors in writing skills, Comparative error analysis, Interlingual errors

### Introduction

In the literature, it is frequently stated that foreign language teaching and learning process is based on four language skills which can be grouped as receptive skills that are listening and reading and productive skills that are writing and speaking skills (Bozorgian, 2012; Harmer, 2015; Hubackova & Golkova, 2014; Tosuncuoğlu, 2018). On the other hand, writing skill is considered as one of the most challenging and complex and skill to master for students (Graham, Harris & Mason, 2005; Tilemma, 2012; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). Research on linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology and social linguistics related to writing skills has shown that it is a very faulty approach to address this skill independently from the others because writing skill has a structure that is interrelated with the other language skills, the culture of the target language and the context presented (Hyland 2002; Kern 2000).

Although it has been seen as a practice area for the development of sub-skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and even reading skills in language teaching for many years; writing is an area where there is a dynamic interaction between the text, author and reader elements and in this respect it can be said that social and contextual factors have impacts over this language skill, so it is considered as a personalized productive skill area of communication and expression in a dynamic, creative and contextual way in current language teaching approaches.

It is so important to develop and implement writing activities which are motivating (Park & Brenna, 2015); requiring individuals to use different information and skills (Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016; Mokhamar, 2016). In addition, they should be presented within a context in order to gain effective writing skills which are based on a purpose and where students can reflect their own ideas and opinions freely instead of the activities which are controlled or limited and focused on mechanical forms rather than production.

Making errors is accepted as one of the most natural mark of the language development in language learning process (Phuket & Othman, 2015; Wu & Garzha, 2014) because they are the indicators of language learners'

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knowledge (Brown, 2000) and progress (James, 1998) and they can be considered as a guiding reference for teachers (Sermsook, Liamnimitr & Pochakorn, 2017). Moreover, language learners' errors, especially the ones that they made in developing writing skills, are defined as the limelight for teachers, linguists and curriculum designers (Darus & Ching, 2009)

Accordingly, it can be stated that identifying the errors that students have made in the process of developing their writing skills and presenting them as feedback in terms of the frequency and types of their errors does not only play a crucial role in terms of learning process of students (Jabeen, Kazemian & Mustafai, 2015) but also in the process of examining or developing curriculum at both macro-level instructional designs for English preparatory programs and micro-level designs to develop their writing skills for all the stakeholders (Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Erdoğan, 2005; Khansir, 2012). To sum up, understanding the language learners' problems in writing skills is very critical in order to develop the quality of foreign language writing (Hammad, 2012).

A lot of studies have been conducted to find out the types and the causes of writing problems on learners' writing papers. While some of them tried to specify and thematize the types of errors in foreign language learners' various types of writings (Alhaysony, 2012; Jenwitheesuk, 2009; Liu, 2013; Phuket & Othman, 2015; Sermsook, Liamnimitr & Pochakorn, 2017; Taşçı & Aksu Ataç, 2018) others tried to explore the sources of their errors in writing (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012; Hinnon, 2014; Li, Ren and Zhao, 2016; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013; Zheng & Park, 2013). However, no comparative writing error analysis which focuses on the differences between the errors of students from different countries or cultures was found in the comprehensive literature view.

According to the literature, it is considered that writing errors are derived from two main sources which are interlingual and intralingual (Brown, 2014; Phuket and Othman, 2015). Moreover, the interlingual error is stated as one of the most important factors resulting from negative transference from learner's mother tongue to the target language (Kaweera, 2013; Krashen, 1981;). Thus, by analyzing the writing errors that were made by language learners from different countries, of which cultures and mother tongues are different can be considered as a vital issue and a reference guide for both decision-makers and practitioners.

This study aims to do a comparative analysis of the writing errors of Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian university students studying in English preparatory classes in the context of grammatical, lexical and spelling errors. In this context, research questions are:

1. What is the distribution of writing errors of Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian university students in terms of grammar?
2. What is the distribution of writing errors of Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian university students in terms of lexical items?
3. What is the distribution of writing errors of Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian university students in terms of spelling?

## Method

The data of this qualitative case study were obtained from the 15 English preparatory class students from Turkey (N=5), Syria (N=5) and Azerbaijan (N=5). All the participants studying at A2 (pre-intermediate) level classes which were determined according to the result of the placement test that was conducted at the beginning of the academic year at the school of foreign languages of a state university in the northwest of Turkey were selected via purposeful sampling method which is commonly preferred in qualitative research for the identification of information-rich cases (Palinkas et al., 2015). Eight of the participants were male and seven of them are female. In addition, all the participants were between 18-20 years old and that was the first year at the school of foreign languages.

In order to get the information from the writing errors on their writing portfolio papers made by the students, 60 pieces of their writing papers constituted of about 80-100 words were collected through the document analysis technique which is a form of qualitative research where documents such as official publications, reports, records etc. (Patton, 2002), which is writing records of students in this study, are interpreted by the researcher to give a meaning around the topic (Bowen, 2009). The steps of error analysis suggested by Corder (1974) were followed. First, students' papers were read in detail and marked using the writing error codes by the researcher and two independent, who are experts from English language teaching department, sentence by sentence and word by word and then coding categories were generated. After that, in order to examine the occurrence of errors; the frequency and the percentage were calculated by counting the numbers of errors. Each error was

recorded according to its type and the characteristics of the errors, such as omission, unnecessary or wrong usage in an individual error record form. After the analyses of the papers were completed, individual interviews were done with the same students in order to reveal their thoughts about the reasons of their writing errors that they made and support the data which were obtained from their papers.

The research data were analyzed through the content analysis which can be defined as a systematic coding and categorizing approach in order to identify the characteristics of a document by counting occurrences of themes, words or phrases within the documents (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Gbrich, 2007). The data were identified and interpreted based on the themes, frequency and percentage values and direct quotations from the interviews done with participants. Findings confirmed by the participants and interviews serving for triangulation were used in order to ensure the validity and the reliability of the data. Furthermore, the findings were presented to the field experts and asked for their appropriateness. The interrater reliability values were between %93 and %98 which is interpreted as reliable (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

## Results and Discussion

The findings of the analysis of the errors of Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian students in their papers show that there are high number of differences between the students from different countries both in terms of the total number of errors and error types. As it can be clearly seen in Table 1, students having the highest number of writing errors are Syrians. Syrian students are followed by Turkish students and Azerbaijani students, respectively.

Table 1. The distribution of writing errors of students.

Themes	Turkish Students (N=5)		Azerbaijani Students (N=5)		Syrian Students (N=5)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Grammatical Errors</i>	330	48.96	231	50.55	278	31.56
<i>Spelling Errors</i>	225	33.38	131	28.67	540	61.29
<i>Lexical Errors</i>	119	17.66	95	20.78	63	7.15
Total	674	100	457	100	881	100

When students' writing errors are examined in terms of the types, it was seen that the types of errors of Turkish and Azerbaijani students are quite similar. Grammatical errors were the highest error type in both groups, and they were followed by spelling and lexical errors. The types of writing errors of Syrian students differed from Turkish and Azerbaijani students. The most common writing errors that Syrian students made were spelling errors, and they were followed by grammatical and lexical errors.

### Results in terms of Grammatical Errors

As it can be seen in Table 2, grammatical errors of Turkish and Azerbaijani students were no/incorrect auxiliary verb, no/incorrect article, no/incorrect preposition, wrong tense, no/incorrect conjunction, respectively. The most common type of grammatical error made by Syrian students was no/incorrect preposition and it was followed by no/incorrect auxiliary verb, no/incorrect article, no/incorrect subject and wrong tense. This finding showed that although there are some differences in terms of the number of errors, the most common four grammatical errors of students from three countries were no/incorrect use of prepositions, no/incorrect use of auxiliary verb, no/incorrect use of article and use of wrong tense. On the other hand, while the fifth common grammatical error types of Turkish and Azerbaijani students was no/incorrect use of conjunction; it was no/incorrect use of subject for Syrian students.

Table 2. The distribution of grammatical errors of students.

Grammatical Errors	Turkish Students (N=5)		Azerbaijani Students (N=5)		Syrian Students (N=5)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<i>No / Incorrect preposition</i>	53	7.86	31	6.78	60	6.81
<i>No / Incorrect auxiliary verb</i>	66	9.79	49	10.72	48	5.45
<i>No / Incorrect article</i>	59	8.75	33	7.22	43	4.88
<i>No/ Incorrect subject</i>	7	1.04	5	1.09	26	2.95
<i>Wrong tense</i>	32	4.75	24	5.25	22	2.50
<i>No / Incorrect conjunction</i>	15	2.23	23	5.03	8	0.91
<i>Word order error</i>	15	2.23	13	2.84	20	2.27
<i>Subject-verb disagreement</i>	14	2.08	12	2.63	13	1.48
<i>No / Incorrect possessive</i>	14	2.08	11	2.41	8	0.91
<i>Infinitive or Gerund error</i>	8	1.19	6	1.31	8	0.91
<i>Sentence fragment</i>	12	1.78	7	1.53	8	0.91
<i>No / Incorrect pronoun</i>	13	1.88	10	2.19	5	0.57
<i>Singularity / Plurality</i>	11	1.93	7	1.53	4	0.45
<i>Repetition of words or ideas</i>	6	0.89	0	0	4	0.45
Total	330	48.96	231	50.55	278	31.56

*Preposition errors:* The majority of Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian students' errors in the use of prepositions were in the form of omission and misuse of prepositions. In addition, when the preposition errors were examined in detail, other common errors were about the exceptional use of prepositions, wrong use or overuse of prepositions in idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs.

The opinion of TR1 (1st Turkish student) about the use of preposition: "...There are too many prepositions and I have difficulty in memorizing them. Moreover, some of them do not have any meanings, so I still don't understand why we use them in sentences..."

Some of the examples made by Turkish students in their papers:

"...We arrived to\* (at) the station in the morning." (misuse).

"He goes to\* outside after he has dinner." (overuse).

The opinion of AZ2 (2nd Azerbaijani student) about the use of preposition: "In the past, I knew only at, in, on prepositions and I used them only before some time and place expressions, but now I feel that I need to use prepositions before everything".

Some of the examples made by Azerbaijani students in their papers:

"Teacher is interested with\* (in) everyone in our class." (misuse)

"I was good for\* (at) singing songs." (misuse)

The opinion of SR2 (2nd Syrian student) about the use of preposition: "We can learn phrasal verbs only by memorizing them, when I think the meaning of the prepositions in the phrasal verbs I wrote, it seems that they are true but they are false according to the rules, but they say there are no rules in phrasal verbs?"

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:

"...My family was looking before\* (after) the injured neighbors" (misuse).

"I don't like to\* him." (overuse).

It is considered that the structural differences between their mother tongue and the target language they have learned play a decisive role in the emergence of Turkish and Azerbaijani students' errors in the use of prepositions. Firstly, the prepositions are used in English before and after the words to be used together but in Turkish only after the word to be used together. Secondly, some of the prepositions used in English do not have any equivalents in Turkish. In addition, the prepositions are used as independent words in English but they are used as independent words in some cases and as a suffix to the words in other cases in Turkish. Finally, some verbs don't require any prepositions in Turkish but they do in English.

When the subject is addressed in terms of Syrian students, some reasons such as not having the equivalents of prepositions in Arabic (Ho-Abdullah & Hasan, 2009; Asma, 2010); the quite limited number of prepositions in Arabic when it's compared to English (Al-Marrani, 2009) and having different meanings of the Arabic prepositions in English can be considered as the main factors that play in the occurrence of preposition errors. In addition, while there is an exceptional use of some prepositions which has some semantic changes in phrasal verbs in English, there is no similar usage of prepositions in Arabic so it can be seen as the rationale for especially the omission of prepositions in Syrian students' papers.

*Auxiliary verb errors:* Most frequently, nearly all of the students made their auxiliary verb errors by using incomplete or faulty auxiliary verbs in the process of writing negative or question sentences. It can be said that the possible reasons for Turkish and Azerbaijani students' auxiliary verb errors can result from one of the characteristics of the English language; because while English is an isolating language which means that auxiliary verbs "be, do, have" are used as independent words; Turkish is an agglutinative language so it does not have a similar systematics for auxiliary verbs and auxiliary verbs are added as suffixes to the verbs, adjectives or nouns.

The opinion of TR2 (2nd Turkish student) about the use of auxiliary verbs: "For example, when I write a sentence about the activities we did with our friends I know I should write in simple past tense so I use "did" but my teacher says: No, you should use "was"; or I use "was" my teacher says: No, you should use "did". Ok, but why?"

Some of the examples made by Turkish students in their papers:

"...I am not\* (don't) wake up early in the weekends" (misuse).

"My father asked: "How much money (do\*) you need to go to the match" (omission)

As Abushibab (2012) highlighted that Turkish learners acquire "be" as the main verb before they acquire "be" as an auxiliary verb and although there are not any differences in auxiliary verbs which are in the form of suffixes that were added to the verbs, nouns or adjectives in Turkish; auxiliary verbs in English vary according to the subjects of the sentences, so this difference can be one of the reasons of a great number of errors that were made in the use of "be" and "do" auxiliary verbs in negative sentences by Turkish and Azerbaijani students.

Some of the examples made by Azerbaijani students in their papers:

"When they came to school, we (were\*) playing football" (omission).

"Their apartment (is\*) the most expensive in our site" (omission).

When the issue is considered from the aspects of Syrian students' errors, being totally different of the use and functions of auxiliary verbs in Arabic and English; the difference between the types of auxiliary verbs in English language which has primary auxiliaries and modal auxiliaries, and Arabic language which has kaana group, verbs of beginning, verbs of appropinquation ve particles which behave like auxiliaries; having no equivalence of the most frequently used English auxiliary verbs in the context of present continuous tense, which are "do" and "be", in Arabic language can be interpreted as the reasons that explain the auxiliary verb errors of Syrian students.

The opinion of SR1 (1st Syrian student) about the use of auxiliary verbs: "You can express opinions and ideas more in Arabic, you do not need to use auxiliary verbs all the time like in English."

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:

"It (is) my favorite place to relax" (omission).

"I love may so much and I be so happy at this time of the year" (misuse).

*Article errors:* When the errors of the Turkish students regarding the use of the articles were examined, it was seen that the most common error was related to the use of the definite article "the". Turkish students sometimes misuse the definite article "the" in the sentences as a result of overgeneralization or they didn't use the definite article "the" when it is necessary. The use of the definite article "the" is highly challenging for individuals having a native mother tongue which does not have a similar article system like in English. Unlike English, the definite article is not used as independent words; definiteness is added to the nouns as suffixes, thanks to the order of words in sentences or word/sentence stress in Turkish (Göksel & Kerslake, 2005).

The opinion of TR3 (3rd Turkish student) about the article errors: “Absolutely, the most challenging grammar topic is use of articles because it’s very complicated and especially article “the” does not have any meanings but we use in sentences.”

Some of the examples made by Turkish students in their papers:  
We went to the\* holiday with my family.” (overuse)

In addition to the definite articles, there are also a great number of errors in the use of indefinite articles. Although there is an indefinite article in Turkish, differences in usage in Turkish is considered as another important factor in the occurrence of this kind of errors.

Some of the examples made by Turkish students in their papers:  
“I and my sisters are student(s) but my brother is (a\*) worker now.” (omission).

On the other hand, although the indefinite article is also used in Azerbaijani Turkish, differences in usage between the two languages cause students to make errors in the use of indefinite articles “a, an” especially with uncountable nouns. Moreover, both the lack of definite article in Azerbaijani Turkish and the absence of definite and indefinite articles in Russian which is the first foreign language in which Azerbaijani students learn at an early age can be considered as some reasons that explain the article errors that students made.

Some of the examples made by Azerbaijani students in their papers:  
“The\* animals are our friends but I don’t like some of them.” (overuse).  
“I like listening to a\* music or going to (the\*) cinema” (overuse & omission)

The most common article errors made by Syrian students are; omission of definite article “the”, omission of indefinite articles “a, an” and misuse of definite article “the”. The structural distinct differences of the use of articles in two languages may lie at the roof of Syrian students’ article errors. Moreover, the absence of indefinite articles “a, an” in Arabic and the use of “-al” which is the equivalent of “the” in Arabic has different functions in different context can be expressed as the determinants behind Syrian students’ article errors.

The opinion of SR3 (3rd Syrian student) about the article errors: “We have also articles in Arabic but the system is very different. We don’t use any articles where they must use and we use articles where they shouldn’t use!”

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:  
“It is a\* large and comfortable” (overuse).  
“(The\*) third reason is its size.” (omission).

*Tense errors:* Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian students made the most common errors in the structure of perfect tenses. It is considered that the absence of the equivalence of the perfect tenses and other grammatical differences in these languages play the most important role in these kinds of errors. Misusing of simple past tense or simple present tense instead of present perfect tense in the sentences supports that interpretation.

Some of the examples made by Turkish and Azerbaijani students in their papers:  
“I didn’t see\* him since I went to school.” (misuse).  
“My family is living\* in İstanbul” (misuse).

The opinion of SR2 (2nd Syrian student) about the tense errors: “Actually, I can find the correct answer in a multiple choice test about the tenses but I feel confused about the use of them in writing.”

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:  
“We are meeting\* together one time in a year” (misuse).  
“I was lived\* in Turkey since 2015” (misuse)

*Conjunction errors:* While the conjunction error is the fifth common error of Turkish and Azerbaijani students, it is not among the most common errors of Syrian students. In the analysis, it was observed that the students use conjunctions in the wrong order in sentences or they use more than one conjunctions unnecessarily.

Some of the examples made by Turkish and Azerbaijani students in their papers:  
“Although\* I was cold but\* picnic was wonderful time.” (overuse).  
“I was very happy. Because\* my father gave me his car.” (wrong position).

Conjunctions are used in all languages in a similar way, so it is difficult to say the conjunction errors result from the differences between mother tongue and target language. The lack of understanding of the semantic equivalents of the conjunctions, carelessness, and the use of a large number of connectors to strengthen the meaning of the sentence may have played a role in the emergence of such errors.

The opinion of TR1 (1st Turkish student) about the tense errors: “There are different conjunctions which can be used for the same purpose but they are used in different places in the sentences; some of them are used at the beginning, some of them are used in the middle and others at the end of the sentence but why? It’s so nonsense.”

*Subject errors:* While the omission or misuse of subjects are in the fifth place among the type of grammatical errors of Syrian students, they are not among the common types of errors made by Turkish and Azerbaijani students. In the analysis, it was determined that Syrian students don’t use any subjects or use them in the wrong order while writing a sentence.

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:

“At first, am going to I\* talk about the good things.” (wrong place)”

Interviews with students showed that the word order in Arabic is in the form of “Verb+Subject+Object” which is quite different from English language can be one of the important factors explaining the reasons underlying these errors.

Because of the frequent use of null subject and the characteristics of the verbs giving information about the number, gender and person in Arabic; it is not necessary to write the subject pronoun all the time in sentences (Jalabneh, 2011), so it can be considered as another factor clarifying the causes of subject errors.

The opinion of SR2 (2nd Syrian student) about the subject errors: “We can understand who did the action even if we didn’t write the subject pronouns in the sentences, so sometimes I forget to use them in English. It’s just like a habit.”

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:

“I love simming(swimming) so much and (I\*) am ready to stay...” (omission).

“(I\*) am in turky (Turkey) and my parents are in Saudi Arabia.” (omission).

## Results in terms of Spelling Errors

When the students' writing errors related to the use of spelling rules are examined, the findings are as follows. Errors of Turkish and Azerbaijani students are listed as punctuation mark errors, typing errors and capitalization errors. On the other hand, the most common error of the Syrian students is about capitalization. It is also the most common error in total. This type of error is followed by typing and punctuation error, respectively.

Table 3. The distribution of spelling errors of students.

Spelling Errors	Turkish Students (N=5)		Azerbaijani Students (N=5)		Syrian Students (N=5)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>		<i>f</i>	%
<i>Capital / Lowercase</i>	66	9.79	38	8.32	239	27.13
<i>Typing</i>	68	10.09	34	7.44	151	17.14
<i>Punctuation</i>	85	12.16	52	11.38	140	15.88
<i>Paragraph indentation</i>	6	0.89	7	1.53	10	1.14
<i>Margins</i>	3	0.45	0	0	0	0
Total	225	33.38	131	28.67	540	61.29

*Punctuation mark errors:* The most common type of error that Turkish students made regarding the use of spelling rules is related to the use of punctuation marks. The misuse of comma and full stop, overuse of punctuation marks, and misuse of apostrophe are the most frequent punctuation errors of Turkish students. Although there are a lot of similarities about the use of punctuation in English and Turkish, there are also some differences in the use of comma, full stop and apostrophe (Elkılıç, Han & Aydın, 2009; Swan & Smith, 2001).

On the other hand, it is a fact that a great number of students have made numerous errors about the use of punctuation even when they write in their mother tongue (Arıcı, 2008; Kalfa, 2000; Yıldız, 2002;).

The opinion of TR2 (2nd Turkish student) about the punctuation mark errors: “I think, punctuation is not very important in writing. The important thing is content and meaning. Also, I didn’t know that teachers pay attention to the punctuation marks in while they are assessing our papers.”

Some of the examples made by Turkish students in their papers:

“I was bored. Because I didn’t like the movie.” (Unnecessary full stop).

“If he didn’t wake up early tomorrow (,) we will fail” (omission of comma).

The majority of the errors in the use of punctuation of Azerbaijani students include omission of comma and full stop and overuse of punctuation marks. In the interviews with the students, when the examples of the errors were shown to them, in most cases they could not realize their errors and it was found that they had inadequate knowledge about the use of punctuation marks.

The opinion of AZ3 (3rd Azerbaijani student) about the use of punctuation marks: “Actually, I made some punctuation errors in my native tongue, it’s not related to learning a foreign language or developing my writing skills. I know where should I use full stop but yes, I don’t know exactly the rules of comma.”

Some of the examples made by Azerbaijani students in their papers:

“I have short(,\*) straight(,\*) brown haer and brown eyes. (omission).

“I came here last September(.\*) I was alone ,\* and bored. (omission + overuse)

The most frequent errors of Syrian students in the use of punctuation marks are listed as the omission of comma and full stop, overuse of punctuation marks and omission of question marks. Although it is different from the systematic in English, there are also punctuation marks in Arabic. However, in the interviews, the students stated that they don’t not pay attention to punctuation marks because they thought that punctuation marks are not as important as grammar or vocabulary in their country.

The opinion of SR1 (1st Syrian student): “Yes, we have punctuation marks but it’s not necessary in our daily life situations such as texting, tweeting or writing to your friend. Furthermore, I can sincerely say that I pay attention to them only in English.”

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:

“Finally(,\*) I love my best friend very mach” (omission).

“Its consist of two floors(.\*) The first floor if you want to sit. (omission)

Besides, Syrian students stated that they use the “و” letter which functions as conjunction “and” in Arabic instead of comma, so they sometimes use “and” unnecessarily while writing in English, too.

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:

“I have black and\* straight and\* short hair and brown eyes. (omission).

*Typing errors:* The majority of Turkish students' typing errors are listed as using of one or more incorrect letters, using of one or more missing letters, using of one or more extra letters, and wrong order of letters in a word. In the analysis, it was observed that the students made most of their errors in the spelling of words which has double consonants or vowels and the ones which include the same letter consecutively.

The opinion of TR4 (4th Turkish student) about typing errors: “I made errors especially while writing long words or the words which includes two or three consonant or vawal consecutively. I feel I made error even if I write these words correctly.”

Some of the examples made by Turkish students in their papers:

“We had a car but unfortunetaly\* it was broke” (substitution).

“I greduated from school two years ago” (wrong letter)

Furthermore, the fact that the spelling of words of foreign origin from English or other Latin languages in Turkish language is different but similar to the spelling in English can be considered as one of the reasons of Turkish students' typing errors.

One of the examples made by Turkish students in their papers:

“Never I don’t drink alcol\* or smoke” (wrong typing).

In the case of errors such as omission of letters or the wrong order of letters; the number of errors of Azerbaijani students is relatively low compared to Turkish students. The fact that x and q, which are not in Turkish alphabet, takes place in Azerbaijan Turkish is considered to be effective in the emergence of this situation.

Some of the examples made by Azerbaijani students in their papers:

“Final(l)y, I failed and turned back to my hometown.” (omission).

“She loves me but she is a jealuos person. (wrong order of letters)

The most common errors made by Syrian students are listed as adding one or more extra letters to the word, omission of one or more letters, writing letters in the wrong order, and using a wrong letter.

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:

“Realy, It’s very funy\*” (double consonant).

“His jop\* is maneger\* and he alwyes\* besy\*” (wrong letter, missing letter, extra letter)

The data obtained from the interviews revealed that even though students knew the correct pronunciation of the words they have experienced problems while writing. The main reason for this situation is that the Arabic and the Latin alphabet are completely different. Also, the confusion arising from the different pronunciation of the letters in different situations and the complexity of writing some voices which are not found in Arabic can be other reasons of these errors.

The opinion of SR4 (4th Syrian student) about typing: “I know how to pronounce the word but I can’t choose the correct letters while when I write it. In addition, it’s difficult to write from right to left with by using a new alphabet.”

*Capital/lowercase errors:* The majority of the errors made by Turkish students in the use of capital/lowercase letters are listed as using capital letters for pronouns in sentences, using lowercase for writing of the names of days, months or titles.

Some of the examples made by Turkish and Azerbaijani students in their papers:

“I go to school everyday but i\* am feel free on saturday\* and sunday\*. (capitalization).

“MY BEATÍFUL LÍFE” (errors in title).

Although Turkish and Azerbaijani students obey the capitalization / lower case rules in most of the situations; they have problems with the rules which are peculiar to English language. They made also some errors especially writing the minor words such as pronouns, prepositions or articles while writing the title.

The opinion of TR5 (5th Turkish student) about capital/lowercase errors: “In Turkish, I only use capital letter at the beginning of the sentence or for the names of people but in English we need to use capital letter for different kinds of words such as months, days etc. What a confusing system!”

Some of the examples made by Turkish and Azerbaijani students in their papers:

“Our bus stoped in the middle of the road and i\* felt bad (capitalization).

“I didn’t find anywhere but then He\* came class” (capitalization)

The lack of capital and lowercase difference in Arabic can be considered the main reason of the capitalization errors that Syrian students made. Most of the students write nearly all of the subject pronouns by using a capital letter because of the overgeneralization of using capital letter for the subject pronoun “I”. Other errors that they made are using lowercase letters while writing the days, months and titles.

The opinion of SR5 (5th Syrian student) about capital/lowercase errors: “I recognized the capitalization rule for the first time while I’m learning Turkish but the rules are different in English. Now, I made some errors also in Turkish.”

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:

“He Was\* angry because He\* didn’t like to going with my friends.” (capitalization).



“ I LikE\* WINTER\*” (capitalization)

## Results in terms of Lexical Errors

When Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian students' lexical errors are examined, it was seen that using incorrect words and unnecessary words are the most common ones. On the other hand, while wrong word form is the third common one for Turkish and Azerbaijani students; omission of words is the third common error type for Syrian students.

Table 4. The distribution of lexical errors of students.

Lexical Errors	Turkish Students (N=5)		Azerbaijani Students (N=5)		Syrian Students (N=5)	
	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Wrong word</i>	69	10.24	45	9.85	32	3,63
<i>Unnecessary word</i>	23	3.41	24	5.25	16	1.82
<i>Missing word</i>	10	1.48	7	1.53	8	0.91
<i>Wrong word form</i>	17	2.52	19	4.16	7	0,79
Total	119	17.66	95	20.79	63	7.15

*Wrong word errors:* When Turkish and Azerbaijani students' errors related to the use of wrong words are examined, it was seen that most of the errors are related to the collocations referring to a group of two or more words that usually go together.

The opinion of TR5 (5th Turkish student) about wrong word error: “I know the meaning of the verbs, adjectives or nouns but even if their meanings are correct, there are some words that can be used only some words (collocations) just like in Turkish and it’s not easy to remember them.”

Some of the examples made by Turkish students in their papers:

“My brother entered\* (got/started/found) this job\* last year but now he is unemployed.” (misuse)

Another factor that causes the wrong word errors may be homonymic words. The opinion of AZ4 (4th Azerbaijani student) about wrong word errors: “The pronunciations of some words are almost the same or very similar but there are minimal differences between the spelling of them. They confused me and I write some words incorrectly.”

Some of the examples made by Azerbaijani students in their papers:

“I can go to the cinema or go to bitch\*.” (misuse)

“I don’t use everything\* without permission” (misuse)

Translating Turkish idiomatic expressions into English directly, the words used in wrong contexts or with wrong collocations, using near-synonymous words incorrectly are among the reasons leading to such errors.

The data obtained from the interviews with Syrian students about the reasons of writing errors related to the use of wrong words revealed that lack of knowledge about the meaning of the words, similar words and carelessness may play important roles in the occurrence of these errors.

The opinion of SR5 (5th Syrian student) about wrong word errors: “I think, learning new words is the easiest and amusing thing in learning a foreign language but sometimes I forget the order of letters and sometimes I write one or more letters wrongly. I need to study more!”

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:

“She is quiet\* (quite) tall and fat.” (similar word)

“She is more richer then\* (than) other students” (similar word)

*Overuse of word errors:* Using the same verb twice or using different verbs unnecessarily are two most common errors that Turkish and Syrian students made in their papers. Some of the examples made by Turkish and Azerbaijani students in their papers:

“I like playing basketball games\*, playing\* football and talking with my friends.” (repetition).  
 “You don’t need to pay money for have\* a concert” (unnecessary word).

Syrian students’ unnecessary word errors are listed as using the minor words unnecessarily, using similar words together, using irrelevant words and using the same words twice in the same sentence. In the interviews, they stated that they use these words consciously in order to strengthen the meaning of the words.

The opinion of SR4 (4th Syrian student) about unnecessary words: “When I don’t use prepositions or articles, my teacher says it’s an error; when I use them he says it’s an error! I don’t know how to use minor words when and where.”

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:

“He doesn’t like hate\* going to this cafe”. “There are four chairs in\* down stairs.”

*Wrong word form errors:* Using verbs instead of nouns or using nouns instead of verbs are two common errors of Turkish and Azerbaijani students in the context of using of wrong word form. The opinion of TR3 (3rd Turkish student) about wrong word form errors: “Actually, I’m not good at knowing the difference between adjectives, adverbs or prepositions even in Turkish because I graduated from the science-maths department from high school, so my errors are not surprising for me.”

Some of the examples made by Turkish students in their papers:

“The film was bored\* (boring) and we escaped from the cinema” (wrong word form). “Turkey has (been) independence\* (independent) since 1923.” (wrong word form).

It was considered that this finding was arisen from the students’ competency level in terms of vocabulary and lack of lexical knowledge. Also, it was inferred from the interview data that most of the students were not aware of their errors and they were not sure about the right form of a word that they use in the sentences.

*Omission of word errors:* Although the number of them is very limited, the third common error of Syrian students is missing words. When the interview data and errors detected in their papers are examined, it can be said that students made these errors mostly because of some affective variables such as stress, excitement, anxiety or other factors such as limited time for writing, forgetfulness while revising the sentences.

The opinion of SR2 (2nd Syrian student) about the omission of words: “The words that I forgot to write actually the ones that I know their meanings but I don’t know why didn’t I write them...”

Some of the examples made by Syrian students in their papers:

“I like doing homework and (playing) football with my Syrian friends.” (omission)  
 “He doesn’t (have) a pet but he loves them. (omission)

## Conclusion

This study aims to explore the writing errors made by students who have different mother tongues and cultural backgrounds by analyzing their papers in terms of grammatical, lexical and spelling errors. The findings revealed that Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian students have some differences in terms of both the number and the types of writing errors. On the other hand, Turkish and Azerbaijani students have also a lot of similarities but they differ from Syrian students in almost all types of errors.

Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian students from which research data are collected, are representative of the cultures which are close to each other geographically and have some common or similar characteristics of lifestyles, behaviors, traditions and customs. In particular, Turkey and Azerbaijan share a very close and deep-rooted cultural unity especially in the context of common geography, history, language and literature (Adıgüzel, 2012). Accordingly, while Azerbaijani and Turkish languages that are two important representatives of Oğuz language family, which is a common branch of Turkic language family, Arabic is a member of Semitic language family and it has a totally different language system. In this respect Turkish and Azerbaijani languages show a great deal of similarities in a lot of respects such as the elements of sentences (Demirdağ, 2014), vocabulary

knowledge (Ayaz, 2011; Barış, 2016; Uğurlu, 2012;), syntax (Akalm, 2009) and linguistics (Hacıyeva, 2008). Although the findings of the study revealed that the writing errors made by the Turkish and Azerbaijani students differed considerably in terms of the frequency of the differences, the results of these two groups were very close to each other in terms of the distribution of the error types. The similarity of the problems experienced in the process of developing writing skills by language learners who have common or similar mother tongue and culture is considered to be a striking result.

Kesmez (2015), who examined the interference errors of Turkish students in writing activities, found out that the most common errors of Turkish students were the lexical category-including word for word translation errors, wrong use of uncountable nouns and verb errors according to the results obtained from his study. In addition, Elkılıç (2012) reported that the most common errors in the English composition of the Turkish students resulted from their mother tongue were listed as misusing the prepositions; confusing certain verbs; misusing uncountable nouns; omitting the indefinite article *a/an*; subject-verb agreement; number, quantifier and noun agreement; demonstrative adjective and noun agreement; word for word translation. On the other hand, Kırkgöz (2010), who examined the errors in a corpus of essays written by Turkish students in order to identify and classify the possible sources of their errors, reported that most of the errors resulted from interlingual errors indicating interference of the first language and she listed the errors respectively as grammar interference (pluralization and verb tense); prepositional interference (addition, omission and misusing) and lexical interference.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the Syrian students did not only make much many errors than Turkish and Azerbaijani students but also they differ from Turkish and Azerbaijani students in terms of proportional distribution of the types of writing errors. The characteristic features of Arabic language which is the mother tongue of Syrian students and has a completely different alphabet system from the Latin alphabet system (Cook and Bassetti, 2005); significant differences in writing order and form such as the use of adjacent and right-to-left handwriting (Kharma and Hajjaj, 1997; Smith, 2001) can be considered as the factors playing roles in the difference between the number and the distribution of the errors found when it compared to Turkish and Azerbaijani students. Apart from those, the social and psychological conditions of Syrian students because of the migration and the civil war in their country could also be another variable that may affect their academic achievement levels.

When researches which were conducted with the participants whose mother tongue is Arabic examined, some similar results were found. In a study by Hourani (2008), it was seen that the most common grammatical errors that Syrian students made when writing English were related to passivization, verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, plurality and auxiliaries. Ridha (2012), who examined the mistakes made by Iraqi students whose native language is Arabic just like the Syrians revealed that the grammatical errors and the mechanical errors were the most serious and frequent ones in the students' writing samples. Moreover, Al-Buainain (2009) examined exam scripts of first-year university students majoring in English in Qatar and found that the most common writing errors of Arab students were tenses, auxiliary verbs, misusing of articles and fragments in the structure of sentences. Finally, Ahamed (2016) investigating the writing errors of Saudi EFL university students stated that students make errors in their papers because of some factors such as mother tongue interference, besides insufficient activities and practice of basic techniques of writing and the most common errors were %52 grammatical (the wrong use of tense or verb forms, the wrong use of articles, the wrong use of prepositions etc.), %27 spelling (wrong choice of letters, missing and overuse of capital letters, insertion or omission of letters etc.) %12 punctuation and %9 lexical errors (errors of verbosity and wrong choice of words).

## **Recommendations**

In the light of the findings of this study, it has been concluded that most of the errors resulted from the mother tongue and cross-linguistic influence are frequently encountered ones in the teaching process of writing skill and the findings are very consistent with the ones in other studies. In this context, a teaching process can be realized in order to prevent these errors by taking both the cultural backgrounds and the similarities, differences between the mother tongue and target language into consideration. Besides, course contents can be enriched and differentiated by focusing on some variables such as mother tongue, cultural background etc. The findings of this study will guide the practitioners in reorganizing the learning and teaching activities to be applied in the English classes consisted of Turkish, Azerbaijani and Syrian students.

Next, decision makers, curriculum specialists and practitioners may take the findings of this research consideration into their preparations, studies and practices especially in multicultural classrooms where students

who have different cultural backgrounds and different mother tongues. Language learners' errors are valuable sources for developing teaching and learning process. Hence, particularly teachers who have responsibilities in teaching writing skills for the students who are from Turkey, Syria and Azerbaijan can revise the teaching activities and revise their strategies and feedback system in the face of the findings of this research.

Moreover, according to the findings of this research, the majority of students' errors result from the negative transference of their first language. As it can clearly be seen in their papers and interviews, this study confirmed that learners' mother tongue plays a vital role in developing writing skills in English. Some remedial studies can be done in order to rise the awareness of the students about the differences of their native language and the target language in terms of grammar, spelling and vocabulary. At the same time, writing teaching process can be supported by including authentic materials such as newspapers, magazines, websites, videos, audios etc. and effective feedback strategies, different teaching techniques methods and activities that raise students' motivation and awareness could be taken into consideration to prevent the frequently made errors.

Finally, there is not any comparative analysis study for writing errors in the literature so similar studies can be done in order to see the differences and similarities between the errors made by students whose mother tongue and cultural backgrounds are different. In addition, the same research can be conducted on different competency levels to identify the most resistant errors or to see the difference between the number and types of frequently made errors over different proficiency levels.

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### Transformational Leadership Laboratory: The Project's Success Factors

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## **Transformational Leadership Laboratory: The Project's Success Factors**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigated success factors of transformational projects managed by Indonesian public leadership education and training participants. Previous reports on project success factors mostly were of project management natures and paid very little attention to the process of educating and training of prospective public project managers. All of participants were alumni of public leadership programs in Indonesia, who involved voluntarily in the current qualitative study. An open-ended questionnaire was set up for one on one interviews in gathering data, and the NVivo 10 was used both in managing and analyzing them. The iterative inductions of this research revealed that project's innovation, team performances, risk management, resources controlling, and schedule monitoring were the top five success factors in managing public transformational projects in education and training settings.

**Key words:** Leadership Education and Training, Transformational Projects, Project Success Factors

### **Introduction**

Since 2015, the administrative regulatory body of the Indonesian public servants has mandated to include transformational projects in the curriculum of public leadership education and training courses. The inclusion of mandatory transformational projects serves at least two objectives. The first one is as a mean to boost Indonesian bureaucracy performances, and the second is as a leadership laboratory for the courses' takers (Suprapti, 2015). It is believed that this policy has impacted positively in serving these intentions. Within three years, hundreds of successful and exemplary transformational projects have been presented in various public exposes, exhibitions, and seminars, which suggested that these projects were suspected by a number of government's publicities as one of many contributing factors to the increasing satisfactory portion in recent satisfaction surveys on government administration across Indonesia (Muslihin, 2016; Sumanti, Sinurat, Syahputra, Afrian, & Febrianto, 2017).

However, very little attentions were paid to the factors that exist and may help the participants of leadership courses in managing their successful transformational projects. Relevant literatures suggested that a number of factors were found in various successful projects. Most of them reported that the success factors existed in construction, IT, humanitarian, and other sectors. Whereas, those which were in the field of education and training of project managers, especially in public sector can be found rarely. Therefore, this study aimed to fill this narrow gap by investigating inductively the success factors of managing public transformational projects in education and training environment.

### **Project's Success Factors**

Kerzner (2001) put forward that project's cost, time, and quality are the golden criteria in determining project's outputs and outcomes. A successful project should be completed within the proposed quality, agreed time and also approved budget. It is advocated that in most of successful projects, regardless their natures, there were a set of factors that contribute directly to their management efforts in resulting targeted outputs and outcomes. In the field of project management, these factors are widely known as project's success factors (Cooke-Davies, 2002).

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A number of researchers believed that various resources should be available timely for a successful project. Experts, project's professionals, skillful technicians, and laborers are some of essential human resources that should exist to design, plan, manage other resources, which fall into finance, facilities, and equipment categories (Isik, Arditi, Dikmen, & Birgonul, 2010; Plant & Willcocks, 2007). In addition, among these human capitals were expected to have clarity in communication, shared roles and responsibilities, and also high level of commitment in order to reach targeted project's outputs and outcomes (Adnan, Bachik, Supardi & Marhani, 2012; Aristo, 2017).

Beside availability of resources and effective project's team, comprehensive planning and risk assessment were also reported as the project's success factors. A detailed project planning, which encompassed by clear goals will result in clarity of project' scope, expected results, and activities in the endeavor to achieve project success (Buddas, 2014; Ika, Diallo & Thuillier, 2012). When the project's development would not progress according to the plan, then sufficient risks' identifications, mitigations, and contingency plans will serve their roles to secure the project success (Hyvari, 2006; Munang & Faisal, 2016). Management of project's time, quality, cost, resources, planning, and risks were the project's success factors reported in general scopes. While, project's success factors that specific to public transformational projects in an educational environment can be found very rarely.

### **Purpose of Study**

The afore mentioned project's success factors were captured from various industries such as construction, infrastructure, health care, humanitarian, and IT. It remained unidentified whether these factors were also existed in public transformational projects. This study aims to investigate the manifestations of success factors involved in the mandatory Indonesian public transformational projects that were managed by leadership education and training participants.

## **Method**

### **Design of the Study**

Detailed data regarding the existences of project's critical success factors in a unique educational setting were explored appropriately by using qualitative research method, which could preserve its adjacent information richness. An open-ended questionnaire was prepared beforehand as a guideline for one on one interviews. This questionnaire enabled the researcher to seek clarifications from research participants and allowed the research participants to extend their responses. This type of qualitative tool was suggested by Gillham (2000), Arthur and Nazroo (2003), and Seidman (2006) in generating in-depth information.

### **Participant of the Study**

In this study, the participants were stakeholders of public transformational projects that were deemed to be successful in recent public seminars, exposes, or exhibitions. The interviews were started with their project leaders, who were participants of public leadership education and training courses. The next interviewees were recruited based on the recommendations from projects' leaders, who were the immediate stakeholders of related transformational projects. This strategy of participants' recruitment is widely known as discriminative snow-ball sampling. This sampling method is categorized as an exponential non-probabilistic approach, where the preceding interview participant was asked to introduce the researcher to the best prospective interviewee as the succeeding participant, and so on (Robson, 2011; Yin, 2011). In addition, stratification of the participants was also applied in order to capture various sub-groups of the interviewees that facilitated analytical comparisons (Creswell, 2002). These sampling and data collection methods enabled this study to isolate the recruited interviewees only to those who were the immediate stakeholders of the targeted successful projects.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

At the end of the data gathering, 17 projects' stakeholders were consented voluntarily in this study. The interviews and data analyzes were concluded when the last 5 interviews with the recommended new

interviewees were resulted in almost no new information regarding the projects' success factors and their emerged patterns. The researcher believed that at this stage, the point of saturation was reached as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985) in Dooley (2002) and Eisenhardt (1989), that collection of some more data were insignificantly increase the information, and were not affect significantly the regularity that has emerged.

The interviews began with asking general ideas regarding what factors that may involve in the leadership education and training participants' successful projects, then pursued their confirmations by asking specifically in what ways these factors were manifested in their projects to the same group of participants, and then their statements were cross-confirmed to other related projects' stakeholders. In these manners, the reliability and validity of this study were maintained, as suggested by Robson (2011). The processes of organizing and mapping of data were done repeatedly following interviews and preceding the next sessions by coding them regularly as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984), before promoting the transformational projects' success factors in this study. In total, there were 38 interview sessions that generated relatively complex data. The QSR NVivo 10 was used in organizing and analyzing them. In this study, for clearer final patterns, the themes or categories were each supported by at least 3 sub-categories, and each of these were supported by at least 4 references.

## Result

All of the participants of this study were stakeholders of 4 exemplary public transformational projects. They were projects' leaders, owners, team members, and end-users, who gave their consents and interviewed one at a time at least twice. The first interviewee in each project was the projects' leader, who then recommended other stakeholders to be the next prospectus participants in this study. However, at the early stage of the interview, only projects' leaders, team members, and owners that understood completely what was being asked for. Whereas, the end-users of the projects were mostly need explanations on the terms of project's success factors. Two transformational projects were related to IT and development of user-friendly public service applications (P2 and P4), one project was a public health-care infrastructure development (P1), and another was in public organization reform (P3). The research participants, their qualifications, roles, and recruitments were reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Participants

Project Codes	Projects' Areas		Key Roles and Qualifications	Recommended by/ recruited at:
P1	Public health-care infrastructure	P1L	Project <i>team leader</i> : civil engineer;	Public seminar
		P1O	Project <i>owner</i> : medical doctor; head of bureau;	P1L
		P1T	Project <i>team member</i> : civil engineer; utility designer;	P1T' office
		P1U	Project <i>end-user</i> : nursing degree; nurse;	P1T
P2	Building automation application	P2L	Project <i>team leader</i> : electrical engineer;	Public exhibition
		P2O	Project <i>owner</i> : law enforcer; head of department;	P2L
		P2T	Project <i>team member</i> : IT engineer;	P2L
		P2U	Project <i>end-user</i> : law enforcer; staff ;	P2O
P3	Organizational reform	P3L	Project <i>team leader</i> : postgraduate in public admin.;	Public exhibition
		P3O	Project <i>owner</i> : postgraduate in sociology; head of bureau	P3L
		P3T	Project <i>team member</i> : Law Legal Master; staff;	P3L
		P3U	Project <i>end-user</i> : staff;	P3U'office
P4	Public registry services' user friendly application	P4L	Project <i>team leader</i> : postgraduate in communication;	Public seminar
		P4O	Project <i>owner</i> : head of public relation;	P4L
		P4T	Project <i>team member</i> : IT engineer;	P4L
		P4Ta	Project <i>team member</i> : IT specialist;	P4L
		P4U	Project <i>end-user</i> : house-wife;	P4' booth

The iterative induction processes of gathered data had undergone coding-recoding, and reducing inaudible data before establishing patterns that has resulted in 5 major themes namely project's innovation, team performances, risk management, resources controlling, and schedule monitoring. All of the afore mentioned themes were emerged gradually approximately during the second-half of the interview stage, and continued to flourished until this report was written. Thus, the afore mentioned themes are the success factors of transformational projects in the Indonesian leadership education and training courses setting.

### Project's Innovation

As can be seen from Table 2, the greatest portion of transcribed interviews was on project's innovation. This theme emerged and supported by 8 sub-categories, which were clearly stated by 14 interview participants. They asserted that innovations were the key success in their transformational projects. Both end-users of the IT projects explained that the developed applications were “*user friendly*” and stated that the projects enabled them to access public services they needed from home, so that they can “*save (their) money*”. This major theme was also confirmed by project's team members, who stated repeatedly that the developed “*new system*” and “*new idea*” in their projects were “*creative solutions*” and “*cost-effective*” especially for the end-users. On his reply P4T said that: “*We offer solution for the commoners, the idea was new in the field and this new system was not only cheap (or) affordable, but also cost-effective for them*”. However, interestingly the several owners and leaders of the IT projects stated that although their projects were innovative, the developed applications were merely, as suggested by P2O as “*adoptions of new method of providing basic public services*”. While in the health-care infrastructure and organization reform projects, innovation was the major node that emerged convincingly only later in the confirmatory interviews. A number of participants emphasized that their endeavors served as “*new models*” to the succeeded similar projects and were deemed innovative, as stated by P3L: “*I am happy to participate in this innovation exhibition, my innovation is copied by some, and now (there) will be more following and adopting it, this is a new model of managing changes in public service*”.

Table 1. Emerged Theme: Project's innovation

Category & Sub-categories	References	Sources	Participants
🌀 project's innovation	53	14	P1L, P1T, P1U, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4O, P4T, P4U, P4Ta
🌀 new idea	41	11	P1L, P1O, P1T, P1U, P2L, P2O, P2T, P2U, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4T, P4U
🌀 new way	38	11	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2L, P2O, P2T, P2U, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4O, P4T, P4Ta
🌀 new model	33	9	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2T, P2U, P3L, P3U, P4U, P4Ta
🌀 new system	31	8	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2T, P2U, P3L, P3U, P4U
🌀 cost-effectiveness	22	8	P2L, P2O, P1T, P2T, P2U, P3U, P4U, P4Ta
🌀 adoption of new methods	21	7	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2O, P2U, P3U, P4O
🌀 creative solutions	14	7	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2T, P2U, P3T, P4T
🌀 user friendly	11	6	P1U, P2T, P2U, P3U, P4T, P4U

### Project's Team Performances

Team performances was unrecognizable by almost all of projects' end-users. Nevertheless, all of projects' internal stakeholders highlighted the “*team performances*” when being asked about the contributing factors of their successful projects. Then, in the confirmatory stages they reinforced this major node, and emphasized the existence of 5 other sub-categories, which were “*collaboration, coordination, communication, team work and team effectiveness*”.

Table 2. Emerged Theme: Project's team effectiveness

Category & Sub-categories	References	Sources	Participants
🌀 project's team performances	42	11	P1T, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4O, P4T, P4Ta
🌀 collaboration	33	11	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4T
🌀 coordination	30	10	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2L, P2T, P3L, P3T, P4L, P4O, P4T
🌀 communication	16	6	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2T, P3L, P4L
🌀 teamwork	21	7	P1L, P1O, P2L, P2T, P3L, P3U, P4L
🌀 team effectiveness	8	3	P1L, P2T, P4Ta

### Project's Risk Management

Similar to the project's team performance, the end-users of most projects were not familiar with current theme, but P2U, an end-user of the IT project was the only who described "risk mitigation" as "assuming or accepting the unwanted to happen". While P1O, the project's owner of health-care infrastructure offered an interesting way in managing risks. He said: "I encouraged my team to ask stupid questions. Many bad things could happen to our project, and I want them to list the unthinkable. This way, they can register the risks, make a complete assessment and mitigation, then get prepared for bad things and develop some contingency plans". When P1O's opinion was cross-checked with other participants, they perceived similarly and confirmed that proper risk management is one of important contributors to their projects' success, as stated by one of them, P2T: "first we register all possible risks, then we assess them all, we need to mitigate before we can construct some contingencies, these are how we manage the risk".

Table 3. Emerged Theme: Project's risk management

Category & Sub-categories	References	Sources	Participants
☉ project's risk management	39	10	P1O, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4O, P4T
☉ risk mitigation	34	11	P1L, P1T, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4T, P2U
☉ contingency plans	21	11	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2L, P2T, P3L, P3O, P3T, P4L, P4O, P4Ta
☉ risk assessment	14	4	P1L, P1T, P2T, P4Ta
☉ risk register	7	2	P1T, P2T

### Project's Resources Controlling

Most of Participants suggested that projects' resources were the direct inputs to their transformational projects. Controlling the availability of resources were the most challenging task for projects' leaders and team members. All of projects' leaders and team members of IT projects and health-care infrastructures complained about their suppliers, who were mostly late in delivering the needed materials and equipment as stated by P1L: "I had difficulties when controlling my suppliers, they promised me to come with agreed materials within agreed due dates, and none of them had made it, especially the heavy equipment supplier, he breached the contract". Projects' team members of the IT projects were not only disappointed about the postponed arrivals of the server components, but also frustrated by the quality of the delivered materials. On this issue, P4T stated: "the components came so late, the quality was bad, we have to choose this supplier because of our (project's) financial constraint, we cannot control such imported things like these". Interestingly, most of interviewees did not mention human resources related terms when talked about project team effectiveness, they believed that "clear responsibilities" and "clear roles" were parts of "project controlling".

Table 4. Emerged Theme: Project's resources controlling

Category & Sub-categories	References	Sources	Participants
☉ project's controlling	32	10	P1L, P1T, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3O, P3T, P4O, P4T, P4Ta
☉ materials supply	27	6	P1L, P1T, P2L, P2T, P4L, P4T
☉ clear responsibilities	20	7	P1T, P2L, P2O, P2T, P3L, P3T, P4T
☉ finance	18	5	P1L, P1O, P2T, P3L, P4Ta
☉ equipment	17	6	P1L, P1O, P1T, P2T, P2O, P3L,
☉ clear roles	14	7	P2L, P2O, P1T, P2L, P2T, P3L, P4T

### Project's Schedule Monitoring

Similar to the previous theme, the projects' end-users were unfamiliar with the concept of project's schedule monitoring, and none of them mentioned this theme. None of the investigated transformational projects were completed early, 3 of them were on the schedule and the health care infrastructure project was finished a little late. Both the leader and team member of the latter project confessed that they failed to recognize the importance to calculate "leads and lags" and also slightly unconcerned about the "sequence of activities" of

their project. In confirmatory interview, P1L professed: “I wanted to deliver my project as soon as possible, I should aware that it was impossible, some project’s activities were crucial and I jumbled them, I missed to add some periods for leads and lags as well”. Almost all of project leaders used the “milestones” to monitor their projects’ progress, as stated by P1L: “We set some activities, the majors, were set as our milestones. They are the markers, check points in my project. We were monitoring the schedule by using them, they were trackable easily”. While, the projects’ team members of the IT developments assured that the low-grade quality of some supplied materials was almost creating serious lateness, as described by P2T: “We rejected some server components, these cheap imported materials were unacceptable. This delayed our progress a bit, but we had to accept other sub-standard components since they were still compatible with our server architecture, we thought that we need to minimize variances, it’s an important part to keep staying within schedule”.

Table 5. Emerged Theme: Project’s schedule monitoring

Category & Sub-categories	References	Sources	Participants
⊗ project’s schedule monitoring	21	5	P1L, P1T, P2L, P3T, P4Ta
⊗ milestones	16	5	P1L, P2L, P2T, P3L, P3T
⊗ sequence of activities	10	5	P1L, P2T, P2T, P3T, P4T
⊗ minimize variances	7	3	P1L, P2T, P3T
⊗ leads and lags	4	2	P1L, P1T

## Discussion and Conclusion

The iterative inductions of the current study found 5 themes that were supported by 26 sub-categories. These themes were the top 5 critical success factors of public transformational projects in leadership educational environment, which were projects’ innovation, team performance, risk management, resources controlling, and schedule monitoring. Most of the findings of the current study were also found in previous reports with regard to project’s success factors. The emerged theme of risk management and its components were similar to those of reported by Hyvari (2006), and also Munang and Faisal (2016) that risk management was an extremely important aspect to be managed properly in each stages of the projects. Other finding similarities can also be observed on the project’s success factor regarding resource controlling as reported by Isik et al. (2010), and Plant and Willcocks (2007), which stated that the availability of needed resources was vital for projects’ success. Several partial differences were noticed between the findings of this study and previous researches on the success factor of team effectiveness. On this factor, Adnan et al. (2012) and Aristo (2017) reported that commitment of project’s team members was one of project’s success factors, which none can be found in the current study, especially under the theme of project’s team performances. This shows a limitation of this study, since recruiting interviewees was extremely difficult, therefore in each projects, a specific role was only represented by one consented participant. When comparing the theme of project’s schedule monitoring, this study emerged a number of specific sub-themes, which were milestones, sequences of activities, variance, and also leads and lags, rather than the general terms that were mentioned previously by Buddas (2014) and Ika et al. (2012) such as clear goals, clarity of project’ scope, expected results, and activities.

However, one of the main findings and the educational setting of this study were the differentiations of the current study. Innovation, the main emerged theme of this qualitative research, was very rare can be found in the project management related literatures. In this study, among the top 5 projects’ critical success factors discovered, innovation was supported by 8 sub-categories or sub-themes that was way-surpassed the others. This main finding was not mentioned in the previously reviewed literatures such as by Adnan et al. (2012), Cooke-Davies (2002), and also by Plant and Willcocks (2007). In addition, few research reports were discussed different kinds of innovation, which were project’ procurement innovation (Barahona & Elizondo, 2012; Lu et al., 2013), evaluation of construction innovation (Murphy et al., 2011), and contractor selection innovation (Holt, 2010). The public leadership education and training environment that used transformation projects as its leadership laboratory was also a unique setting to this study compared to previous studies by Khoo (2017) on knowledge transformation in transdisciplinary leadership, Ashleigh et al., (2012) on project management blended education learning themes, and ElSafty et al. (2012) on education of construction health and safety.

This study aimed to investigate inductively the success factors existed in the mandatory Indonesian public transformational projects in the public leadership education and training environment. Five themes have emerged as the results of iterative textual analyzes that involved internal and external projects’ stakeholders, which were innovation, team performance, risk management, control of resources, and schedule monitoring. The interviewed external stakeholders i.e. end-users, were mostly unfamiliar with the concept of project’s success factors that reduced the speed of the fieldwork research in order to explain the concept to them at the

beginning of the interviews, since most of them had neither educated nor involved in such projects' environments. Nevertheless, they confirmed and echoed that the project's innovation was the prominent success factor among others. The existences and important roles of innovation in the investigated exemplary projects were also sustained by projects' internal stakeholders. Innovation was the main finding of the current study, which is a project's success factor that unique to the setting of Indonesian public transformational projects in leadership education and training.

## Recommendations

This study focused on discovering success factors in the mandatory public transformational projects that served as a method to assess Indonesian leadership education and training participants. The discovered factors were unique to the transformation public projects in leadership education and training environment, that were deemed to be the most successful among others from 2016 to 2018, and exhibited in public exposes and seminars. However, these unique settings put at least two limitations to the current study. The first limitation is regarding the research setting that was controlled in the area of leadership education, which was confronted by the very limited numbers of interviewees. The second limitation was related to the applied research method, that although it revealed 5 top success factors with in-depth and rich supporting information on their sub-categories, the results might not be generalized further. Therefore, the succeeding researches may choose to discover other projects' success factors that unique to some other similar education settings, such as project management or business management courses. Quantitative approaches may also suitable to survey and measure the existences and effects of the concluded factors to projects' success in different settings or wider boundaries.

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### The Inclusion of Cultural Diversity in Higher Education Curriculum Design

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## The Inclusion of Cultural Diversity in Higher Education Curriculum Design

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### Abstract

This paper reports findings of a study that assesses the measures taken by universities in selected South East Asian countries when developing the competencies of students from other countries. This is to address the internationalization thrust of higher education (HE) that constitutes the participation of international students and academics in HE-related activities. Specifically, this study assesses whether the academic programs (a) suit students' diverse backgrounds; and (b) address the cultural background from where the international students come from. Four participants from four different countries participated in this study. Two were HE academic leaders, researcher, and university leader; one was HE researcher and academic; while another was an academic. The data were collected through online in-depth interviewing conducted via email. The results revealed that majority of them perceived that cultural background was not addressed in the academic programs. However, certain courses in the HE institutions did address the host countries' cultural beliefs and traditions. The findings are discussed in the context of higher education institution to enlighten universities and higher education authorities on the appropriate method to design curriculum in universities hosting international students.

**Key words:** Intersection of culture; Universities; Curriculum; Cultural background; International students; South East Asian countries.

### Introduction

The ASEAN Economic Community envisions to become the 4th largest economy in the world by 2050 (ASEAN, 2017). The efforts to materialize this vision will significantly improve the livelihood of about 600 million people residing in ASEAN countries, and to achieve this, all efforts are focused on turning the majority into young educated workforce. Given universities have been acknowledged as a center that serves as an important agent of change for the socio-economic structure of a nation (Breznitz & Feldman, 2012; Campbell, 2017), it is imperative upon universities to support and substantiate the ASEAN vision. Universities in the ASEAN countries could strengthen collaboration among themselves or with other stakeholders in order to bring about their countries to a greater level, befitting the theme of thinking globally, and prospering regionally.

Higher education (HE) sector has the mandate to play critical roles in transforming a country via the training of workforce (Harrison, 2017), generation of relevant innovation, and production or reproduction of new knowledge (Lucchesi, 2005). For one, universities have been playing pertinent roles in producing competent individuals, shaping the values and norms of the society, as well as transforming its socio-economic structure. While much of their activities lead to great outcomes that help societies to respond to the increasingly changing milieus, the internalization of the university agenda also forces them to be culturally ready (Agnew & VanBalkom, 2009). A number of initiatives have been taken by universities to bring about more positive impacts not only at home but also on the international platform because they do not only serve for local but also for international students.

The presence of international students enrolling in a university creates a diverse learning environment, and in turn, creates an intersection of culture in a university ecosystem. Burrell, Fleming, Fredericks, & Burrell (2015) reported that the presence of international students at universities in the United States of America has resulted in

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difficulties to understand the different needs of students of diverse backgrounds. This necessitated certain effort to assess the unique experience of international students in order to provide them an effective learning process.

The Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia (now the Ministry of Education) outlines in its strategic plan the need to shape the good values and norms among its beneficiaries by providing quality HE services to not only its citizens but also people in the region (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012). This is evident in the formation of a distinct thrust in the Malaysian Education Strategic Plan that focuses on the efforts to bring about positive outcomes to other countries in the near and far. The internationalization agenda of the Malaysian Higher Education system involves the engagement of the international community, both as resources and beneficiaries of HE services. This involves the process to integrate an international, intercultural, or global dimensions into the purpose, functions, and delivery of HE services, including the teaching and learning aspect (Soejatminah, 2009). In fact, the internationalization agenda of the Malaysian Education system has also necessitated sound initiatives that involve participants from the international community. Besides providing national HE programs to international students, there are also international education programs that are offered to local students. They comprised of academic-related activities that involve students, academic members, industries, and community from various nationalities through (a) collaboration with foreign universities, (b) linkage with local and international industries, and (c) adaptation of outcome-based curriculum. All these initiatives are conducted to meet the needs of the international community, and enrolment of more international students (Laguador, Villas, & Delgado, 2014). For instance, in China, Singapore, and Malaysia, there has been a consistent growth in the establishment of branch campus of foreign universities, which in turn increase the enrolment of students in the universities, contributive of the effort to expedite the pace of HE massification; and access to it (Huang, 2007).

### **International Learning Environment**

Asia has become a compelling destination for international students, particularly from within the region. The international community at universities is characterized by the presence of individuals with different cultural backgrounds, ideas, and experiences. An estimated five million students choose to study outside their home countries in 2014 (ICEF, 2015). Besides leveraging on this trend, the need for universities to increase their economic capacity, as well as improve national and global rankings have driven them to put in strategies to increase the number of international students (Guo & Jamal, 2007; Jaroensubphayanont, 2014; Mahmud, Amat, Rahman, & Ishak, 2010).

Malaysia with its strategic location, and the increasing education cooperation among ASEAN countries have also seen an increase in the flow of international students (Malaklolunthu, & Selan, 2011). As of December 2014, Malaysian HE institutions have received 135,502 enrollment of international students (ICEF, 2015), making Malaysia jumped in the rankings of UNESCO's latest International Student Mobility Survey from 12th to the ninth place. The top sending countries for Malaysian institutions are Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Yemen, Sri Lanka, and Libya (The Sun Daily, 2015). By March 2018, there were 171,513 international students from about 174 countries who studied in Malaysian public and private HE institutions. (MOHE, 2018).

In Singapore, international students made up about 18-20% (or about 52,000) of the total undergraduate intake (Ling, 2014; Lur, 2011). In Thailand, the flow of international students increased from 4,343 in 2002 to 20,309 by 2011 (Jaroensubphayanont, 2014). In the Philippines, the number of international students has more than doubled over the last year with 26,000 in 2011 to more than 61,000 in 2012 (Ateneo De Manila University (2013). In Indonesia, there are about 5,700 foreign students (Lukman, 2016). Asian universities and colleges; local and private, are therefore experiencing cultural intersection with the presence of many international students.

Several strategies have been put in place to attract more international students including achieving institutions global recognition ranking, securing scholarships opportunities, establishing efficient immigration policy, providing state of the art facilities, and even conducting rigorous branding and promotion of the host countries (Samokhvalova, 2017). In fact, these are also some of the factors that influence students' choice of place to study. While supportive policies and impressive infrastructure have been taking place to facilitate internationalization, there are still some challenges facing international students. A number of studies have shown international students experiencing challenges adjusting to culture, climate, health care, accommodation, financial and language limitations (Akhtaruzzaman & Hoque, 2011; Mahmut et al., 2010; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Zhang & Goodson, 2011), and experiencing more stress and anxiety (Andrade, 2006), attributable to, among other reasons, their learning processes which could be related to intercultural interactions, and international understanding (Johnson, 2016; Ward, 2001).

Given the fact that the presence of people from different cultures would lead to the occurrence of cultural intersection, there seem to be an interesting emerging issue concerning the trend of importing and exporting HE activities or services, causing some extent of debates on HE reform in many countries in this region at both policy and institutional levels (Huang, 2007). This is due to the presence of challenges in communication and understanding of each other with differing values, beliefs, norms, as well as priorities (Rehm, 2003). The cultural background of different participants in a university forms essential bases of their underlying values, beliefs, and norms; and in turn, influence their behaviors and attitudes towards certain issues they involve in. Nonetheless, despite the many reports on the presence of international students studying in universities, little has been done to study the extent to which the participants' different cultural backgrounds are addressed in the programs offered at universities.

### **The Present Study**

The ways universities play roles in educating the society should accommodate the needs of the diverse population of students. This entails the planning of HE services that are relevant to the need of students, and the society they come from. In other words, in providing good initiatives of educational programs to participants of a different culture, the content and approaches adopted by the provider must recognize and embrace the cultural background of the participants. DuBrin (2014) accentuated this importance adding that any program that involves international community must address the participants' diversity, requiring the organizer to take into account, respect and enjoy a wide range of cultural and individual differences. Any programs that involve participants of different cultural background will only have genuine impacts if the design of the program is informed by the socio-cultural background of the participants. This suggests that the development of education curriculum should also take into account the background of its participants. This warrants for a study to assess whether education programs at universities in ASEAN countries consider such differences when designing education curricula.

The study assesses if HE providers have acquired knowledge about the culture of people from different places; and cultivate the positive feeling and behaviors towards people of other culture. Unlike other studies (i.e., Mahmud et al., 2010; Trice, 2003) which focused on international students' challenges, this study addressed the perspectives of HE subject matter experts (academics, HE researchers, and HE leaders). This study examined the harmony between the content of the academic program with international students' cultural background. Specifically, this study assesses

- a. whether the content of the academic program in universities take into account the cultural background of the society from which the international students come from?
- b. whether the international students are equipped with the skills to understand the customs, traditions, and beliefs of people in the destination culture?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants for this study came from four ASEAN countries, namely Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Brunei. They have been contacted by the researchers through the official and personal network. The participants from Thailand and Indonesia are academic members, researcher in higher education research as well as university leader. The participant from Brunei is an academic member, while the participant from Malaysia is an academic member and higher education researcher

### **Design**

The data were collected through online in-depth interviewing conducted via e-mail, a viable means of data collection activities that can be the alternative to face-to-face or telephone interview (Meho, 2006). It was semi-structured in nature that involves multiple e-mail exchanges between the researchers and participants over an extended period of time. The information provided by a participant was not shared with other participants hence information from a participant was not influenced by other participants which might occur in virtual focus group discussion (Schneider, Kerwin, Frechtling, & Vivari, 2002).

## **Instrument**

The interview questions have been developed based on a literature review to determine whether universities consider the cultural background of international students who study in their institution. Five open-ended questions were developed to answer the two research objectives of this paper. These questions were subjected to a review by one subject matter expert (SME). The questions also enquire the efforts to equip these students with the skills to understand the customs, traditions, and beliefs of people in the destination culture. The data gathered from the participants have represented the HE subject matter experts, giving credence and precision to the data. This substantiates the truth value of the qualitative data, an equivalent concept of validity in quantitative research. The consistency of the information given by the participants contributes to the trustworthiness of the findings, a concept which is equivalent to the concept of reliability in quantitative research. The word-processed responses in the email allow researchers to have rich verbatim descriptions of their view on the scopes enquired (Noble & Smith, 2015).

## **Data analysis**

The data analysis involves a systematic, iterative process of identifying and making meaning from common themes guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase guide to qualitative analysis.

## **Findings**

### **The linkage between the content of the academic program and the cultural background of international society**

Three of the participants mentioned that cultural background was not explicitly addressed in their academic programs. The participant from Thailand, who is also a director of a program shared "I don't think we adjust any content of our program....we don't do it." This is due to the fact that the university has very few international students.

Similarly, an academic from Indonesia also responded that "we only provide international student office to help international student deal with their problem." Although support is offered to all international students, it is more technical or psychological in nature, and not in terms of the academic program. The same participant shared that an advisor has been appointed to manage international students' issues.

Another participant from Brunei believes there is an integration element in the curriculum that may expose the students to the variety of cultural background among international students. She, however, is unsure of the extent of the integration. She stated that "Brunei does have exchange studies program, that allows their students to study abroad for a semester or a year. In return, students from participating countries send their students here. This has become an opportunity to add the diversity of cultural awareness for the students involved. Additionally, there are scholarships for international students, as an opportunity for the students to experience an international ambiance for international students. There is also an international office that assists the students to accommodate to the university in Brunei."

Interestingly, a participant from Malaysia however stated that there is a good extent of content in an academic program that takes into account the cultural background of international students..... The participant responded "Good, syllabus and examples mostly are international." To her opinion, the syllabus of courses, and examples used for teaching in classes are mostly international. She also reiterates that it is the lecturer's responsibility to be sensitive and to use materials that can be applied to student from any cultural background.

### **Understanding of the customs, traditions, and beliefs of the destination culture**

All the participants were asked about the extents to which their students were equipped with the appropriate skills to understand the customs, traditions, and beliefs of people in the destination culture. In Thailand, the undergraduate students were provided with general education subjects. Within these subjects, students are exposed to other cultures by participating in various activities such as role-play (by playing roles of other cultures) and performing cultural dances. Specifically, the participants mentioned that "we provide our undergraduate with general education subjects. Some of subjects ask students to study about other cultures. They performed activities like performing arts from other cultures for example cultural dances. They conduct a play to take roles from other cultures....We invited international students to attend our festivals."

In Indonesia, a subject known as Cross-Cultural Psychology is offered at the undergraduate level, although this subject is not a compulsory subject. In this subject, students learn about how cultures influence human behavior, specifically how people's thoughts, feelings and actions vary across cultures. The university where this participant works at also has an international office that deals with students' exchange program. As a preparation before students are sent overseas to pursue their studies, they will have to attend a cultural training. Cross-cultural awareness is also encouraged by organizing an exchange student program. The participant detailed out by putting that "Another program to increase cultural awareness is through cross-culture expedition. We used to bring our student for one-week field trip to ASEAN countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia... Students need to write a report on their cultural observation in those country and compare them to Indonesia culture. In our university, cross-cultural psychology is not really emphasized, but one of the university value is "kearifan lokal" which is more into indigenous psychology. Our students are encouraged to know more about various Indonesian culture. Therefore, several cultural learning programs are organized by the university including "Wayang" show. It is one of the Javanese culture, traditional dance as one of the extracurricular, teaching our students to be aware with the Indonesian handcraft and many more." The aim of this program was to observe cultural similarities and differences. The Indonesian students who attended this program prepared reports about their cultural observation. In the participant's opinion, however, the emphasis is more of making Indonesian students aware of their own culture instead of identifying the different cultural background of international students.

The participant from Brunei however, reported that there is no specific course that assists international students to assimilate in the country they are studying in. She acknowledged that there are differences between the culture in Brunei and culture of international students. The researcher from Malaysia reiterated that there is poor effort to formally promote understanding among students of various backgrounds. Nevertheless, she witnessed frequent interactions among students in hostels and classes that help build the understanding. She points out that "The target home country seems to focus more on implementing and highlighting their own values, which may be of importance for them to inculcate. I am unsure or unaware, however, of specific course units that we can undertake to focus on cultural and lifestyles sensitivities that are of difference to the home country."

In summary, from the responses, most international students may be equipped with the destination culture's heritage through subjects (like the general education subjects), students' exchange programs, field trips (i.e., cross culture expedition), or cultural performances. They are exposed to their destination country's cultural heritage by way of festivities, or probably through their own personal experiences. It is also found that all of those interviewees expressed a similar view when enquired about the consideration of the cultural background with the academic program. All of the participants believed that they were not aware of the academic program being tailored based on the international students' cultural background. This may be due to the low number of international students in the university, or perhaps, there are other programs (such as field trip) that are thought to have addressed the cultural diversity. Interestingly, it seems that in two of the countries interviewed, the focus is more on the culture of the destination country. This means, in many countries, the programs in universities emphasized on promoting their own cultural heritage instead of embedding the other countries' cultures in the teaching and learning processes.

## Conclusion

The enrolment of international students has led to the presence of diverse culture, values, language, and lifestyle in a learning environment, hence requiring the need to increase cultural awareness and appreciation (Andrade, 2006). The presence of the international community in a university creates some dynamic changes in the process of acquiring and disseminating knowledge; developing skills; and enhancing abilities. It is important, therefore, that teachers/lecturers learn how to create environments that acknowledge the cultural diversity that students of various backgrounds have their classrooms (Adams, 1992). Universities should realize that they have the responsibilities to embrace differences or diversity and in turn integrate it in the university life, including in the teaching and learning processes. This would encourage diversity development that ultimately result in meaningful university experience among students, including international students who expect a high standard of HE program (Kanji, Malek, & Tambi, 1999). They expect the knowledge and skills acquired throughout their enrolment would prepare them to become good professionals when they return to their country. Such expectation makes it pertinent for universities to best serve their international students (Padlee, Kamaruddin & Baharun, 2010).

This study has assessed whether the content of the academic program is in harmony with international students' cultural background. The study found that there is a lack of awareness on whether the content of academic programs has taken into account the cultural background of international society. Despite the awareness on the international content of academic programs, the participants reported that international students were exposed to activities which enhance their understanding of the customs, traditions, and beliefs of the destination culture.

The findings show that international students have, to some extent, been exposed to activities which may enhance their positive experience while enrolling in Malaysian universities. With regards to whether the content of acknowledge and extent of skills they acquire would be relevant to their country, little has been done by curriculum developers to ensure that curriculum contents are relevant to the context of the community where the international students come. This does not benefit a principle which underscores the essentiality to equip students with the competencies they genuinely require in order for them to fully function in their society (Cavanaugh, 2018). Students and graduates of universities must be ready to become the catalyst of progress, to become the agents of development and prosperity for their nation, and improve their, their family and society, quality of life. It is expected that once the cultural factors be taken into account, the programs offered by universities which host international students would be of much benefits to the international community.

The findings necessitate HE policy makers and universities to strategically devise activities that provide substantiated impacts to students, societies, and industries at local and international levels. The efforts must take cultural aspects into account, including students' cultural background. A number of interventions could be adopted by universities in their efforts to strengthen the delivery of the academic program so that it is suitable for students of international backgrounds. The interventions can be implemented at student, human resource, techno-structural, and strategic levels (Cummings & Worley, 2015).

1. Student level: Engaging international students to identify their need and assess the expectations; and outreaching ex-students or alumni, such as through Tracer Study, to evaluate the relevance of their academic program in relation to their career and life activities after graduation;
2. Human resource level; Training curriculum developer to acknowledge the need for having input from students, alumni, and stakeholders when developing curriculum. They should be trained to incorporate international input in university curricula.
3. Techno- Structural level; Conducting periodical curriculum review which emphasizes the need to embed internationally relevant input in academic programs; and establishing Board of Studies which consist of international members.
4. Strategic level: Engaging various parties from multi-national organizations, foreign missions (diplomat from foreign embassies); international alumni to become members in Board of Studies.

The above measures are expected to bring about more information which serves as bases to augment the content structure as well as pedagogical approach in university teaching and learning processes. The identified needs of students of different cultural backgrounds will enable curriculum developers to design internationally-informed curricula which take into account their different circumstances. Students may have a more meaningful learning process if they know that their study program suits their country's need or circumstances, being aware that they would be able to use and transfer the knowledge when they return to their country.

One limitation with this study however concerns the research design which was qualitative in nature. Therefore, it cannot be extended to the wider populations. Another limitation is attributed to personal biases that participants may unintentionally committed due to their personal experiences and awareness about curriculum contents and culture in the context of their teaching and learning. Thus, future study should include more participation from all ASEAN countries, and take into perspectives both the academics' and students' participants to allow for triangulation of data. Despite these limitations, the findings of the present study allow for the understanding of the extent universities incorporate cultural diversity in the designs and development of their curriculum to support the growing number of international students in their respective universities. The implication for this finding points to the importance of policy and practice in specific HE to include subjects or courses that can create cross-cultural awareness and diversity.

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### Should We Teach Pronunciation Explicitly in L2/EFL Classrooms?

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## Should We Teach Pronunciation Explicitly in L2/EFL Classrooms?

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to discuss whether explicit teaching of English pronunciation in second language (L2) and English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms is helpful for learners or not. This study aims to review the studies on pronunciation teaching to synthesize the literature. In this way, connections between research and practice will be formed and the implications for language teaching will be mentioned. In this study, a literature review (of around 40 articles, books and book chapters) has been done first and then, in accordance with the findings, the emerging themes (e.g. intelligibility, Lingua Franca Core and students' background) from the review were further reviewed and a synthesis is provided taking the findings regarding different perspectives into consideration. The results suggest that recently pronunciation teaching has shown great improvements and the aims of it have changed from attaining a native-like proficiency to being intelligible. The review suggests that the aim of pronunciation teaching should be to teach for functional and meaningful contexts and it should be a part of communicative approaches to provide students with a fluent speech. The findings also suggest that the focus in explicit pronunciation teaching should be on not only perception, but also production and only the relevant and useful parts of phonology should be taught to learners.

**Key words:** Pronunciation, English as an L2, Lingua Franca Core, Teaching pronunciation

### Introduction

Kelly (1969) calls pronunciation teaching the Cinderella of foreign language teaching as it has not been studied thoroughly unlike grammar and vocabulary components of languages. It was only after the 1980s that the first linguistic contribution was made to pronunciation teaching (Rogerson-Revell, 2011). This contribution is the development of International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as a part of the Reform Movement. This Reform Movement has radically changed the nature and aims of language teaching. Four objectives were suggested by the Reform Movement for a successful teaching (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996, 3):

- The spoken form of a language is primary and should be taught first.
- The findings of phonetics should be applied to language teaching.
- Teachers must have solid training in phonetics.
- Learners should be given phonetic training to establish good speech habits.

This new perspective gave way to a better and modern perspective on pronunciation teaching and its importance was acknowledged in the field. Since then, pronunciation studies and pronunciation teaching have experienced an immense increase in popularity (Atli & Bergil, 2012; Demirezen, 2010; Derwin & Munro, 2015; Gimson, 1994; Scarcella & Oxford, 1994; Silveria, 2013). However, despite this proliferation, various approaches and methods took pronunciation teaching into consideration differently. Accordingly, this paper aims to review research on pronunciation teaching to synthesize the literature. In this way, connections between research and practice will be formed and different views on pronunciation teaching will be discussed. Then, the comparison and contrast of the studies which support and oppose explicit teaching of pronunciation will be presented and the implications of this discussion for L2/EFL pronunciation teaching will be mentioned.

In order to realise the objective of the study, a literature review (of around 40 articles, books and book chapters) has been done as a first step to find out. Then, using Content Analysis these studies are classified and analysed.

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Content Analysis deals with analysing contents in different situations. Some instances of content in Content Analysis are articles, political debates, books and interviews. Accordingly, as content, articles, books and book chapters are included in the data of this study and they are analysed using Content Analysis in order to understand the issues surrounding explicit teaching of pronunciation. In accordance with the analysis, three main themes emerged: intelligibility, Lingua Franca Core and students' background. Consequently, these themes were further reviewed and expanded, and a synthesis was provided taking the findings regarding different perspectives into consideration.

## **Pronunciation Teaching**

In this section, in accordance with the aims of this paper, the history and goals of pronunciation teaching will be discussed in order to lay a foundation for the Discussion section. At the outset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, traditional methods such as Grammar Translation and Reading Approaches ignored communication skills and pronunciation teaching. The focus was more on the formal aspects of languages (Atar & Seedhouse, 2018). However, in the 40s and 50s Audio-lingualism favoured explicit pronunciation teaching as it saw oral production essential in accordance with the Reform Movement. It was essential to attain native-like pronunciation according to this view. However, the typical methods used for pronunciation teaching were Behaviourist in nature and they heavily focused on imitation, repetition and drilling (Rogerson-Revell, 2011). The aim here was to form useful habits and segments of sounds were the focus.

However, after the emergence of the Cognitive Approach, explicit pronunciation teaching was deemphasized and grammar and vocabulary teaching was preferred over pronunciation. The underlying motive for this was the belief that native-like pronunciation is impossible. Consequently, it was concluded that teachers should not spend much time on it, rather they should spend most of their time on the teachable and improvable parts of the language which are vocabulary and grammar (Scovel, 2000). This is the period when pronunciation teaching came to a stagnation and it was ignored in language acquisition studies. However, too much emphasis on vocabulary and grammar teaching was also highly criticized in the 80s. After that, the Communicative Approach and Task-Based Learning emerged. This was the continuum of the Reform Movement, because oral proficiency was highly valued and one of most important aims of language teaching, as Morley (1991, 488) put it, was: "Intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence." However, the problem here is that the Communicative Approach favours a good pronunciation, but it likes neither explicit teaching of phonemes and suprasegmentals nor provides clear answers to how to teach pronunciation. The Communicative Approach simply rejected pronunciation teaching for the reason that it is not a suitable way for teaching language as communication (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). Although pronunciation teaching was negatively affected by the emergence of the Communicative Approach, the importance of pronunciation teaching was never totally lost and especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, researchers and teachers have started to find out new ways to incorporate pronunciation teaching into the Communicative Approach in order to achieve better speaking skills for language learners (Jenkins & Setter, 2005).

Along with different views, the goals of pronunciation teaching also changed in the last century. Audio-lingualism and the Communicative Approach supported native-like proficiency as it enables the learners to achieve intelligibility and communicative competence (Demir, 2018). Then, especially starting from the 70s, intelligibility was seen as an essential objective of pronunciation teaching (Munro & Derwing, 2015). Finally, in the last decade, a more balanced view is adopted (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). This new perspective is an eclectic one which suggests that intelligibility is a satisfactory objective, but pronunciation teaching should also be available in order to deal with the inherent problems of pronunciation teaching/learning. Accordingly, in the next section, intelligibility in relation to standardization will be discussed.

## **Standardization and Intelligibility**

The label standard accent is something artificial and relative (Esling, 1998). Accents tell about where people have lived, what they do as a job or what their education level is. Then, having an accent is something mostly social and it is the result of the hierarchical society (Esling, 1998; Trudgill, 2008). Received Pronunciation (RP) is regarded as the formal accent of English not only for native speakers but also for L2 learners. It is taken for granted that RP should be the goal in language teaching and all the non-native speakers (NNS) should learn it. The reason for this was the idea that RP is the best accent. However, this had some historical and sociological reasons. RP was used by a small minority in Britain and it was a symbol for being in a higher position in the community. As a result, English L2 learners were taught in accordance with the RP accent so that they acquire a more popular and prestigious accent. In addition, Trudgill (1999) claims that RP is the most widely studied

accent and it is prestigious throughout the world. Consequently, it was argued that it would be wise to teach it to the learners of English.

However, as mentioned in the previous part, along with methods, goals of pronunciation teaching have also changed in the recent decades. The researchers who support teaching a standard accent for pronunciation teaching claim that L2 learners of English learners should have a native-like pronunciation and this is especially apparent in the 1980s in the Communicative Approach. However, the goal of being native-like has changed to being intelligible lately (See Morley, 1991). Cook (2009), for example, claims that native-like accent should not be the purpose of pronunciation teaching, because it is already impossible. As L2 learners already have set-up the phonological module of their mother tongue in their mind, it is nearly impossible for learners to sound like a native. Jenkins (2000) further claims that RP is only used by a little minority in the British society and its usage is very confined. Moreover, she claims that RP has already lost its reputation and it is even associated with negative perceptions like being overly formal or reminding of a hierarchical structure in the society. Finally, the sound inventories of all languages are in the process of change. In his book, Gimson (1994, 90) demonstrates how changes in different accents of English occur. For example, a recent trendy change is the dropping of /j/ after alveolar consonants. To exemplify, words such as *allude* /ə'ljʊ:d/ has become / ə'lu:d / or *luminous* /'lyu:mi:nəs/ has become /'lu:mi:nəs/. From these arguments, it can be concluded that accents are relative and they change throughout time. Consequently, a native-like standard accent is no more the goal of pronunciation teaching and acquiring an intelligible accent is a more reasonable goal.

So, what exactly does intelligibility mean? Kenworthy (1987, 13) defines intelligibility as “being understood by a listener at a time in a given situation”. Gimson (1994, 329) defines three criteria for minimal intelligibility in any model designed for learners. These are:

1. It should be at least as easy for the foreign student to learn as any natural model.
2. It should be readily intelligible to most native speakers of English.
3. It should provide a base for the learner who has acquired it to understand the major natural varieties of English.

Intelligibility is the main aim of pronunciation teaching now (Jenkins, 2000). It is a quite reasonable aim considering the claims of the two eminent researchers in the field of Applied Linguistics: Cook (2009) and Krashen (1981) argue that native-like pronunciation is nearly impossible for L2 learners. However, as Kenworthy (1987) mentioned in the definition, the term intelligibility is a relative one and it depends on the context. This is because of the properties of the target language and the native tongue. In fact, this is why Jenkins (2000) aims at forming an international English as a Lingua Franca which is intelligible to learners from different language backgrounds.

To sum up the argument, one of the fundamental aims of pronunciation teaching today is to have learners have an intelligible accent by which they can communicate throughout the world. Having a standard or a native-like accent is devalued as it does not conform to the reality and as it is not feasible in a globalized world where needs and goals vary immensely. Today, the number of people using English as non-natives is more than the natives throughout the world.

### **The Camp of Pro(NON)ciation: Why should not We Teach Pronunciation?**

As mentioned in the introduction part, after the 1980s the Communicative Approach and Task-Based learning rejected explicit pronunciation teaching and studies about pronunciation teaching were very scarce. Those against pronunciation teaching have several reasons for this.

Firstly, in his book Krashen (1981) claimed that most of the language teaching fails because this teaching is against the nature of language learning. He claims that learners should learn languages just like the children: with natural input without any explicit teaching. This is because, learning can never be converted into acquisition and learned rules always decrease a learners' performance, which he calls the monitoring. Krashen and Terrel (1983) claims that learned rules fail because:

- A) Learners must have time to monitor their utterance before speaking.
- B) Learners are expected to consciously aim for being grammatical.
- C) Learners have to have the explicit knowledge of a particular rule.

These conditions are rarely met in daily spontaneous spoken language. So, Krashen (1981) strictly rejects explicit teaching of pronunciation as the learned segments and phonological rules will only make learners' speaking performance harder.

Another criticism to the explicit teaching of pronunciation is based on the idea that phonological features are not easy to learn. This suggests that learners must master many rules to learn a phonological property (Krashen, 1982). For example, rules for stress seems quite complex for English and they are difficult to learn. In fact, even if learners learn them, it is very unlikely that they will be able to use them during a spontaneous conversation. Therefore, researchers like Wells (2006) claim that pronunciation teaching in accordance with English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) of Jenkins (2000) is also problematic. The reason is, it ignores parts of English in which NNSs have difficulty and this is against a natural language acquisition process.

Critical Period Hypothesis (Penfield & Roberts, 1959; Lenneberg, 1967) is also used as a counter argument for explicit pronunciation teaching. The ideas of Neufeld (1980) and Tarone (1978) are in conflict with researchers such as Jenkins (2000) and Cook (2009) in that Neufeld and Tarone claim that learners cannot acquire pronunciation neatly if they have passed the critical age. They claim that adults cannot acquire pronunciation perfectly unlike children, which is because of the psychomotor skills rather than psycholinguistic obstacles caused by the critical period. What they suggest is that as adults are used to pronouncing sounds according to their L1, their nerves and muscles cannot do the necessary movements for the exact L2 sounds. For example, according to their claim, a Turkish learner of English will not be able to pronounce /w/ correctly, because his/her psychomotor nerves will tend to pronounce it like the labiodental sound /v/ which exists in Turkish. Therefore, rather than rounding his/her lip while saying /w/, s/he will still use teeth along with lips. As a result, Tarone (1978) concludes that native-like proficiency is practically impossible. Hence, there is no need to teach pronunciation.

Finally, to teach pronunciation, not only learners but also teachers should be familiar with phonology and the International Phonetic Alphabet. However, Gimson (1994) claims that phonology is a daunting word for both learners and students, and even if students can be taught pronunciation, the most important problem is teachers. Most of the teachers throughout the world do not know the phonological alphabet or they do not have enough capability to teach it.

### **The Camp of Pronunciation Teaching: Why should We Teach Pronunciation?**

Pronunciation teaching has gained popularity over the last decades and interest in integrating pronunciation teaching into the Communicative Approach has soared. Many researchers such as Cook (2009), Jenkins (2000), Gimson (1994), Cenoz and Lecumberri (1999) support pronunciation teaching. However, as mentioned in the Introduction part, these researchers are aware of the problems caused by the methods in Audio-lingual Method. Therefore, rather than using repetitive activities without any functions, they tried to incorporate pronunciation teaching into the Communicative Approach and Task-Based Learning with communicative and meaningful activities. For instance, Celce-Murcia, (1996) suggests that pronunciation can be taught via communicative activities such as games, problem solving activities or role playing. The point here is that pronunciation should have a function in these activities and students must use pronunciation to work out the activity. For example, a problem-solving activity which requires ordering something on phone may be designed. In this activity, the things to be ordered can be chosen in a way that they have minimal pairs and the wrong use of these minimal pairs results in misunderstanding. As a result, students will try to solve the problem and this activity provides comprehensible input for L2 learners, which as Krashen (1981) suggests is essential for successful language learning. As a result, it can be argued that the target pronunciation teaching should be an integral part of communicative activities.

As for the theoretical and practical reasons which make pronunciation teaching necessary, in her study Jenkins (2000) found out that out of the communicative problems observed among language learners, most of them are caused by pronunciation errors. This means that pronunciation is the area which threatens intelligibility the most. In addition, in their study Hinofotis and Bailey (1980) found that even if learners have a good competence in grammar and vocabulary, as long as they do not have good pronunciation abilities, they fail much more frequently than those who have a good understanding of pronunciation. This suggests that pronunciation teaching is essential and as Gimson (1994) argues, it is inescapable that at least rudimentary aspects of English should be taught to learners.

## The Discussion and Evaluation of the Review

As mentioned in the previous section, in the 80s Krashen (1981) claimed that no teaching can be converted into acquisition. However, Bialystok (1996) claims that some students make it to turn learned items into acquisition and they can achieve an automatic and fluent accent. Bialystok (1996) suggests that this can be achieved through continuous use of language. Even if learners learn rules for sounds and segments in pronunciation teaching, when they have the chance to use their knowledge in natural settings over a prolonged time, these rules become automatic just like most of our motor abilities. In this respect, although the Communicative Approach was against pronunciation teaching in the 80s, pronunciation teaching can be incorporated into communication and learned phonology can be converted into fluent speech by taking part in various communicative activities. At this point, Krashen (1981) puts forward the idea that there is no need for pronunciation teaching, because students will just take it in through comprehensible input and communicative activities. However, this idea has some flaws. First of all, people are not usually aware of the suprasegmental features or the properties of sounds they use. Cook (2009) and Jenkins (2000) claim that most of the phonological properties of phonology are subconscious. For example, most ordinary people can use language successfully, but when they are asked to explain how phonological features such as stress and intonation may change meaning, they cannot do it. People with no background in Phonology are not even aware of how sounds are produced even though people utter thousands of words each day. A concrete example of the subconscious feature of Phonology comes from Jenkins (2000). Japanese learners do not have an /l/ and /r/ distinction and they are not minimal pairs in Japanese. As a result, when they learn English, unless they are taught explicitly that these two sounds are different phonemes, most of them even do not recognize the difference. In my own English teaching experience in the Turkish context, too, almost none of my undergraduate students, who had had at least 8 years of English teaching, were aware of the difference between [ð] and [θ] and in fact, they were quite surprised to hear that they were different than /t/ as this does not exist in Turkish. My students also could not recognize the difference between /w/ and /v/ and usually they just used /v/ for both of them. Then, it can be argued that if there are differences in the phonological inventories of the first and L2, it is really difficult for learners to realize these differences. This is because, it is almost impossible for them to distinguish these sounds as their first language has already shaped their brain and phonological perception (Revell-Rogerson, 2011).

In response to Krashen's (1981) claim that explicit teaching hinders L2 learning, Esling (1998) claims that consciousness raising can be very useful for learners to deal with both the transfer errors and universal errors. In addition, it contributes to the automatization of the rules and it helps the students turn their learned knowledge into an acquired one. Esling (1998) claims that learners can learn just by taking part in communicative activities, but if they are given a well-structured task, it can make things easier for them. In fact, it may be suggested that this is the general aim of the L2/EFL teaching: making the learning process easier and more efficient. Esling (1998, 27) gives an example to better explain it: People can learn playing tennis 'just by doing it', but in addition to demonstration, if they are given good structured instructions such as: "first, how to hold the racket, then, tossing up the ball, after that striking the ball and placing the ball and finally, varying the speed and direction of it.", the learning process will be easier. Of course, the student will initially do these steps slowly, but it is quite possible that after playing tennis for a long time s/he will be able to use it spontaneously without thinking about the mentioned steps at all. In the same vein, if learners are given good and guided instructions in pronunciation, they can also acquire a fluent style via practice.

As for the criticisms of Neufeld (1980) and Tarone (1978) in the previous section regarding the Critical Period Hypothesis, Scovel (1969) suggests that Critical Period Hypothesis does have a great effect on the phonology inventory of learners. While most adults can successfully acquire and surpass young learners in mastering syntax, grammar and vocabulary, they almost never succeed in achieving a native fluency (Revell-Rogerson, 2011). Some other studies also suggested that age is a considerable factor in pronunciation teaching (Aydın & Akyüz, 2017; Roohani, 2013). This shows that Critical Period Hypothesis is indeed at work for language learning, especially for pronunciation. This is attributed to the brain's loss of plasticity after a certain age and as a result, foreign accent is nearly inescapable (Lenneberg, 1967). This also gives way to the idea that foreign accents are to be accepted as natural as it is already very difficult for L2 learners to achieve a native-like pronunciation in their L2 while having another L1 in their brain (Cook, 2009).

Another important point to mention is Cook's (2002, 2003) Multi Competence Theory which claims that interlanguage is the indispensable outcome of L2 learning. This suggests that an L2 cannot be independent of a first language and vice versa. Consequently, it can be argued that interlanguage for phonology is very strong. Those against pronunciation teaching assume that L2 phonology can be acquired just like babies do the first language, but the point they miss is that L2 learners already have a first language in their mind and this will

have an effect on the acquisition of an L2 (Atar, 2014, 19). This also implies that the aim of pronunciation teaching should be intelligibility as it is almost impossible to acquire an L2 perfectly while having another language in the mind. Moreover, the universal errors which are seen across learners from many different language backgrounds also suggest that Critical Period Hypothesis is active and universal errors such as epenthesis or deletion occur in the languages of learners regardless of their first language. Then, it can be concluded that these universal errors should be considered carefully and used in language teaching books and materials (See Jenkins, (2000) for a detailed reading.). Moreover, these errors support Jenkin's (2000) *Lingua Franca Core*, because these universal errors of NNSs can be used to achieve intelligibility as much as possible.

One another point that is worth mentioning is that as Jenkins (2000) suggests, the most important factor in pronunciation teaching is the learners. The goals must be set up in accordance with their needs. For example, if they use English only in NNS environments, there is no need for wasting time on trying to achieve a native-like proficiency. In addition, Jenkins' (2000) minimum requirements for intelligibility suggests that differences which do not cause meaning differences such as [ð] and [θ] may not be taught. The point here is not to ignore them, but to postpone them until learners acquire more essential issues first. Still, Jenkins (2000) acknowledge the fact that it is quite acceptable if learners want to learn these differences. In fact, these minute differences may be taught in the later stages and this is what is meant by postponing. Jenkins (2000) found out in her studies that learners have stage-like developments in pronunciation learning and minute differences such as the interdental sounds are not learned in the initial stages even if these are taught to students. Accordingly, it may be argued that in pronunciation teaching, learners should only be given essential and meaningful phonological properties and very detailed properties should be ignored or postponed until they reach a specific level.

One more issue that is worth discussion is the importance of the students and their background. This is because, no theory or method neatly satisfies their needs (Dalton & Seidhofer, 1994). To exemplify, Jenkins (2000) suggests that the differences between /l/ and /r/, and /ʒ/ and /ʃ/ must be maintained. This is a valid argument, because these are the problematic sounds. However, these are irrelevant for Turkish learners of English as Turkish already has the distinctions between these sounds. In other words, not only teachers, but also language teaching books should align themselves with the needs of the students and only relevant points must be given priority. For example, while I was teaching English at a state university in Turkey, the course book *Success* (Parsons et al., 2007) was used for the main course and *Contemporary Topics* (Kisslinger, 2010) for listening and speaking. However, *Success* has no coherent way for teaching pronunciation and from time to time it solely presents some minimal pairs to teach different phonemes. However, these are neither in a context nor embedded in an activity. As for *Contemporary Topics*, it was totally designed according to the Communicative Approach in the 80s and it has no explicit teaching for pronunciation. It merely presents listening parts and provides communicative activities for speaking. As discussed above speaking alone does not improve students' speech as much as a successful and efficient interaction requires.

As for what to pay attention to in pronunciation teaching, systematic and simple rules should be taught to students. For example, final devoicing is a universal error of English L2 learners and if they are made aware of it, this can work and prevent communication problems. For instance, as Cook (2009) suggests, if students are given the rule that vowels are a little bit longer before voiced plosives word-finally, this can enhance students' intelligibility. Another example is stress. If students are told to stress only content words, this also profoundly enhances their intelligibility. For instance, in Turkish inflections, modals or pronouns are also stressed. Hence, if they learn not to stress these words in English, this helps the intelligibility of their English.

Finally, it can be argued here that Jenkins' (2000) *Lingua Franca Core* is very useful, because even if there is a negative attitude towards standard accents or having a native-like accent, there is this problem that if students are not given any pronunciation teaching and if they do not at least learn the rudimentary aspects of English, they will end up with being only understandable to a very restricted community. To exemplify, if Turkish learners are not given any phonological training, their Turkish accent will be very hard for most of the native speakers and NNSs of English. Consequently, *Lingua Franca Core* (for a detailed reading on the subject, see: Jenkins, 2000) can supply the universally necessary sounds for intelligibility and learners can acquire the necessary sounds which are essential for a satisfactory communication.

## Conclusion

In this paper, the issues around pronunciation teaching and its history has been presented first and then, whether pronunciation should be taught explicitly in English L2/EFL classrooms has been discussed via reviewing the literature from the perspective of those who support and oppose pronunciation teaching. The review has

suggested that pronunciation teaching has shown a great improvement in the recent decades and its aims have changed from attaining a native-like proficiency to being intelligible. The review and its implications for real life practice in L2 classrooms are also mentioned by considering the review of the literature. The analysis and synthesis suggest that the aim of pronunciation teaching should be to teach phonology for functional and meaningful contexts and it should be a part of communicative approaches to provide students with a fluent speech. The focus should be on not only perception but also production and only relevant and useful parts of phonology should be taught to learners. In this sense, this area should further be supported with studies and research in order to have a clear understanding of how students acquire phonology of an L2 and what is exactly meant by useful and relevant. Finally, at the end of the Discussion section, specific instances from English and Turkish are provided to demonstrate the implications of the discussion. As a conclusion of the analysis, it may be suggested that explicit pronunciation teaching should be further supported with research in order to have a clear understanding of the benefits and disadvantages of explicit pronunciation teaching.

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### **Becoming Socially Responsible: The Implementation of Project-Oriented Problem-Based Learning**

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## Becoming Socially Responsible: The Implementation of Project-Oriented Problem-Based Learning

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### Abstract

Project-oriented problem-based learning (POPBL) is an alternative approach to innovative teaching and is widely implemented in the classroom. However, little information is gathered pertaining to its implementation in psychology-related subjects. The present study is guided by two objectives: 1) to examine students' perception of this type of approach, and (2) to determine whether students' perception improves after the implementation of POPBL. 103 participants aged between 18-24 years old ( $M = 21.91$ ,  $SD = 2.14$ ) participated in this study. A measure, named the Students' Learning Experience Scale (SLES) was constructed to determine participants' perception of their learning in five aspects: (1) acquired knowledge, (2) soft skills, (3) contribution and engagement, (4) sustainability; and (5) assessments. The results from the present study suggested that the POPBL was indeed highly acceptable and favored by all students. A paired t-test was also conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach on students' scores on the SLES. The results show that there was a significant difference in the scores for students' perception of the course before ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .45$ ) and after ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = .40$ );  $t(87) = (-4.05)$ .  $p = .000$ . These findings were further discussed with respect to the current literature on teaching and learning approaches, and the significant implications in developing effective pedagogic strategies.

**Key words:** Project oriented problem-based learning, Psychology, Teaching and learning.

### Introduction

The emphasis in psychology is on human behaviours and mental processes that go beyond individual-focused. It integrates various aspects at the social, cultural, economic, political and environmental levels to promote positive change. This integration at the individual and systemic levels requires that psychology students to have attributes refer to as the "*psychologically literate citizen*" (Cranney, Botwood, & Morris, 2012; Mair, Taylor & Hulme, 2013) where they are able to respond to the call for social responsibility (McGovern, Corey, Cranney, Dizon, Holmes, Kuebli et al., 2010). An awareness about social responsibility allows students to be more rounded in their view of knowledge, that the understanding of psychology should not only benefit them, but also the local and global communities in general (Mair, Taylor, & Hume, 2013).

The vision of a psychologically literate citizen sets an important basis for understanding the value of an education in psychology that fosters social development and engagement. The centrality of this is the linkage between the curriculum and application of knowledge to the real world. This involves educational initiatives that are geared towards incorporating some sorts of applied learning experiences as a means to enhance students' academic learning and personal development (e.g., Halpern, 2010; McGovern et al., 2010; Reich & Nelson, 2010). Psychology teachers too, apart from imparting knowledge, have an obligation to prepare students to adapt and survive in their current and future world (Cranney & Dunn, 2011). Many past studies have indicated the importance of internship, service learning or field experience in the curriculum (Norcross, Hailstorks, Aiken, Pfund, Stamm & Christidis, 2016). This is supported in other studies which demonstrated that students' success is highly correlated with frequent experiential learning (Pawlow & Mainz, 2017; Stoloff, Curtis, Rodgers, Brewster, & McCarthy, 2012). As such, the educators are expected to develop the competencies on various instructional methods and use of technology in and out of their classrooms to enrich students' knowledge and skills in a more engaging outcome-based educational method.

In addition, students who choose to major in psychology are frequently motivated by the opportunity to make a difference, and therefore are more likely than other undergraduates to engage in voluntary work (HESA, 2012). According to Bromnick and Horowitz (2013), students often enter psychology programs because they are interested and

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wanted to help. The desire to help, coupled with psychological understanding, can contribute to the ability of students to positively contribute to the world in which they live (Cranney & Dunn, 2011), and in turn becoming socially responsible.

The focus on improving student outcomes also necessitates the improvement in the quality of teaching workforce. This means that the educators are instrumental in creating effective teaching and learning environments. Ideally, all psychology teachers, lecturers, or educators should not only strive to impart knowledge alone, but encourage their students to apply this knowledge into the real setting. The students should be encouraged to acquire certain set of skills, values, and innate qualities that will propel them within the field. This necessitates the lecturers to tap on these various qualities as a way to prepare the students to the real world. This also means that academics need to shift their conventional teaching and learning process toward a more engaging outcome-based educational method.

One alternative learning method and a widely used method of teaching such as the project-oriented problem-based learning (POPBL) can help achieve this (Pucher & Lehner, 2011). Central to the POPBL approach is the idea that learning is most effective when students put theory into practice (Harmer, 2014). POPBL provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge and at the same time gather information. POPBL can be characterized as a teaching and learning model with well-constructed problems that emphasizes student-centered instruction by assigning projects to small groups of students (Li & Faghri, 2015). The POPBL sets the platform for students to engage themselves in real-life problems facing the communities, while at the same time working for possible solutions. POPBL is also a tool used to provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to solving novel, real-world problems. Through POPBL too, students are taught to be more aware of the social contexts which allows for understanding of different problems and challenges that the community (global or local) experience. The approach of POPBL is based on Jean Piaget's cognitive theory, John Dewey's and Lewin's experiential learning, and Vygotsky's social cognitive theory. These theories share the same goal in learning- students will learn better when they experience their own learning. The most effective experience being "minds on and hands-on" which also requires social interaction. POPBL provide more meaningful learning as a result of being motivated. By learning in the context, it is easier for students to transfer and relate the knowledge in other related context. This paper will discuss the implementation of POPBL in a psychology course and determine the students' experience of this type of approach to learning in the classroom. Specifically, the objectives are two-folds:

- 1) To determine students' overall perception of the course when POPBL is included, and
- 2) To examine whether there is a significant difference before and after implementing POPBL.

### **POPBL: Introduction, Features, and Process**

The POPBL is originated from the Aalborg University Denmark (Hussain & Rosenorn, 2008). The three important features that define POPBL are (1) problem, (2) project, and (3) teamwork. POPBL is student-centered rather than subject-oriented, focusing more on the learning process (Yasin & Rahman, 2011). The POPBL focuses on project. This project-based which has goal and action for change, can motivate and gain commitment among students who are involved in the project (Yasin & Rahman, 2011). The project is related to a question or problem usually being selected by the students. A good problem is characterized as being authentic or realistic, constructive and integrated, suitable in complexity, promote self-directed and lifelong learning, and stimulate critical thinking and metacognitive skills (Khairiyah, Syed, Zamry, & Nor-Farida, 2010).

The key features in the POPBL include learning by doing, real world problems, role of the tutor as a guide, team work, and an end product (Harmer, 2014). The student role changes from learning by listening to learning by doing. They are engaged in real life experiences and activities. This links the students to real world issues which will sustain their interest and motivation (Bell, 2010). By participating in real life activities, students are able to efficiently integrate knowledge learnt from classrooms into their understanding (Hoffmann, & Ritchie, 1997).

In a POPBL project, a teacher will act as a facilitator, mentor or supervisor. Stauffacher et al. (2006: 255) explain: "the teacher's role changes from a distributor of knowledge to a process manager, helping students in their learning process by initiating reflection processes and supporting them, if necessary, on substantive matters". Usually, the learning takes place between students in the group while the instructor was essentially a supervisor and moderator (Frank, Lavy & Elata, 2003).

POPBL is usually conducted in a group. Students are expected to collaborate with other people, group or organization outside their classroom. The basic principles of POPBL are student-centered, problem-oriented, focus more on learning process in finding solution, project based which composed of goals and action for change, as well as promotion of soft skills (i.e., communication, problem solving, team work, decision making). POPBL emphasizes learning activities that are long term, interdisciplinary and student-centered. Students are expected to apply their knowledge of psychology and

their associated skills and attributes to problem solving and interacting with the everyday world around them (Stevens & Gielen, 2007).

### **Implementation of POPBL in Different Subjects/Courses**

POPBL is a widely employed method of teaching across diverse educational institutions (Lehmann et al., 2008; Kolmos, 2009). This includes the implementation of POPBL in the technology field (Nielsen, Alminde, Bisgaard, Laursen, & Bhandari, 2006), programming course (Ibrahim & Halim, 2013), engineering (Li & Faghri, 2015; Mohamed, Mat Jubadi, & Wan Zaki, 2011; Rios et al., 2010; Yusoff, Keng & Mohamad, 2011), architectural field (Sharif, Fared, & Maarof (2012) and computer science (Pucher & Lehner, 2011). This model is often implemented in the technical subjects, such as engineering and computing (Pucher & Lehner, 2011) aims at applying technical knowledge while at the same time acquiring practical skills and integrating sustainable designs in engineering as well as in programming (Chandrasekaran, Stojcevski, Littlefair & Joordens, 2013).

Several studies reported positive outcomes of POPBL (i.e., Ibrahim & Halim, 2013; Rios et al., 2010). Rios et al. (2010) reported that the methodology provides three main advantages: (1) it facilitates training in technical, personal, and contextual competences; (2) real problems in the professional sphere are dealt with; and (3) collaborative learning is facilitated through the integration of teaching and research. In addition, Ibrahim and Halim (2013) implemented POPBL in an introductory course in their university and found that POPBL is very much applicable to be implemented even for freshmen in the computing field. The results have shown that students are highly motivated and satisfied with POPBL implementation towards improving their soft-skills (communication between teammates and planning) as well as their technical skills (analysing real-world problem, designing the structured solutions and developing the products). Pucher and Lehner (2011) were in support of POPBL as most teachers they interviewed agreed with the implementation of POPBL in the field of computer science. The advantages of this type of method in teaching include the ability of students in applying their technical knowledge, getting involved into team processes and understanding some cases even so called soft factors in project management. This study indicates that 95% of the students reported that they really liked the POPBL lessons.

However, a number of studies have also indicated the complex picture of POPBL. For example, Harmer (2014) noted that the defining of POPBL is often problematic because the broadness of the term and therefore it usually means different things in different countries. Furthermore, it is closely related to and sometimes used interchangeably with problem based learning (PBL). Incorporating POPBL into the teaching can also turn chaotic in the perception of the students (Pucher & Lehner, 2011). Yasin and Rahman (2011) implemented POPBL in Life Sciences subject in Education course. In this study, the researchers acknowledged that most of the students are used to the traditional method of learning. When they gave feedback on the implementation of POPBL, many of them reported feeling lost at the very beginning of the class. They also failed to see the connectedness between the contents lectured. Some of the students reported that the tasks given were overwhelming.

In summary, POPBL has been implemented in certain disciplines, particularly the technical courses. However, very few studies actually implement POPBL in the human sciences field. Therefore, this study discusses the implementation of POPBL in a psychology course. The purpose of this paper is to describe the implementation of POPBL in a psychology course and to determine its effectiveness.

### **Teaching Psychology**

There are many learning domains to be achieved in the undergraduate psychology curriculum (Altman, 1996; APA 2013). For example, the APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major 2.0 (APA, 2013; hereinafter referred to as APA Guidelines 2.0) identified five learning goals: (a) knowledge-base in psychology, (b) scientific inquiry and critical thinking, (c) ethical and social responsibility in a diverse world, (d) communication, and (e) professional development.

In addition, Altman (1996) proposes a conceptual model of educational domains. In this model, he proposes three specific domains that all students should obtain: (a) foundational knowledge (i.e., the core content and methods of psychology), (b) professional knowledge (i.e., knowledge of the practice of psychology), and (c) socially responsive knowledge. The purposes of socially responsive knowledge include, “first to educate students in the problems of society; second, have them experience and understand first-hand social issues in their community; and third, give students the experience and skills to act on social problems” (Altman, 1996). In other words, Altman calls for a curriculum to be linked to the community needs, and engage students in direct, academically based problem solving on any social issues. In fact, socially responsive knowledge depends heavily on both foundational and professional knowledge. All three domains (i.e., social, foundational, and professional knowledge) are intertwined and codependent with each other. A

graduate who achieves all of these three domains embodies the psychologically literate citizen. Therefore, having a curriculum that supports all three would ensure the undergraduates are equipped with knowledge that would allow them to be better citizens in the future.

On the other hand, McGovern and colleagues (2010) introduced the concept of psychological literate citizen which encapsulates the common graduate attributes or capabilities that students should acquire while undertaking a major in psychology. Psychological literacy means, among others, having a basic knowledge of the critical subject matter of psychology, taking a creative and amiable skeptic approach to problem solving, and applying psychological principles to personal, social and organizational issues in work, relationships and the broader community. From some perspectives, psychological literacy becomes the most important outcome of undergraduate education in the discipline. It connects skills and knowledge from multiple domains, and applies theory to practice in various settings.

Although psychology educators internationally have been working toward helping students to acquire these common attributes, it has been only recently that educators have explicitly delineated attributes and learning outcomes and have sought to develop appropriate teaching and assessment strategies, which also include whole-program approach (Cranney & Dunn, 2011). To achieve this, teaching psychology means educators should be able to provide opportunities for students to engage in real world that can allow them to develop a set of skills which include critical thinking, communication, negotiation, cooperation, decision making, and problem solving skills. Psychology educators may need to adapt the curriculum to facilitate transfer of knowledge and skills to situations beyond the classroom. An educator therefore should:

- i) recognise and teach the applications of psychology, its relevance to the real world and the transferability of skills, rather than always teaching it in a theoretical context (Dunn et al., 2011; Mair et al., 2013). This also involves incorporating different strategies in teaching such as the use of POPBL;
- ii) constructively align (Biggs, 1996) the courses to explicitly include psychological literacy in the learning outcomes, teaching, and the assessments (Dunn et al., 2011; Trapp, 2010); and
- iii) model psychological literacy in our own professional lives, through our interactions with colleagues and students, using psychology to inform our teaching practices, solve problems and ensure inclusivity (Bernstein, 2011; Cranney & Dunn, 2011).

## **The Context of the Study**

### **The Course: Psychology of Human Relations**

Psychology of Human Relations was offered at the Department of Psychology, *Kulliyah* of Islamic Revealed knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia. This course is generally offered to third year students at the university, though other students from different levels of study would also take this course.

The objectives of this course include to (1) introduce basic concepts of human relations in various settings; (2) introduce generic skills in interpersonal contexts; (3) illustrate ways to improve interpersonal skills via skill-building suggestions, exercises, and cases; and (4) highlight the Islamic view of interpersonal interactions and human relations. This course aims to familiarize students with theories and skills of human relations at the interpersonal and organizational levels. It stresses the role of psychosocial and cultural factors in effective communication which serves as the basis for human relations. It includes topics such as interpersonal communication, understanding individual differences, developing teamwork skills, group decision making, resolving conflicts, leadership, positive political skills, motivating others, as well as customer satisfaction.

In addition, the learning outcomes of this course are to (1) play various roles based on psychological principles of human relation; (2) display human relation skills according to prescribed step-by-step criteria; and (3) demonstrate self-awareness, sensitivity toward others and personal responsibility while interacting with others.

### *The Project: Course Design (Implementation of POPBL)*

The POPBL approach was implemented in this course to train students to synthesize knowledge from various methods of learning, while at the same time enhance their knowledge through application of that knowledge in the real world. Various skills such as collaboration, communication, and other interpersonal skills cannot be learnt only in classrooms. Instead, through project, students will be better prepared for lifelong learning, and for the real challenges they will face in the future. The rationale for incorporating POPBL in a psychology course takes two forms. The first is for the students to acquire knowledge and skills from lecturers in the classroom, and secondly, for the students to engage with the outside community. The project for this course entails action plan, conducting a program, in-class presentation, and report

writing. The students worked in a team of five to six members. Specifically, the project includes the following six stages:

- 1) Identifying a problem or an issue in the community. In teams, the students would predetermine the issues they are interested to work on. These issues can be in the form of disciplinary problems in schools, lack of motivations among certain groups, safety issues, and recycling. The students were told that problems should be real. It may be any happenings that occur around campus or in the society. The localities may be diverse, but it is a problem that the teams know they can help to solve.
- 2) Gathering information stage. At this stage, team must identify the facts, as well as generate goals/objectives. To achieve this, they may carry out a need analysis. Since their knowledge about the issue is limited, they are required to conduct a need analysis and secure help from many people who may be expert in the field. A number of questions guide the team's choice: Why the problem? What is the importance? Can we find solution to it? Who is the target group? How do we carry out the project (workshop or training)?  
In the team, the students will propose a workshop or training program with the purpose of empowering the targeted groups. This proposed strategy must be justified. The teams are asked to refer to the course outline to guide them in planning for their programs.
- 3) The Product. Based on Stage 1 and 2, the team would propose an issue, and design a module that can assist the target participants. For example, in one project, the team created a motivation program to help develop students' motivation in school. In another project, the students developed a module to assist females achieve confidence and resilience in a rehabilitation centre.
- 4) Planning and scheduling. In this stage, the team worked together to plan the project, and schedule their time. The lecturer provided the key dates or timeline for submissions of the proposal, presentations (pre and post), and written reports.
- 5) Applying stage. This stage refers to the implementation of the modules/programs in various schools, NGOs, and organizations.
- 6) Monitoring, assessment and evaluation. Assessment and evaluation are in the form of the (i) team presentation and (ii) written reports. There were two presentations that all teams were required to do (i) pre-program presentation and (ii) post program presentation. There were also two written reports that students were required to complete: team and individual reports.

## Methodology

The present study attempts to determine students' perception of the project after participating in the project-oriented problem-based learning. The following section detailed the findings of the study, divided into two parts:

- 1) Students' perception of the course after the implementation of POPBL using descriptive analysis and also students' written comments of the course; and
- 2) Students' perception of before and after the implementation of POPBL determined through a paired sample t-test.

## Sample

103 participants participated in this study. They were 81 female (78.6%) and 22 male students (21.4%), with the mean age of 21.91 (SD = 2.14). Their levels of study comprised of Year 1 (32%), Year 2 (28%), Year 3 (34%), and Year 4 (6%). This study was conducted in the year between 2016-2017.

## Measure

*Students' Learning Experience Scale (SLES)*. A measure was developed to determine students' perception of their experience in the course. The developed scale consisted of 19 items specifically constructed to measure the students' perception of the project that they engaged in during the semester, particularly after having experienced project-oriented problem-based learning approach. The scale was named as Students' Learning Experience Scale (SLES). All the items were selected based on literature on effective teaching and learning. The item was scored on a five-point likert scale ranging from 1 = 'strongly disagree', 2 = 'somewhat disagree', 3 = 'neither disagree nor agree', 4 = 'agree', and 5 = 'strongly agree', with higher scores indicating positive perception of the project. The subscales include learner's knowledge (6 items), perceived enhancement of soft skills (5 items), perceived contribution and engagement with community (4 items), sustainability of project in the future semester (2 items), and perceived workload of assessment (2 items). The reliability of the scale is 0.93. In addition to this, one open-ended question was included to allow the participants to include written perceptions pertaining to the course. The following Table 1 presents the related criteria for all categories. This questionnaire was administered to the students in the final weeks of the semester (Week 13 and 14). The questionnaire was administered online through Google doc.

Table 1  
Categories and Criteria of the Students' Learning Experience Scale (SLES)

Categories	Criteria
1. Learner's Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage me to integrate concepts and skills from other disciplines.</li> <li>2. Help me to develop a deeper understanding of the course.</li> <li>3. Was effective in developing my understanding.</li> <li>4. Allow me to apply learning in the classroom to the community.</li> <li>5. Increase awareness of community issues.</li> <li>6. This project challenged me intellectually.</li> </ol>
2. Perceived enhancement of soft skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enhance problem-solving ability.</li> <li>2. Improve oral communication skills.</li> <li>3. Make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.</li> <li>4. Enhance ability to present and defend an argument.</li> <li>5. Provided peer and group interactions useful to me in completing the task.</li> </ol>
3. Perceived contribution and engagement with community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I feel that my participation activity has helped the organisation achieve its desired outcomes.</li> <li>2. I feel that my participation activity has made, or is likely to make, a real contribution to the organisation.</li> <li>3. I feel that my participation activity has made, or is likely to make, a real contribution to the community.</li> <li>4. I feel that my participation activity has better equipped me to make a real contribution to the community in relation to social and legal issues.</li> </ol>
4. Project sustainability in future semester	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I am very satisfied with the assignment that I did in this course.</li> <li>2. This type of project should be continued in the next semester.</li> </ol>
5. Perceived workload of assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The assessments of the project (presentations and report writings) were appropriate for my level.</li> <li>2. This project taken much of my time from other courses</li> </ol>

## Results

### Students' Perception of the Course

There are five main categories of students' perceptions being measured, namely learner's knowledge, perceived enhancement of soft skills, perceived contribution and engagement with community, sustainability of project in the future semester, and perceived workload of assessment.

In terms of learner's knowledge, majority of students agreed that the project allowed them to develop a deeper understanding of the course (79.7%) and was effective in developing understanding (81.6%). The project allows for application of learning in the classrooms to the community (94.7%), and in turn, increased their awareness of community issues (92%). In addition to this, the project encouraged them to integrate concept and skills from other disciplines besides the contents learnt from this course (82.5%). This is shown in Table 2.

Table 2  
Frequency Distribution of Learner's Knowledge

Categories	Criteria	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
<i>Learner's Knowledge</i>	1. Encourage me to integrate concepts and skills from other disciplines.	82.5	17.5
	2. Help me to develop a deeper understanding of the course.	79.7	20.3
	3. Was effective in developing my understanding.	81.6	18.4
	4. Allow me to apply learning in the classroom to the community.	94.7	5.3
	5. Increase awareness of community issues.	92.0	8.0
	6. This project challenged me intellectually.	86.5	13.5



One of the objectives of incorporating POPBL into the course was to encourage the improvement or enhancement of students' soft skills. As shown in Table 3, students agreed that the project enhanced their problem solving ability (96%), communication skills (94%), and interactions with peer and groups (95%). In terms of their contribution to the community; they believed their project did make a difference. 92% of them agreed that their program did make a contribution to the organisations they had chosen, while 87% felt their program did contribute to the community. 87% of the students also felt that similar project (including the assessments) should be retained in future semester. 83% of the participants felt very satisfied with the project they did in the course.

Table 3  
Frequency Distribution of perceived enhancement of soft skills

Categories	Criteria	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
<i>Perceived enhancement of soft skills</i>	1. Enhance problem-solving ability.	96	4
	2. Improve oral communication skills.	94	6
	3. Make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.	81	19
	4. Enhance ability to present and defend an argument.	83	17
	5. Provided peer and group interactions useful to me in completing the task.	95	5

The students' overall comments also suggested that majority were acceptable to this kind of teaching and learning method. However, one of the issues is with the members' willingness to "give all" or difficulties to get other members to work along with each other, as mentioned in the following:

*Generally speaking, the modules / activities as well as the assignment given were very interesting and helpful in preparing us to be a positive changing agent in the community. The in-class activities (role-play, etc) is really good as we can get the feedback of our 'performance' and 'learning input' immediately through the discussion conducted afterwards. The thing that make me felt quite disappointed or rather is that I believe that I can do better with more encouraging and supportive group members. However, it is such a great experience working with those kinds of various personality for that is the reality that we are going to be faced after this. The best lesson learnt is that we sometimes need to agree to disagree for we cannot change others' but our own selves.*

In addition, there is also an issue of sustainability, with many expressing their willingness to continue with the project. They also expressed concern that this program or project will be a one-off project, as mentioned below:

*The venue for the project should be same and continuous every semester. So that it will not be one off program to the organization and it will create a good relationship between the organization and IIUM.*

*I will be very satisfied with the project if I managed to expand and continue the project up until now. It was a very good and beneficial project for the specific target group and for the community as well*

### Students' perception before and after the implementation of POPBL

A paired t-test was conducted to compare students' perception of the course before and after the implementation of POPBL. Only 88 students completed the pre and post test questionnaires. Therefore, the analysis comprised of this number ( $n = 88$ ) The results show that there was a significant difference in the scores for students' perception of the course before (Time 1) ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .45$ ) and after (Time 2) ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = .40$ );  $t(87) = (-4.05)$ ,  $p = .000$  after the implementation of POPBL. This is detailed in Table 4.

Table 4  
Results of paired t-tests comparing students perception before and after the implementation of POPBL

Before (Time 1)		After (Time 2)		95% CI for Mean Difference	t	df
M	SD	M	SD			
4.15	.45	4.41	.40	-.38, -.13	- 4.05*	87

\* $p < .001$

## Discussion

Various approaches to teaching and learning have been used in education to provide meaningful learning to students. There are two core objectives in students' learning: (1) to provide students with the basic knowledge of the discipline; and (2) to enable the students to apply that knowledge in the community. Project-oriented problem based learning is one teaching pedagogy method that incorporates both learning by knowing and doing. It is a student oriented learning approach that focuses on students' personal skills and lifelong learning abilities. In order to educate psychologically literate students, they need to be exposed to real life problems experience by different people and groups, and practice applying their knowledge and skills for solutions, and to make a difference. This is achievable through the incorporation of POPBL in a coursework.

The present study examined students' perception regarding the implementation of POPBL in their course. Their perceptions were based on five categories (i) knowledge; (ii) soft skills; (iii) contribution to community; (iv) program sustainability; and (v) course workload. In terms of learner's knowledge, all participants agreed that the project allowed for the application of the learning to the community. It also increased their awareness of community issues. Many other studies have shown this (Moesby et al., 2006).

Majority of the participants also agreed that the course enhanced their problem solving and communications skills in and outside the classrooms as well as between their peer groups. This result is similar in other studies such as McLoone, Lawlor, and Meehan (2014) who showed that the approach improved students' communication, presentation, and general teamwork skills. Ibrahim and Halim (2013) as well as Mohamed, Mat Jubadi, and Wan Zaki (2011) show that POPBL exposed students to more problem solving skills in real world problems.

The participants also felt that the project did contribute to the organizations that they worked with, and felt that their project did contribute to the community. Majority of the participants agreed that the project should be retained in the future semester. This is similar to another study conducted by McLoone et al. (2014) who found that both staff and students responded favorably to the POPBL approach among first year engineering students. The respondents' feedback was very positive as POPBL motivated them to learn. In terms of workload, majority of the students believed that the amount of assessments for the project were appropriate.

## Conclusion

This paper presents the implementation and evaluation of a POPBL in a psychology course. Overall, the students responded positively to the learning experience associated with the approach. They found the experience allowed them to apply what they learnt in classrooms to the real world, increased their awareness of community issues around them, and improved their soft skills. Future work on POPBL in a psychology course should focus on the before and after experience of POPBL. In addition, POPBL should also be multidisciplinary, involving other subject matter or discipline in combination with a psychology course in order to enrich students' learning. Apart from survey questionnaire, qualitative interview such as focus group discussion should be employed to gauge students' perception of the approach.

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### **An Evaluation of the Transition Process from Teaching to the Academia**

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## **An Evaluation of the Transition Process from Teaching to the Academia\***

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### **Abstract**

The recent increase in the number of universities in Turkey has speeded up the transition of teachers who receive graduate education to the academia. However, this rapid transition brought a variety of problems. The present study focused on the academics' experiences regarding the transition from teaching to the academia from a holistic perspective. The qualitative research method and the phenomenological design were employed in the study. The participants were seven academics who passed to the academia from a teaching career. Convenient sampling and snowball sampling were used in the selection of the participants. The research data were gathered through an interview form. An audio-recorder was used not to lose data during the interviews. In the analysis of the data, the descriptive analysis technique was employed. As for the reliability and validity of the study, data triangulation, external revision, direct quotations and referee evaluation were put into practice. Three themes were revealed as a result of the data analysis. These themes were the teaching profession and process, graduate education process and the process of becoming an academic. The findings of the study are as follows: The teaching profession was practiced willingly and with a human-oriented approach. Teaching was seen as a way of serving the society through students. Graduate education was regarded as a difficult process, but expectations overcame the difficulties. Since the participants had to work as a teacher and learn as an undergraduate student at the same time could be challenging both financially and psychologically. Academicianhip was perceived as a place for critical and scientific thinking. The transition to the academia was followed by the efforts to adapt to the new institutional and physical environment. Based on the study, it can be suggested that the teaching profession should be made more development-oriented through graduate education, and legal regulations should be made to ease the bureaucratic difficulties teachers experience while receiving graduate education.

**Key words:** Academia, Phenomenological design, Academicianhip, Teaching

### **Introduction**

As the number of universities in Turkey has increased and more university-level programs related to education have been opened in recent years, more teachers have started to pursue a graduate degree in their fields. They both carry out their teaching profession and receive their graduate education at the same time. Moreover, the teachers who attend these programs want to continue their career as academics at a university, and seek for ways to achieve this.

Teaching is a profession that is based on educating individuals, and in which complex educational problems and relationships are experienced. The Ministry of National Education, one of the most important departments that represent the teaching profession in Turkey, describe six dimensions related to the profession in its teacher training and development strategy. These dimensions are pre-service teacher education, the selection and employment of candidates for the teaching profession, qualifying and adaptation training, career development and rewarding, the status of the teaching profession, and constant professional development (MEB, 2017). In a study on the problems related to teaching and school administration from the perspective of the meetings of the National Education Council and the Journal of Announcements (1980-2014), Tofur, Aypay and Yücel (2016) state that the decisions made with respect to the teaching profession implemented insufficiently, or the relevant council decisions not included in policy documents is a drawback for the profession.

Academicianhip is a profession that requires offering solutions to problems, producing models and participating in theoretical processes. In this respect, the educational environments where teachers and

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academics work have certain distinguishing features in terms of human relationships, culture and tasks. At this point, one may have positive or negative experiences during the transition from being a teacher to becoming an academic, and afterwards. Therefore, this study focuses on teachers' experiences of their transition from being a teacher to becoming an academic. In this sense, revealing teachers' experiences of becoming an academic can provide useful findings in terms of teacher training and how teaching and academicship are perceived as well as educational practice and theory. On the other hand, exposing the problems teachers face during their graduate education can provide insights for improving this process.

Individuals who believe in both personal and professional development as they carry out their teaching profession consider initiating a new process as necessary to achieve this. Such a process brings about a set of difficulties for teachers. Cansoy and Parlar (2017) indicate that school-based activities can be a solution for these difficulties. The school-based approach helps administrators, teachers, students and parents make the educational environment more effective. This enables teachers to carry out their own work and also work with their colleagues. A collaborative environment leads all stakeholders to make a contribution to school by creating synergy. In a study on the teaching profession, teachers were reported to perceive the profession in terms of values that can be adopted in any organisation such as kindness, mercy and sacrifice, and technical skills such as knowledge, skills and shaping and supporting the future generations in any way they need (Karataş, Ardiç & Oral, 2017). Accordingly, the difficulties experienced materially and morally can be both personal and professional. The transition to becoming an academic following the graduate education received with an attitude of accepting what has happened and what is to happen from the beginning brings a different process with particular difficulties. With reference to what is experienced in the transition from teaching to becoming an academic, and adapting to academicship, the primary aim of this study was to reveal teachers' experiences in this process, and offer suggestions based on the results obtained.

The following research questions were addressed in this context:

1. What does the teaching experience bring to teachers who pass from teaching to academicship?
2. What do teachers who pass from teaching to academicship experience during their graduate education?
3. What do teachers who pass from teaching to academicship experience during the transition process?

## **Method**

In this section, the issues regarding the methodology of the study are presented. These include the following: The research design, participants, data gathering, analysis of the data, reliability-validity strategies employed, research ethics, and researcher's role.

### **Research Design**

The study was designed in accordance with the qualitative research method, and more specifically with the phenomenological design. According to Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2015), phenomenology is "*a qualitative research method by which the researchers try to explain how one or more participants experience a phenomenon (event, case, concept, etc.) (p. 408).*" For the purposes of the present study, phenomenological design was decided to be suitable because the aim was to understand how the participants perceived the phenomenon based on their experience, and an interview form.

### **Participants**

Convenient sampling and snowball sampling were used in the selection of participants. According to Miles and Huberman (2015), convenient sampling "saves time and money and enables flexibility at the expense of knowledge and reliability", while snowball sampling is used to "define the state of individuals who are acquainted to people who they know are rich in terms of knowledge" (p.28). The participants of the study were seven individuals who were thought to contribute to the study, and who passed from teaching to academicship within the last three years at the time. One of the participants was female, and the rest were male. When the literature is reviewed for sample size, there seems to be no rule in qualitative research. Sample size may range based on questions, data and resources (Merriam, 2013; Patton, 2014). Moreover, the fact that there was similarity between the participants' views, seven participants were thought to be sufficient for the study. The data, on the other hand, were gathered through a semi-structured interview form. In the form, the participants were asked 12 questions regarding their experience in teaching, graduate education and transition to

becoming an academic. Two academics who were experts in their field, two possible participants and two language experts were asked for their opinions while developing the interview form. The participants' real names were not included in the study. Instead, they were referred to as P1, P2, P3, etc. while providing quotations.

### **Data Gathering**

The data in this study were gathered using a semi-structured interview form. Considering the possible changes in the form throughout the research process, the data were reviewed regularly, and the study could be conducted through these reviews -the addition or exclusion of questions-. In this regard, there was no need to add or remove any questions in the form. In addition to the 12 main questions, two probing questions were used to help the participants provide more detailed data related to the study. For Merriam (2015), "*probing and follow-up questions are asked to obtain more explanation and information about what participants have said (p. 98).*" After the participants were informed about the interviews, the necessary permissions were obtained and appointments were made, the interview process started.

### **Data Analysis**

The interviews were recorded with an audio-recorder, and the data were analysed by using this device. After the interviews were transcribed, the transcriptions were sent to the participants, and only after their consent was obtained, the coding process started. In the coding process, open coding was preferred. According to Neuman (2006, p.664), open coding is "the initial coding of qualitative data in which the researcher examine the data and summarise them in analytical categories or codes as a preparation". In the analysis of the data, the content analysis technique was employed. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011) note that in content analysis, it is aimed to help the reader better understand the study through direct quotations. In this way, the causal links between the views are better established. In the present study, the findings and interpretations are presented together with direct quotations to reach the results.

### **Reliability-Validity Strategies Used in the Study**

For reliability and validity, the three strategies stated by Christensen et al. (2015) were employed. These strategies included the following: (i) External revision: Individuals who were field experts and had research experience in this area were contacted, and their views on the research process were taken into consideration. Their views were reviewed to address any mistakes and weaknesses. (ii) Direct quotations: The transcriptions of the participants' views were done by using an audio-recorder, and thus data loss was prevented. Themes and categories were formed according to the data. The process for forming the themes, categories and codes was conducted based on the direct quotations. (iii) Referee evaluation: Discussions on the research results were held with individuals who had research studies in the area.

### **Research Ethics**

After the participants were informed about the interviews, and the necessary permissions and appointments were obtained, the interview process started.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The fact that the researchers of the present study have experienced the process of graduate education and currently work as academics is thought to enable them to understand and show empathy towards the participants' experiences and views, and accordingly, to interpret the data in a relevant way to draw implications.

## **Findings and Interpretation**

The themes, categories and codes obtained from the data are presented in this section. Based on the data, three themes, 10 categories and 18 sub-categories were revealed. The themes were the teaching profession and process, graduate education process and the process of becoming an academic.

### **1. Theme: The Teaching Profession and Process**

This theme consisted of two categories: the meaning of the teaching profession itself, and the process of practising the profession.



### 1.1. *The Meaning of the Teaching Profession*

Under this category, there were three codes: people-orientedness, development and future-orientedness. The participants did not describe the teaching profession as merely related to education and instruction, but associated it with having an influence on people. They saw the profession as a way to mobilise the nature of humans, bring their nature to the forefront and make them feel valuable, and accordingly made a point of equipping students with target outcomes. The views of the participants regarding this perspective are as follows:

**P1:** First of all, I see teaching as being a master of arts. I mean it's the art of appealing to the human spirit. Like touching a student's heart, and taking him/her up to the next stage.

**P3:** Teaching is a profession that enables to reach people and make them discover their potentials.

**P6:** Teaching is about the spirit, the heart of human beings.

Another aspect of the profession that the participants featured was its contribution to students' development. Considering that the word 'development' is regarded in the literature as a change in the desired direction, it can be stated that the teachers focused on the changes that are in favour of students. Engaging in activities to ensure students' development and enable them to become aware of their capacity was a dimension that the participants considered in association to the teaching profession. The views of the participants regarding this dimension are as in the following:

**P2:** It's about monitoring students' development, contribute to and support their development.

**P3:** Teaching is a profession that enables to reach people and make them discover their potentials.

The participants described the teaching profession as a process of building the future of the society through students. In order for this process to be fulfilled successfully, raising students in terms of both education and learning were seen as having great importance. The participants emphasised that having an influence on students and consequently on the society was a vital task for teachers. Their views on this issue are as follows:

**P4:** Teaching means constant responsibility for me.

**P5:** Teaching is about touching the mind and spirit of students, and thus preparing them for life.

**P7:** Teaching is the name of a profession that aims to build our nation by educating our children, and serve the nation by means of this task.

### 1.2. *The Process of Practising the Teaching Profession*

The participants highlighted two points in their views on the process of practising the teaching profession. These points included practising the teaching profession willingly, and the profession bringing difficulties in itself. The participants believed that they did not have any difficulty in adopting a positive attitude in their job as required by the profession, and did their full share of work. By work, they meant students' both academic and social needs. It can be inferred from their views that they focused on students' needs to reveal their potential and in this respect they made sacrifices from time to time. Their views on this issue are as in the following:

**P1:** ... Throughout my professional life, I have done my best to make students become aware of their tasks and responsibilities, be well-behaved and perform their potential.

**P4:** ...I always experienced the unique pleasures of teaching. Chatting with students, talking to them, listening to their troubles, helping to them and informing them about anything, it was nice.

**P5:** Teaching is a profession that requires a lot of responsibilities.

**P7:** I believe that I practise this profession, which I think is suitable for my personality, willingly and with love. I still have former students and parents calling me. I think that someone who practise this profession for money can't be successful in it.

In addition to the sacrifices made and the student-centred approach adopted, the problems experienced in the profession also seems to have affected the participants. It can be stated that difficulties due to both the institution and the profession were challenging for the participants. Yet, the existence of problems did not constitute an impediment for the job. Their views on this issue are as follows:

**P3:** ...In recent years, I have seen the teaching profession become harder.

**P6:** In fact, it has been a difficult process, being involved in both academic studies and teaching, a little insomnia and constant tiredness. The only downside of my teaching experience is perhaps my subject matter, it doesn't attract students' attention.

The views stated under this theme show that the participants attached value on the teaching profession both individually and in the professional sense, and they prepared themselves both physically and psychologically for all sorts of experiences required by the profession.

## 2. Theme: The Graduate Education Process

This theme further contained five categories including the perception of graduate education, the desire to pursue graduate education, the process of graduate education, the experience of graduate education, and the graduate education and teaching experience.

### 2.1. *The Perception of Graduate Education*

In this category, there seems to be an agreement in the participants' views. They associated academicship with development. By the concept of development, they referred to both their own development and the development in their perspectives to students based on what they learned, or in other words professional development. The development in the individual sense apparently led to the progression to further steps (i.e. becoming an academic and obtaining a title), which can be inferred from the participants' views. Therefore, it can be argued that development is initially experienced at the individual level, and is reflected upon students and the school afterwards, consequently turning into professional development. At this point, there seems to be a case that can be summarized as the benefit from the near to the far. The participants' views on this issue are as follows:

**P1:** It doesn't have a special meaning. Human is an entity that constantly learns. I see it as a step to get a job as an academic.

**P2:** Graduate education changed my perspective to the society, the school and the classroom.

**P3:** It means self-development and respectability to me.

**P4:** I started graduate education to learn things that I may not know with regard to teaching. In other words, I was trying to figure out what I exactly was doing. The first semester of my Master's education opened up my horizon, and I was not the old me then. I learned interesting and also useful things. I started to do my job more consciously. I learned to observe the class, and put my observations into certain perspectives. It was quite exciting for me.

**P5:** It is individuals' continuing their personal development in a setting where they enjoy to work.

**P6:** It is the first step to expertise, gaining a perspective. It is about learning the primary concepts and principles related to the field.

**P7:** It is a means for individual and professional development, and reflect this development to the institution.

### 2.2. *The Desire to Pursue Graduate Education*

The participants described their desire to pursue graduate education in terms of a means for development, and career expectations. The same practices being kept repeated after a point in teaching do not seem to coincide with the participants' needs of learning and change, and at the same time, with their career understanding. It can also be inferred from their views that lifelong learning is reflected on their understanding, needs and expectations are not abandoned no matter what year of the profession, and effort is shown accordingly. In this regard, the participants stated the following:

**P2:** I started graduate education to specialise in a professional field, and meet my career expectations.

**P3:** The routines of this profession started to bother me. As the years passed by repeating the same pieces of knowledge over and over again, I had a feeling of dissatisfaction and a need for change.

**P4:** ... I started it to better understand what exactly I was doing.

**P5:** ...I wanted to evaluate the time in the most effective way possible. I would do it again.

**P7:** A monotonous life is not for me. ... Besides, I had a dream of becoming an academic. I'm happy to have achieved it.

The participants stated that their efforts brought development as well as a transformation in their lives, and regarding their expectation, they had the expectation of becoming an academic. They thought that their endeavours were to be a means for both financial and spiritual satisfaction. The participants' views on this issue are as follows:

**P1:** I became an academic to realise my dream, and to train quality teachers.

**P2:** I started graduate education to specialise in a professional field, and meet my career expectations.

**P6:** I wanted it to become an academic.

### 2.3. *The Process of Graduate Education*

The participants featured the concepts of sacrifice and desire in the process of their graduate education. This process included experiences with characteristics and content similar to what they had in their profession. The participants' sacrifices and efforts came through in the process in both financial and psychological sense. Yet, they thought that the sacrifices were worth the yield of the education, and thanks to this motivation, they endured the negative effects of the process. Therefore, the participants were able to have a balance between their sacrifices and desires. The views of the participants regarding this aspect are as in the following:

**P3:** I started my graduate study after I completed my undergraduate education. Then I had an eight-year break, and I started my PhD. You know about the working conditions. Living on one salary is not enough when you want to do a PhD. I had to give a break.

**P4:** I always had it in my mind after my undergraduate education. But, it wasn't just possible, I was able to start the Master's after four years. Yet, I didn't give up because I wanted to do it so much, I mean an environment where I can develop myself and have good time.

**P7:** I started this process with my undergraduate supervisor's and my father's inspiration. I carried on with the support of my wife and children. It is a very difficult process.

The participants stated that they tolerated the sacrifices they made due to different reasons, by virtue of their desire to receive graduate education. They emphasised that such a desire required sacrifices. Quotations from the participants' views are as follows:

**P1:** Since I worked in a private school, the working hours were too long. Although I had a strong desire, I did my Master's by attending evening classes at a private university because I couldn't take time off from work.

**P2:** Even though I liked the teaching profession, the bureaucratic workload drove me to Master's programs.

**P5:** ... It was important for me to continue my education, and I wanted to continue.

### 2.4. *Graduate Education Experience*

The participants underlined two issues regarding their graduate education experience: graduate education requiring an intensive workplace and not being able to meet expectations as expected. The participants' both practising teaching and pursuing graduate education, both of these tasks having heavy workload in themselves, and in some cases having to travel long distances for graduate classes brought a considerably intensive tempo to their life. The views of the participants regarding this aspect are as in the following:

**P1:** The Master's class mostly included presentations and assignments. It was the same with PhD classes. In this process, you need to do research and question what you read a lot. Besides, you need to spend long periods of time to produce quality assignments. The coursework is completed somewhat easily in spite of the difficulties.

**P5:** I was teaching while I was taking the Master's classes. Doing both tasks at the same time, and sparing my time after working hours to graduate work were difficult.

**P7:** It is a troublesome process, you need to be strong and determined. While your colleagues only do their jobs, you are involved in an additional task that has both a financial and a psychological task.

The participants also asserted that in such an intensive tempo, they could not fully meet their expectations, and had a disappointment in this respect. At this point, there were problems regarding the theory-practice gap, which is also mentioned in the literature, and also emotional setbacks. Apparently, they had question marks regarding whether the education they received was effective and useful. Quotations from the participants' views are as follows:

**P2:** The theoretical frameworks that are far from the school and classroom environment surprised me.

**P4:** I started my PhD in a somewhat cold environment compared to my Master's. I had disappointments and boredom at the beginning.

**P6:** The PhD process is a total disappointment. Some of the professors aren't just competent, you don't learn much, but you have big expectations that are not met, they can sometimes be moody and mixed-up

### 2.5. *The Graduate Education and the Teaching Experience*

As for the graduate education and the teaching experience, the participants stated that carrying out two tasks at the same time caused them to deal with difficulties that stem from different sources. These difficulties were related to family and the institution. They shared their sorrow due to not being able to spare enough time to their families during this difficult process. However, they were aware that the process requires such sacrifices. They believed that they had to give up on certain aspects of their lives for some time, although they did not want to, in return for what they would achieve at the end. In this regard, the participants stated the following:

**P1:** ... Besides, working on assignments, presentations and a thesis requires you to concentrate on these tasks, and this makes you an antisocial person. You have to spend less time with friends, your wife, friends, relatives, and so on.

**P2:** ...carrying out both tasks together caused me to neglect my family....

**P5:** Those who are teachers would know. If you are a teacher, you think of school and your students even if it is not the working hours. But you need to spare the limited time remaining from work for yourself, your friends and family. After all, everybody has his/her own life. And if you pursue graduate education, you sacrifice that limited time for it.

**P7:** It is a very difficult and painful process that I went through for 8.5 years. I think that I couldn't spare enough time for my family during this process.

The fact that the participants had problems due to their institutions apart from their families was also reflected in their views. In particular, school administrators' permission for and attitudes towards attendance to graduate classes could be a problem for the teachers. Apart from the graduate studies, teachers' doing certain tasks together at school caused difficulties for the participants, as can be inferred from their views.

**P1:** As a teacher in a private school, getting permission to attend graduate classes really wore me out.

**P3:** It was difficult to do both jobs. Particularly, permissions were a problem. Administrators don't like just endeavours. They usually say 'What's the use of it?'. They just don't get it...

**P4:** It is very difficult to make work with school.

Although the participants had difficulties related to their families and institutions, they preferred to continue their graduate education with the awareness of the outcomes they would achieve at the end. They emphasised outcomes for both developing their knowledge and skills and guiding their professional activities. They highlighted thinking events from different perspectives, and reflecting this to their students and instruction. The views of the participants regarding this aspect are as in the following:

**P1:** The most important gain we had in this process was our stimulating professors who guided us, and our colleagues with whom we carried out research.

**P2:** I gained a different perspective, analytical and critical thinking skills, and understood that skills were more important than knowledge.

**P3:** By means of my graduate classes, I was able to give my students different points of view. ... I was able to look critically at many things.

**P5:** A broad view of the world, and working in an area that I enjoy.

**P7:** Personally, my biggest gain from this process was that my profession (school administration) overlapped with my graduate education, and they supported each other. Since I wrote my thesis with this understanding, I had the chance to apply what I learned in my PhD.

In this theme, the participants described graduate education as a means for the development of the society starting with themselves. At the end of their education, they aimed to achieve general and specific goals accordingly. It seems that a process similar to the teaching profession was experienced at this point. In other words, difficulties stemming from different sources were encountered during the graduate education process.

### 3. Theme: The Process of Becoming an Academic

The participants described the process of becoming an academic with regard to three categories: the transition process, the perception of academicianship, and the post-transition process.

#### 3.1. *The Transition Process*

Regarding their experiences in the process of passing to the academia, the participants highlighted the informal relationships and uncertainty. They emphasised the discomfort they felt due to the lack of certain rules and procedures in this transition. They thought that the transition process could be completed in a shorter period of time. The uncertainty and length of the process as well as the bureaucratic procedures seem to have put psychological pressure on the participants. In this regard, the participants stated the following:

**P3:** You know, you need to see a few university deans. That's what we did. We tried to choose the one with better conditions. It was a troublesome process. You just need to wait for long.

**P6:** You don't know whether you will find an academic position or not. The transition process is very difficult, and includes extensive procedures. Taking the language exam and having its results is one month only. And two institutions send official papers to each other. Even obtaining the official consent from your current institution takes time.

**P7:** The transition is an uncertain process. You start thinking about it before defending your thesis. I had the chance and applied for it, but you never know because it is a long process. It has various steps, you first apply for a position, then take the foreign language exam, go through the security investigation, and your publications are reviewed. It requires a long process along with bureaucracy.

The participants stated that informal relationships were important for the transition, and they acted accordingly. However, they thought that having to establish informal contacts and relationships made them feel bothered since they did not know what would happen next. Quotations from the participants' views are as follows:

**P1:** Shortly after I completed my PhD, I had the chance to meet an administrator of the university where I work now, through a friend of mine. I had 3-4 more visits, and then they said they could open a position for me. The announcement of the position, the application, the language exam, and finally I was appointed to the position.

**P4:** What I experienced after my PhD. I had a feeling of emptiness. Then I talked to a few universities.

#### 3.2. *The Perception of Academicianship*

The participants described academicianship as a profession that allows for different and critical thinking and in which scientific thinking can be implemented. They saw it as a means for moving their individual and professional development even further. Other prominent aspects in their views are as follows:

\*Academicianship instilled more confidence in the participants individually.

\* It gave them the opportunity to work based on their own schedule.

\* It allowed for more freedom.

\* It brought them respectability in the society.

\* It enabled them to think in a different perspective and reflect this difference on their work. The views of the participants regarding this aspect are as in the following:

**P1:** ... Here at the university, I share with my students the specifics of the teacher training art. In the academia, I like to think, question and criticise, and teach these skills to my students.

**P2:** The inner peace that I have from free and critical thinking.

**P3:** Academicianship means more respectability.

**P4:** Now, I feel like I'm the boss of my own business. It's like that when you are in the academia. Reading and writing, gaining new pieces of knowledge and forming new environments.

**P5:** I think being an academic is about bringing light to science and to one's environment with his/her work.

**P6:** Academicianship is a pleasant job for me. Reading, writing, producing and sharing all this with students...

**P7:** I see academicianship as a profession associated with different thinking, development and concrete steps towards development.

### 3.3. The Post-Transition Process

The participants mentioned profession-related factors that arose after the transition. They thought that academicianship had differences compared with teaching, but they were able to get used to these differences in the course of time. Although the adaptation process had its difficulties, the participants could cope with it because they were aware of the process. Starting to work in an academic position in a city different from the one they worked as a teacher required the participants to leave their physical and social environment, which affected both them and their families. Therefore, the adaptation was both in and out of the institution. However, as is stated earlier, the participants and their families thought they would adapt to the new conditions over time since they knew about the new situation. Quotations from the participants' views are as follows:

**P1:** ... It takes time to get used to the bureaucratic procedures at the university.

**P2:** ...the lack of an orientation process made it difficult for me to adapt to the university environment.

**P3:** ... the new job was completely different from teaching. You are anti-social again. You are closeted in your office and work. Sometimes you don't see anybody for days.

**P4:** ... There aren't really big differences between academicianship and teaching. So, you feel more responsible in your new job.

**P5:** We need to get used to what the new job brings.

**P7:** Since this process brings new tasks and a new environment, you try to get used to it for a long time. The department where you work had a significant effect in your adaptation.

In this theme, the participants pointed out their experiences related to the process that they described in the previous themes. They highlighted development and self-improvement with regard to the education they received and academicianship. The uncertainty in the transition process was described as an unpleasant period, but after the transition, the problems they had considerably decreased.

## Result, Discussion and Suggestions

In the present study, the transition from the teaching profession to academicianship was examined based on individual experiences. Three themes, which include the teaching profession and process, graduate education process and the process of becoming an academic, were revealed. The common findings showed that the process of transition from teaching to becoming an academic at a university was quite difficult and brought additional responsibilities to individuals, but yielded certain outcomes at the end. On the other hand, the participants' quest for meaning in their profession encouraged them to undertake academic studies.

Firstly, in the theme "the teaching profession and process", the participants focused on the meaning of teaching and the professional processes. According to their statements, they practised teaching consciously and willingly. At the same time, they emphasised the human-oriented nature of the teaching profession, and the importance of practising it based on individual and professional development. Moreover, they stated that there

could be certain obstacles while practising the profession, but these obstacles should be overcome within the professional process. As can be inferred, their faith and commitment in the teaching profession seem to be quite strong. Furthermore, it can be stated that the participants regarded the obstacles as an opportunity for development. When they were teachers, they cared about the profession and tried to develop themselves in this respect. Having a positive attitude towards the teaching profession can be seen as important for the quality of education and instruction. Attitudes towards the profession strengthen the learning climate in school, and positively affects the relationship between students and the teacher (Küçükahmet, 1986; Morgan, 1984 cited in Semerci & Semerci, 2004). Teachers' commitment to the profession and their feeling that they are important are closely related to their attitudes (Temizkan, 2008).

Secondly, the graduate education process was examined in terms of several aspects including the participants' perception, desire and experiences. The participants indicated that graduate education enables the development of their own as well as their students, and allowed for career opportunities. On the other hand, they also stated that one of the reasons why they desired to receive graduate education was the routine work of the teaching profession. In this regard, academic studies can be regarded as a way for teachers to rebuild themselves through learning. The participants emphasised that making individual and social sacrifices due to long working hours in the graduate education process was vital in sustaining the whole process. This was because various problems were always encountered. They also pointed out that they had financial problems since many activities during academic endeavours cost money, while the high working tempo involving both teaching and academic studies caused physical and psychological breakdowns. It can thus be stated that academic studies along with teaching had a price and brought certain individual sacrifices. Consistent with this finding, Özmen and Güç (2013) reported that teachers made a great amount of sacrifices to overcome the difficulties experienced during doctoral education. This is because academic studies, especially at doctoral level, require individuals to make an original contribution to science and thus work hard. Then, they need to make individual and social sacrifices to make time for their studies. On the other hand, the graduate education process provided the participants new opportunities of development. Through academic studies, they gained different experiences and perspectives and were content with the process. In this respect, the process they went through can be said to have led to a mental transformation in the participants. Besides, it can be inferred that being a teacher and carrying out academic studies at the same time requires a high level of performance and hard work. Furthermore, this process also has a bureaucratic aspect. This finding is in line with Balıkcı (2016) who reported that bureaucracy can be a factor that hinders all activities at school.

Finally, the participants' experiences after they passed to the academia were examined. These experiences were further specified in terms of the transition process, the perception of academicianship, and the post-transition process. The participants stated that the transition from teaching to academicianship took a long time due to bureaucratic correspondence, and included uncertainty. Moreover, they emphasised that the existence of an informal structure in employing staff for academic positions increased the uncertainty. During this process, the participants can be said to have been under a lot of stress. After the transition to academicianship, their working environment and culture changes, and they went through an adaptation process. This was also valid for the participants' families. The fact that the types of institutions where teaching and academicianship are practised can be an important reason for stress in this adaptation process. In addition, the system and procedures being different can bring certain compulsory changes in individuals' lives. On the other hand, the participants asserted that they could act more freely as academics than they did as teachers, and had more respectability in the academia. These views can be regarded as normal due to the nature of both professions because academicianship provides individuals more opportunities in terms of time, experience, working conditions and status. As can be inferred from these statements, the transition to the academia was seen as a troublesome process, and also required an adaptation process. Those who succeed in becoming an academic were content with their profession in terms of the opportunities.

Based on the results of the study, the following suggestions can be offered for practitioners: Teachers' passing to the academia and working in teacher training programs can be seen as important because the academics who come from practical side can be expected to train student teachers with a different perspective. In this respect, this process can be supported and encouraged. In this way, teacher candidates can observe the balance between practice and theory. Another issue is that during the graduate education process, teachers can encounter certain difficulties and obstacles related to their job or financial situation. In this regard, more opportunities can be provided to teachers who actively work in schools. Therefore, policy-makers can make decisions that would facilitate the process. Administrators and practitioners can help teachers who receive education at this level in different areas related to their job. Furthermore, the teaching profession can be made more development-oriented by means of graduate education. Legal regulations can be made to solve the bureaucratic difficulties that teachers experience when they want to pursue graduate education. The regulations regarding the transition

to academicianship can be improved. As for further research, this process can be examined with more participants and by using different research methods.

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## Internet Resources

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