Analysis of Turkish Language Teachers' Posts in Facebook Groups in terms of Professional Development: A Case Study[1]

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Abstract

This study investigated Turkish Language teachers' posts in a Facebook group regarding professional development during an academic year. This study was designed to be a case study, which employed qualitative research methods. The teachers whose posts were the most relevant to professional development were selected among the three Facebook groups with the highest number of members. The teachers' posts shared during the 2019-2020 academic year were obtained by document analysis. We analyzed the data qualitatively with content analysis. The codes were processed and analyzed by using MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2020 program. The posts generated 393 codes, and the content analysis revealed 36 categories and six themes. We determined the frequency of the codes for each theme and category. The six themes were "Material," "Content Knowledge," "Teaching Process," "Other," "Official Process," and "Culture and Art" from the most frequent to the least frequent. Through the posts in a Facebook group, we determined codes that supported Turkish teachers' professional development and provided suggestions for online professional development.

Keywords: Professional Development, Online Professional Development, Turkish Language Teachers, Social Media, Facebook

Introduction

A skilled workforce has a vital role in countries' technological developments and economic growth. To establish such power, teachers need to be trained to educate students in accord with the characteristics of their time and context and be equipped to use information technologies (Özer & Gelen, 2008). Teachers who are a model for society, regulate the teaching process, and monitor students' development needs to have various special field efficacies that positively affect the quality of education (İskender et al., 2015). It is essential to train teachers with these qualities to raise future generations well in the changing world. The first step for training qualified teachers is to clearly define the competencies expected of teachers (Şengül & Alkaya, 2016). Teacher competencies have been categorized differently, and many opinions have been negotiated. Shulman (1987) stated that a resource for teacher knowledge would contain at least the following categories of knowledge: content (field) knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, pedagogical

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content (field) knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, and knowledge of educational contexts and educational goals. Different educational institutions and organizations in different countries have similarly introduced various criteria and standards. For example, the Victorian Institute of Teaching in Austria set eight standards concerning professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional participation (Emmett, 2010). In Turkey, preparing for the teaching profession requires general culture, content education, and pedagogical knowledge (METK, 2020). General teaching efficacy and special field efficacy for teachers are also determined (Ministry of National Education (MEB), 2006, 2008, 2017). All teachers are educated at education faculties or equivalent institutions to acquire the expected competencies before their in-service period. Upon starting the profession, teachers do not have the opportunity to receive well-organized training (Yıldırım, 2019). However, "the teaching profession constantly adjusts to accommodate change, and teachers are under constant pressure to update their knowledge" (Duncan-Howell, 2010, p. 324). Due to the rapid changes with the technological developments, it becomes impossible to continue teaching with the knowledge teachers acquire in their pre-service education (Yurtseven Yılmaz, 2018). For this reason, teachers have been ensured to participate in various professional development activities to accommodate change by providing their personal and professional development.

Teacher professional development can be defined as processes and activities designed to deepen teachers' understanding of students and the learning-teaching process (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995) and improve their professional skills and attitudes (Guskey, 2000). According to Bissessar (2014), definitions focus on three areas: a deep understanding of teachers and students' needs, reflection on development, and teacher development and teacher training. These areas can also be considered the required qualifications for professional development activities.

Borko (2004) stated that the fundamentals of professional development include professional development programs, teachers as the learners of the system, the managers who guide the teachers in new knowledge and practices, and the context in which the professional development occurs. Traditionally professional development has had three critical factors to be ongoing and intensive. For professional learning to be sustained and not limited to short programs, "the mode of delivery needs to suit teacher conditions and be sympathetic to their needs as learners" (Duncan-Howell, 2010, p. 325).

One of the essential learning methods for professional development is teachers' collaborative learning, which establishes space to self-diagnose needs and receive constant and active support. This type of learning can be achieved through communities of practice. Wenger et al. (2002, p. 34) underline that "the community element is critical to an effective knowledge structure and state that a community of practice is not just a group of colleagues gathered in various environments but a group of people who interact, learn together, build relationships, and in the process develop a sense of belonging and mutual commitment". In relatively informal and action-oriented environments, communities of practice are among the critical mechanisms in the professional development process (Yıldırım, 2019). What is noteworthy with these communities is that people who need professional help gather to learn and collaborate. Duncan-Howell (2010) states that collaboration is essential in promoting teacher learning.

The rapid development in technology has led to various changes in people's lives, and especially with the developing web technologies, communication and the need for sharing have become possible through social networks (Yılmazsoy, 2018). The communication and information sharing network also provides new possibilities for people involved in the same profession to share their experiences. We observe that teachers benefit from these networks to facilitate their development. Communities of practice in this sense are maintained in online environments, and thus, the collaboration continues through these networks. Teacher professional development thus continues to evolve by challenging space and time in front of a screen and opening doors to global collaboration and sharing (Bissessar, 2014). Social networks such as Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn

stand out as tools that create opportunities for teachers to continue and share their professional development (Burden, 2010).

Thanks to technological affordances, teachers can also develop various personal skills in such social networks with interactive environments. According to Kabilan (2004), online professional development environments contribute to teachers in terms of motivation, knowledge, skills and ideas, self-regulated learning, developing competence by interacting and acquiring the knowledge and skills of computer technology.

Hew and Hara (2007) investigated the motivators for teachers to share knowledge in online environments and concluded that teachers participate in groups with a sense of socialization, reciprocity, personal gain, and commitment. They found out that knowledge sharing was the most common activity in the groups. In Duncan-Howell's (2010) study, 86.7% of the teachers agreed that participation in an online community represented meaningful professional development. We can conclude that teachers are motivated to interact through online communities and resort to these communities for professional development.

Facebook, which stands out with its increasing number of users and ease of use since its introduction to the public, is a suitable apparatus for teacher professional development due to its features such as private messaging, creating groups, and options for written and visual interaction. Mercieca and Kelly (2018) noted that Facebook had the potential for teachers with little experience to receive support, continuous mentoring, and professional assistance.

Teachers using Facebook expected support for their teaching, sought social support and collaboration, shared concerns, received advice, and exchanged information about instructional design and methodologies (Bissessar, 2014). Distinct from traditional professional development programs, social network sites, such as Facebook, allow teachers to form groups or contribute and share content via a non-bureaucratic, peer-to-peer approach to professional development via networking (Bissessar, 2014; Liljekvist et al., 2020).

Cruz-Yeh (2011) stated that Facebook could facilitate teacher professional development by introducing online teacher professional development opportunities, accessing teaching and learning resources, web pages, and online activities simultaneously, and connecting with other teachers of the same field. According to Rutherford (2010), until the education community comes up with a formal means of professional development that is free, user friendly, and timely, Facebook teacher groups and similar forms of social media should be seen as an effective supplement to traditional teacher professional development.

Studies have investigated the benefits of Facebook groups for teacher professional development using theoretical and practice-based approaches (Bal, 2019; Bett & Makewa, 2020; Bissessar, 2014; Deniz, 2016; Ergüney, 2019; Ganapathy et al., 2020; Kelly & Antonio, 2016; Liljekvist et al., 2020; Lantz-Andersson et al., 2017; Patahuddin & Logan, 2019; Petti & Triacca, 2013; Rutherford, 2010; Sarıdaş, 2017; Staudt et al., 2013; Yildirim, 2019). However, we have not found a detailed longitudinal study examining Turkish teacher groups, although these groups have increased in recent years.

We intended to investigate what Facebook, depicted as an advantageous platform for professional development in the literature, means for Turkish Language teachers. Yıldız and Oduncu (2020) examined Turkish Language teachers' posts regarding content and language in Facebook groups and concluded that the teachers shared activities, sheets, questions, and sharing books. However, the study was limited in its coverage of the academic period and lacked an analysis of professional development. The searches on Facebook revealed 45 groups specific to Turkish teachers, and the most populous of these groups had 41,541 members. The number of groups and their members seemed noteworthy. We found that the posts shared in the group were based on education and school and aimed to understand whether they showed consistency throughout the academic year. Thus, we decided to conduct a longitudinal study to cover an academic year. This study, therefore, explored the question "what do Turkish teachers' posts in Facebook groups suggest for their professional development?" This study is essential for uncovering whether teachers' posts in Facebook groups consistently support teacher

development over a long period and contribute to the studies on online professional development.

Material and Methods

This study is qualitative research that analyzes Turkish Language teachers' posts in Facebook groups in professional development. As there are multiple realities in qualitative research, the reality constructed in a social environment lies the ground, and situations and events are interpreted from the participants and the researcher's perspectives without any generalizations (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020). In this study, the posts occurring naturally in a professional community of practice in a social network were analyzed and interpreted from the researcher's point of view and based on the post contents, without any attempted generalizations.

Prior to the study, we observed that Turkish teachers were engaged in various types of interaction in Facebook groups. To explain what these groups mean for teachers' professional development and explain the direction of the interaction in these digital environments, we examined the content of the posts in these groups. Besides, we assumed no interference by the researcher on the Facebook group, the posts shared in the group and its members. The study was, therefore, designed to be a case study.

To determine a Facebook group as the field of study, we had a one-month observational period on the three most populous Facebook groups for Turkish teachers and selected the most suitable group for categorization in terms of the quality and quantity of the posts. The data were collected from a Facebook group with 38,360 members on the 2nd of September 2019, specific to the participants called Türkçe Öğretmenleri "Evrak ve Bilgi Paylaşımı" (Turkish Teachers: Document and Information Sharing, henceforth TTDIS). The Facebook group provided an exceptional environment for Turkish teachers and appeared to mandate the group members to be engaged in the teaching of Turkish. The group was established on the 4th of November 2014, and the number of members reached 40,540 on the 15th of June 2021.

The data were collected by using document analysis. The texts, images, and videos shared in the Facebook group were explored through document analysis. We considered the materials shared in the groups as our documents and coded them to reach a conclusion using these codes. As the posts in the groups were evaluated independently of the users that generated them, the study did not focus on the members; hence no personal information was considered a variable. The posts in such a populous group, which reflected the nature of social media use, were taken and examined as documents.

The posts were collected daily by using the filter option to view the newest posts on the timeline of the TTDIS Facebook group by using document analysis. The posts were limited to those shared during the 2019-2020 academic year. Two thousand three hundred seventy-eight documents posted between the 2nd of September 2019 (the beginning of the training period) and the 19th of June 2021 (the end of the training period) were collected and examined regarding professional development using content analysis. MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2020 qualitative data analysis program was used.

Each post was coded, taking its topic and content into account. We devoted special attention that the codes were detailed and reflected the post content. The coding procedure did not include whether the posts contained videos, images, written text, or documents. Instead, the study focused on the relationship between posts regardless of their type and teaching profession and the contributions to teacher professional development. The posts were examined for their inquiry, purpose, and contribution. The posts were mainly information-giving statements, requests, and questions, which signified the purpose of sharing. Such clues helped first in the decision-making process of coding and then in categorization and the construction of themes. Another important matter was that the codes constructed during the content analysis process were not directly related to the post content. We indented to analyze the posts at the discourse level since coding solely based on teachers' words and expressions in the posts failed to depict a broad picture of the nature of the post contents. Therefore, the researcher interpreted the posts and coded their relation to professional development.

Since qualitative research is researcher-centered, seeking expert help during and after coding is essential to achieve validity. While coding the data, the researcher received help from an associate professor and an expert in Turkish education. They assisted in the construction of the coding procedure

and decision-making process of themes and categories, and thus we resorted to different scholars' opinions and comments.

On the other hand, the data were also coded by another expert in Turkish education. Prior to the coding process, we held a meeting with the expert and explained the purpose and the scope of the study and the coding procedure we followed. The second encoder's codes and the researcher's codes were compared using the MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2020 program to calculate the inter-coder agreement. Since the software processed the consistency of the codes with a lexicon-based approach, the two researchers' codes expressed slightly differently yet had the same reasoning were unified. The inter-coder agreement was determined to be 74.41%. The Kappa Statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Kappa Statistics

		Coder 1		
		1	0	
	1	a=3594	b=616	4210
Coder 2	0	c=620	0	620
		4214	616	4830

The disagreements between the two coders were negotiated, and the codes and the thematization process were revised.

Findings

This study examined 2378 posts and revealed 393 codes concerning professional development. The codes were repeated 2413 times during the analysis period, and the content analysis revealed 36 categories and six themes. The code frequency of the themes is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2 Themes for Professional Development

Themes	Codes	
	f	%
Material	989	41.00
Content Knowledge	373	15.50
Teaching Process	327	13.60
Other	291	12.10
Official Process	218	9.00
Culture and Art	215	8.90
Total	2413	100

The frequency and percentages of themes demonstrated that the posts were mainly about the materials (989). The posts about language and expression (373), which teachers mostly shared to exchange knowledge of the language, followed the material-related posts in frequency. We observed that the posts that contained culture and art (215) were the least frequent shares in the group.

Table 3 Categories for Material

Categories	Codes	
	f	%
Assessment and evaluation tool	544	55.0
Material for a specific topic	251	25.4
Material for a lesson	113	11.4
Question about material	40	4.0
Sharing books	21	2.1
Opinions about materials	20	2.0
Total	989	100

Table 3 showed that the category with the highest frequency was "assessment and evaluation tool" (544). The category with the lowest frequency was "opinions about materials" (20).

Table 4 Categories for Pedagogical Knowledge

Categories	Codes	
	f	%
Knowledge of the language	335	89.8
Lexical meaning	18	4.8
Word search for foreign words	8	2.1
Rhetoric	8	2.1
Text type and features	4	1.1
Total	373	100

As presented in Table 4, "knowledge of the language"(335) category had the highest frequency while the "text types and features" (4) category was calculated to have the lowest frequency.

Table 5 Categories for Teaching Process

Categories	Codes	
	f	%
In-class activities	127	38.8
Lesson plans	93	28.5
Curricular knowledge	54	16.5
Activity	53	16.2
Total	327	100

Table 5 demonstrated that the "in-class activities" (127) category was the most frequent. The category with the lowest frequency was "activity" (53).

Table 6 Categories for Other

Categories	Codes	
	f	%
Group interaction	111	38.1
Shared humor	41	14.1
Special occasions/celebration	33	11.3
Sharing trending current affairs	31	10.8
Not classified	21	7.2
Seeking help for academic studies	19	6.5
Seeking help for student assignment in Turkish language education program	19	6.5
Sharing a spelling mistake in an everyday activity	13	4.5
Sharing job ads	3	1
Total	291	100

Several codes not directly related to teacher professional development were coded and collected under "Other" without detailed coding attached. We found the most significant number of posts in the category "group interaction," which included teachers' communication about curricular and extracurricular activities and questions about the group. Job ads were the least frequent category.

Table 7 Categories for the Official Process

Categories	Codes	
	f	%
Official ceremonies and special occasions	100	45.9
Information exchange about official process	55	25.2
Regulations	29	13.3
Official documents	22	10.1
Student clubs	12	5.5
Total	218	100

Table 7 illustrated that the category with the highest frequency was "official ceremonies and special occasions" (100). The category with the lowest frequency was "school clubs" (12).

Table 8 Categories for Culture and Art

Categories	Codes	
	f	%
Sharing literature	172	80
Famous figures	15	7
Movie	14	6.5
Cultural events	6	2.8
Historical artifacts	6	2.8
Historical events	1	0.5
Turkish culture	1	0.5
Total	215	100

Table 8 showed that the "sharing literature" (172) category was the most frequent. The categories with the lowest frequency were "historical events" (1) and "Turkish culture" (1).

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

The study analyzed 2378 posts from a Facebook group for Turkish teachers posted during one academic year, and the framework of professional development was employed, which resulted in the construction of various themes. The body of research examining teacher professional development in Facebook groups has had a shorter data collection period than the present study. Besides, these studies often used various instruments such as Shulman's (1987) framework of professional development categorization for their content analysis rather than constructing codes based on their content analysis. These two factors led to a limited comparison between these studies and the present one.

Based on our content analysis of posts through which we reached 393 codes about professional development, we determined six themes: "Material," "Pedagogical Knowledge, "Teaching Process," "Other," "Official Process," and "Culture and Art."

The material theme had the highest code frequency in the Facebook group. Group members' posts under the material theme were categorized into six codes: assessment and evaluation tool, material for a specific topic, material for a lesson, questions about the material, sharing books, and opinions about materials. Teachers appeared to benefit from the Facebook group to obtain materials that enriched their teaching context. We found that material-related posts were also abundant in other studies

(Deniz, 2016; Yıldırım, 2019; Yıldız & Oduncu, 2020), which indicated that material sharing was essential for teacher groups in Turkey in general and Turkish teachers as a particular professional group. This finding was contextually relevant, seeing that the posts included resources and practice tests for students preparing for national exams in Turkey. We noticed that the "assessment and evaluation tool" category under the "material" theme was the most frequent category. Teachers shared or questioned various assessment and evaluation tools based on findings linking this category. The "questions about test items" was the most common code within this category. The teachers' posts seeking help to resolve any issues with test items in an assessment tool were analyzed under this code. Similar studies also revealed that this was the most frequent code (Yıldırım, 2019; Yıldız & Oduncu, 2020). Similar to the categories under the "Material" theme in this study, Deniz (2016) also found codes relevant to requesting suggestions, asking for opinions, and sharing materials.

Our findings showed that the second theme with the highest code frequency was "pedagogical knowledge. "Under this theme were the codes "knowledge of the language," "lexical meaning," "word search for foreign words, "rhetoric," and "text types and features." These posts contained theoretical knowledge about what Turkish teachers teach in their field. The posts containing pedagogical content knowledge were the most frequent in Bett and Makewa's (2020) study, while they were less frequently observed in the studies by Rutherford (2010) and Liljekvist et al. (2020). We also found studies where the posts aspired to exchange information about the teaching profession, though they were less frequent than the present study. The posts were critical for teachers to update their knowledge from undergraduate degrees and gain a new understanding. Among the categories of this theme, the highest frequency was the "knowledge of the language" category. Apart from the knowledge of the language, Turkish teachers exchanged information and participated in discussions concerning pedagogical knowledge by sharing in the categories of word search for foreign words, rhetoric, and text types and features.

We also observed that teachers in the studied Facebook group exchanged information about the factors affecting their teaching in the classroom and sought suggestions from other members. These posts evaluated under the "teaching process" theme ranked third for the code frequency. This theme included four categories: in-class activities, lesson plans, curricular knowledge, and activity. In Deniz's (2016) study, the theme corresponding to the learning process revealed that the posts concerning education and training were the most common type. The codes in our study for curricular knowledge as a part of the teaching process were also found and thematized in Deniz's study. Rutherford's (2010) study revealed that such codes from the pedagogical knowledge theme appeared to be the most common codes. We combined the codes classified under the "teaching process" theme in our study, which were similar to Liljekvist et al.'s (2020) research which used Shulman's (1987) classification scheme for curricular knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of learners and their characteristics. Contrary to our findings, Liljekvist et al. (2020) found this theme to be the most frequent code. Other studies showed similar findings concerning curricular knowledge and activities, though not highlighted them distinctively (Bett & Makewa, 2020; Yıldırım, 2019; Yıldız & Oduncu, 2020).

Another prominent theme in the study was the "Other," which included codes irrelevant to the teaching process and professional development. The category with the highest frequency of codes within this theme was the "group interaction," which consisted of questions in the general flow of group communication. The "shared humor" and "special occasions/celebration" categories followed this category. These types of posts appeared due to the affordances of social media. It was essential to share emotions and be interactively involved to establish a sense of trust within a community. Hur and Brush's (2009) findings showed that teachers used Facebook groups to share emotions and experience a sense of camaraderie. Similar studies showed that the posts shared in these groups also included non-educational materials such as trending current affairs and intra-group communication (Bett & Makewa, 2020; Deniz, 2016; Rutherford, 2010; Yıldırım,

2019). The theme "other" included teachers' help-seeking from their colleagues for their academic studies. Member teachers who pursued graduate studies shared questionnaires and similar academic materials for teachers to participate in their studies. We also found various posts shared by undergraduate students of the Turkish language education program and categorized them under the "other" theme. Undergraduate students seemed to seek support for their assignments by posting in these groups.

Another theme that the group revealed was the "official process." The theme "official ceremonies and special occasions" had the highest frequency. Given that Turkish teachers play an active role in organizing official ceremonies held at the school, this finding is reasonably expected. This theme included the codes from "information exchange about the official process," "regulations," "official documents," and "student clubs." Similar studies demonstrated that teachers shared such posts, and the posts were thematized (Deniz, 2016; Yıldırım, 2019). Since teachers collectively operated within specific regulations, they could quickly receive such formal information from their colleagues in a digital environment.

The theme with the lowest code frequency was "culture and art." The posts in this theme were associated with cultural knowledge. Based on the group members' posts, the generated codes about literature were categorized under this theme. The teachers seemed to request and share books for students, as the content of the theme illustrated. Teachers can know about the books to recommend to their students through such posts. It is critical that Turkish teachers prepare a reading list to improve their reading skills. Other scholars also detected similar post contents (Liljekvist et al., 2020; Yıldız & Oduncu, 2020). However, culture and art-related posts seemed to be missing in other studies. This can be interpreted as a particular case for Turkish language education or the Turkish context. Literature can be considered an area of interest for Turkish language teachers. Moreover, cultural knowledge was determined to be one of the providers of teacher preparation for the teaching profession (METK, 2020). Therefore, it was expected for the teachers in the group to share topics relating to literature,

famous figures, cinema, cultural events, historical artifacts and events, and Turkish culture.

We observed that previous studies analyzing Facebook groups also reached similar themes as the present study. Though, there were differences in the frequencies of codes. The frequent posts themed or categorized in this study seemed to remain as codes or categories in other studies. Since our data collection period was as long as an academic year, it naturally increased the frequency of some codes. These codes, therefore, stood out as the most frequent codes. For a longitudinal study, it was natural to contain such differences with the existing body of research that had a more limited data collection period.

Based on the themes that emerged in the study, we concluded that the Facebook group supported teacher professional development, and the findings were similar to those from previous studies. The Facebook group as an online professional development platform qualified for effectively meeting needs (İlğan, 2013), facilitating opportunities for teachers to engage in professional learning over a longer time frame (Duncan-Howell, 2010), and providing peer support and guidance. However, we should note that it is not possible to evaluate the extent of benefit and whether teachers access accurate information via the group within the scope of this study.

Based on the findings of this study, we provided various recommendations for teachers and researchers.

- This study generated general themes about professional development. Longitudinal studies can provide a more detailed picture of specific themes related to teaching (content knowledge, program knowledge, etc.).
- We found that the examined posts were related to professional development. With the development of communication technologies, teachers can resort to such new social media tools as Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, YouTube, and others to support their professional development seeking peer help.
- Within the scope of this study, we only analyzed the posts in the group. We recommend that qualitative comparative research is conducted in the future to investigate the interviews with the group managers and member teachers who post in the group about their lack or sufficiency of

teacher competence and its relation to their in-service training.

- Through conducting studies that explore Facebook groups for teachers in different fields of expertise, the function of these groups in regard to professional development ought to be compared to other fields for needs analysis.

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