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MA Thesis in Language Teaching**

**From Teacher Isolation to Teacher Collaboration: An Exploratory
Study**

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Arts (MA) in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

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Dedicated to

My Family

For

Their sincere help and patience

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Abstract

Interactions and collaboration are particularly valuable to improve teachers' professional learning. However, a number of factors may impede teacher's collaboration. Although much research offer guidance on teacher collaboration, there is scant information on why teachers are isolated and what practical strategies of collaboration are. Thus the objectives of this study are twofold: (1) knowing why Iranian teachers are isolated, and (2) uncovering collaboration techniques used by language teachers. This study uses Grounded Theory to collect and analyze qualitative data from thirteen experienced language teachers who were willing to share their perception with the researcher. Analysis revealed two core categories: Causes of teacher's isolation and techniques for collaboration. Despite being a localised and small-scale study, it holds relevance and significance for policy makers, school leaders and teachers in Sannandaj and beyond. It provides a real account of reasons of teacher isolation and the complex nature of collaboration and strategies that can be used to collaborate.

Keywords: Teacher isolation, teacher collaboration, perceptions, suggestions, grounded theory

Article

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Chapter One
Introduction

1.1 General Overview

This thesis is a study on language teacher collaboration. It explores teachers' perception of the roots of isolation and techniques that can be used for collaboration among EFL practitioners. The research is situated in the field of Second Language Education. In order for teachers to collaborate, they need to know the roots of isolation. Then we conceptualise teachers' perspectives to uncover their collaboration techniques.

Teachers should constantly develop and learn new techniques of teaching, in other words, they are not only teachers but also learners in the field of teaching and learning. Schools and language institutes should prepare a place that can insure teacher's constant development, and this could not be achieved through one-shot in-service programs (McLaughlin & Yee, 1988; Brath, 1990). Cosh (1999) argues towards a view of the experienced teacher as professional, with autonomy and independence, and as the originator of his/her own development, rather than as a skilled workman/woman dependent on development by others. Literature has pointed out a variety of collaboration methods that could be gathered under three titles: peer coaching, peer observation, and pair mentoring.

The literature on teacher collaboration mostly has focused on discovering the encouraging effects of collaboration for teachers, and more direct effects for students. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) found teacher conversation and collaboration to be important components of professional development. Emerging research indicates that teacher collaboration has been associated with higher levels of academic performance for students (Goddard, 2007; Louis, 2009).

In sum, a review of the literature on teacher collaboration indicates that this approach has been advocated largely for its positive effects on teachers, though more recent research supports that teacher collaboration may have direct benefits for teachers and students. Although, much has been written on isolation and collaboration, the field is in need of qualitative studies that aim at discovering teacher isolation reasons and practical techniques for collaboration. To fully collaborate, teachers require administrative support to help overcome barriers to their interaction. After having listed possible reasons for isolation then we have tried to drive out used techniques for collaboration.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Though it is not challenging in ESL contexts, maintaining and developing the knowledge and skills developed through pre-service teacher education programs are very challenging for teachers teaching in EFL contexts where English has no social function. In these contexts, they can use and share their professional knowledge only through: (1) teacher-teacher interactions; and (2) teacher-learner interactions. Except for occasional interaction with language learners, there remains teacher-teacher interaction and collaboration as the only mechanism through which teachers can maintain and develop their professional knowledge and skills. Despite the importance of language teacher collaboration in EFL contexts, Iranian EFL teachers are getting isolated due to various reasons.

Thus the field of second language teacher education is in urgent need of qualitative studies that reviews the underlying causes of teacher isolation and trace and uncover occasional collaboration among EFL teachers and promote them through teacher education programs.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Few studies, have been carried out to show why teachers work in isolation and what their suggestions are for possible future collaboration. Some studies (Cakir, 2010; Goddard & Goddard, 2007; Foulger, 2005) have discussed the effect of collaboration on teachers' professional development. Other studies have discussed teachers' collaboration for professional development in general with no special reference to English teachers (Avalos, 2010; Bagheridoust & Jajarmi, 2009; Donnelly, 2007; Kohler Buchan, 1995). Therefore, studies on primary English language teachers' collaboration obstacles are needed since such studies would serve as a basis for promoting conditions needed for collaboration.

The study aims at uncovering: (1) roots of isolation; and (2) modes of collaboration. To this end, this study elicits theoretically relevant interview data by making teachers answer the following questions:

1. Would you please describe the workplace atmosphere? That is, do language teachers work in isolation or do they collaborate to improve their practice?
2. If they work in isolation, would you please tell me the reasons for this mode of action? If they collaborate, would you please describe their actual modes of collaboration?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Since English has no specific social function in EFL contexts, except for within group collaboration, language teachers find no chance of using their knowledge and skills. Since collaboration among language teachers is an exception rather than a rule, uncovering patterns of collaboration and publicizing them would be an important step in shifting language teachers away from isolation towards collaboration. Moreover, since the quality of learning can be no better than the quality of teaching, one should first improve the quality of teaching if s/he expects any improvement in the quality of learning. Uncovering and sharing techniques of collaboration will contribute to the quality of teaching and learning.

1.5 Limitations of the study

Although the use of interviews to collect the data is a fairly common approach to studying in our field, this study does not provide a complete picture of these assessments. There could be several other reasons for teacher isolation that were ignored because of insufficient data to support them. We have not, for example, differentiated between negligible recess time due to the compressed schedule of the teachers or due to the lack of enough rooms in school. Similarly, we have interviewed with teachers without having a clear understanding of their experiences as teaches. It means that there was no observation to see if they were really isolated or not. Besides, being localized and small-scale study, we could not generalize the study.

Chapter Two

Review of Related literature

2.1 General Overview

Cooperation is important for us as teachers because we should constantly develop and learn new techniques of teaching, in other words, we are not only teachers but also learners in the field of teaching and learning. Schools and private language institutes should prepare a place that can ensure teacher's constant development, and this could not be achieved through one-shot in-service program (Mclaughlin & Yee, 1988; Brath, 1990). Teacher's learning and development are not a simple process that could be carried out individually and apart from others in isolation.

As such the present study has tried to investigate on the topic of teacher isolation in the literature of teacher education to: 1) establish a theoretical framework in describing the isolation and collaboration methods for teachers in order to no longer teach in isolation; 2) present empirical findings to support the thesis statements; and 3) finally present implications for practice.

2.2 Theoretical Perspectives

2.2.1 Teacher Isolation

The theoretical perspectives presented here are classified as follows. First, teacher isolation will be defined. Then the causes of isolation will be explained, which will be followed by negative effects of teachers isolation, and finally different modes of collaboration among teachers will be discussed.

As noted by Flinder (1988), in defining teacher isolation there are two different orientations. The first one views isolation as the conditions under which teachers work i.e., the characteristics of the teacher's workplace and the opportunities, or lack of opportunities the teacher has for interacting with colleagues. The second orientation defines teacher isolation as a psychological state rather than as a condition of work. This orientation locates the workplace inside the individual as it is created and continually recreated through the filtering and processing of information (Flinder, 1988). Thus, teacher isolation depends more on how teachers perceive and experience collegial interaction than it does on the absolute amount of interaction in which they are involved (Hedberg, 1981).

According to the cognitive approach (Peplau, Miceli, & Morasch, 1982) to isolation, loneliness at work and professional isolation are alike in meaning.

Based on this approach, professional isolation is the unfriendly experience one feels when his network of social relations at work does not work properly in some significant way, either quantitatively or qualitatively.

The attribution theory (Peplau et al., 1982) divides isolation into two modes: internal and stable VS external and unstable. According to this theory, internal and stable professional isolation should have a more negative impact on teachers than external and unstable ones. Furthermore, loneliness, as the result of unvarying features of the self or of the situation, leads to lower expectancies for future social relations and to greater loneliness (Peplau et al., 1982; Weiner, 1986).

Lortie (1975) described three different types of isolation. Egg-crate isolation is the physical separation of classrooms. This state is related to the school structure where teachers lack contact with each other. Teachers enter the classroom and simply shut the doors. Psychological isolation refers to the response of teachers to the mutual interactions with each other. Adaptive isolation refers to the overwhelming state of mind when struggling to meet new demands.

David Flinders (1988) seeks to critically examine the nature of teacher isolation. He states that the existence of professional isolation presents two paradoxes. First, classrooms are full of students, and there are few opportunities for teachers to discuss their work with their colleagues. The second paradox is that teachers may view their classrooms as both a barrier to interaction and a means of protection from outside interference.

Generally, teaching is characterized by taking place in isolation (Lortie, 1975) which imposes restrictions or limitations on teachers and protect them from being judged (Snow, 2005). The literature has pointed out a number of causes for teacher isolation. Many authors state that the school structure perpetuates professional isolation, restricting the possibilities for teachers to observe and interact with one another (Calabrese, 1986; Flinders, 1988; Gaikwood & Brantley, 1992; Lortie, 1975). Others consider scheduling as a cause of professional isolation (Lieberman & Miller, 1992; Lortie, 1975). Cookson (2005) reports that the “egg crate” structure and the compressed timetables of schools make professional collaboration difficult for teachers. This situation brings teachers to a state that they find themselves alone without any interaction with their colleagues.

The cognitive approach to loneliness applied to professional isolation leads to the identification of two distinct classes or causes of isolation: precipitating events and predisposing factors (Lau & Perlman, 1982). Changes in a person's achieved social relations or changes in his anticipated social relations can lead to advanced professional isolation. The emergence of conflicts is an example of a change that can precipitate the feeling of isolation in the workplace. Personal characteristics such as shyness and unwillingness to take social risk are consistently linked to the feeling of isolation (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). These feelings can prompt the person to be professionally isolated.

Peplau et al. (1982) state that people usually try to seek explanations and list the possible reasons for their loneliness. They classify personal accounts of loneliness into three distinct elements:

- Isolated people can usually point out a causing event that led to the beginning of their loneliness.
- People explore the maintaining causes of their isolation which typically include characteristic of the self (e.g., being too shy) or of the situation (e.g., being in a place where it is hard to meet new people).
- Isolated people typically have some ideas of the sort of changes in their social relations that would lessen their isolation.

Based on the cognitive approach to loneliness, the consequences of isolation can be weakened by cognitive processes. Weiner (1986) has classified causative attributions of isolation into three areas: locus of causality that refers to the internal or external causes of isolation as seen by the person. Stability concerns with the duration of the cause of isolation whether it is short-lived or live longer. Controllability refers to the person's control over his behavior.

There are other causes for teacher isolation. First of all, teachers work alone as adults with discrete student groups in separate classrooms. The very little time to engage in dialogue with colleagues about teaching practice could be the second cause. Within a school only one to two experts are hired for each subject (Trower & Gallagher, 2008), who happen to have imperfect chances to discuss student learning and share problems related to work, achievements and puzzles. And lastly, interaction among faculty is often limited to cordial everyday talk

instead of issues about student learning, which strengthens the professional isolation among teachers (Hadar&Broder, 2010).

What one teacher considers as isolation may be seen as individual autonomy by others. It means that, isolation within classrooms may be interpreted as protection from outsiders in the class by others. Nonetheless, this state has two negative consequences for both teachers and students. Whenever a teacher is complaining about a feeling of isolation, it is logical to assume a negative impact on his behavior and energy levels. Isolation is likely to result in burnout and feelings of extreme helplessness (Gaikwad & Brantley, 1992) which consequently affects students' outcomes. As a result of professional isolation, teachers feel that no one cares about what they are going to do (Eisner, 1992); hence, they become frustrated at work and lose their energy. The feeling of burnout that is caused by being isolated will in turn result in disturbing the psychological, mental and physical health of the person (Neveu, 2007). Burnout may lead to negative attitudes associated with the person and thus causes the withdrawal from the job, declined job fulfillment, and quitting the job (Carlson & Thomas, 2006). Moreover, it negatively affects classroom atmosphere, learning and learners.

Having stated the problem of teacher isolation and its negative consequences on teachers' personal and professional life, we should now review the literature and synthesize the techniques scholars and educators have presented to involve teachers in collaborative effort. While professional isolation leads to a state of burnout and a feeling of extreme helplessness, a collaborative atmosphere is conducive to professional growth and job satisfaction.

2.2.2 Teacher Collaboration

In what follows, the review first defines teacher collaboration. Then it will explain the necessity of creating conditions that are conducive to collaboration. Finally, it will provide stakeholders with useful techniques that move teachers away from isolation towards collaboration.

Nowadays teachers are both subjects and objects of learning (Avalos, 2010). They need to cooperate with each other to develop themselves professionally. While traditionally they waited for the educator to bombard them with externally imposed methods and techniques through crash teacher training courses, teacher now collaborate and learn from each other's experience. Since the outdated

"master" role has changed (Avalos, 2010), teachers can learn from each other reciprocally. Societies of teachers that have gathered together to teach will create a helpful learning atmosphere which will change their practice (Fuolger, 2005). While it was formerly believed that theory improves practice, within this new paradigm, it is practice that improves practice and as such teachers no longer wait for externally imposed initiatives.

Not only does collaboration improve teachers' professional knowledge and experience, but also it significantly improves student learning and achievement. Studies show that in schools where teachers collaborate on issues related to their teaching (e.g. curriculum, syllabus, teaching methods, etc.), students' achievements is higher. In other words, peers influence instructional practices which consequently influence students' learning (e.g. Goddard & Goddard, 2007; Supovitz, Sirinides, May, 2010).

Despite the positive effect of collaboration on both teachers and learners, it shouldn't be hierarchically imposed on teachers since it is a threat to professional autonomy. Demanding teachers to collaborate disturbs their right as professionals to work in isolation and can result only in "contrived congeniality" rather than a true collaborative culture (Hargreaves 1991). Some critics of systematic collaboration even offer a conspiracy theory. Scholars advocating this theory argue that any effort to embed collaborative processes into the school day represents an administrative ploy to compel teachers to do the bidding of others and demonstrates a lack of commitment to empowering teachers. Thus proponents of volunteerism greet any attempt to ensure that educators work together with the addendum, "but only if they want to" (DuFour, 2011). That is, teacher collaboration is conducive to professional development and growth if it is democratic rather than dictated. But there remains a question: "How can we involve teachers in collaboration without externally imposing it on classroom practice?"

2.2.3 Peer Coaching

To facilitate teachers cooperation and allow them to exchange support, feedback, and assistance in a reciprocal and nonthreatening acquaintance (Ackland, 1991), teachers can collaborate through what is called peer coaching. Dalton and Moyer

(1991) defined peer coaching as a company between teachers in a nonjudgmental atmosphere built on a collaborative and reflective dialogue. Through peer coaching teachers can share their knowledge and provide each other with feedback, support, and assistance. This could help them constantly learn through learning new teaching strategies, refining old ones, and solving each other's problems related to classroom practice. Similarly, Robin (1995) indicates that peer coaching allows teachers to reflect upon existing practices and refine and enlarge their instructional abilities.

Cook and Fine (1997) state that teacher development is not a phenomenon that occurs on a specific day during the school year. As mentioned earlier, instead of relying totally on discrete in-service days and pre-service years, professional development must be closely linked to the just-in-time demands of teaching such as lesson planning and assessment of student work and this could be achieved through peer coaching. Foulger (2005) stated that peer coaching will provide “communities of practice” where teachers can argue, think, try out, and refine new practices. Peer coaching responds to emergent teachers' needs and inspires teachers to work and learn in a mutual community rather than wait for externally imposed ideas presented to them through the once popular applied science model of teacher education.

Some practitioners may believe that coaching is a way of evaluation not collaboration. However, coaching is different from evaluation in that coaching is a process in which education professionals assist each other in negotiating the distance between acquiring new skills or teaching strategies and applying them skillfully and effectively for instruction. The evaluation of teachers typically implies judgment about the adequacy of the person, whereas coaching implies assistance in a learning process (Showers, 1985). Although coaching takes place in a nonjudgmental atmosphere, peers should plan every aspect of the training process carefully. The amount of learned skills should be measured and the effectiveness of teaching skill and strategies with their students should be studied. In this sense, everything is evaluated. However, nothing could be farther from the atmosphere of coaching than is the practice of traditional evaluation.

The norms of coaching and evaluation practice is antithetical and should be separated in our thinking as well as in practice. By definition, evaluation

should not be undertaken concurrently with coaching, whereas the analysis of skills and their use is an inherent part of it (Beverly, 1985). Below is a comparison of peer coaching and evaluation excerpted from *Peer Coaching*, National Staff Development Council (1991).

Table 1. Peer coaching and evaluation parameters

Peer coaching	Evaluation
trial and error approach	“best foot forward”
give-and-take; sharing both ways	one way learning
non-threatening (peers)	sometimes threatening (supervisor)
forward-looking: improvement-oriented	looking backward: what has happened
coach is invested in teacher’s success	administrator may or may not gain if teacher is successful
targets specific areas	general review, global
Ongoing	often one-shot
data: given to teacher	data: personnel file
teacher being observed does the evaluation	administrator evaluates
Focus is on “What I saw.”	focus often on “What I didn’t see.”
FORMATIVE	SUMMATIVE

Being deeply rooted in education systems around the world, evaluation can be easily implemented but how can teachers implement peer coaching? Prior to specifying the implementation of peer coaching, it should be noted that individual peers decide when and how often the observations will occur, they also decide for conditions under which the observations will be directed and what specific instructional data to be recorded by the visiting coach (Kinsella, 1995). Although peer coaching can be implemented in different ways, teachers can implement it through a non-judgmental and none-threatening process which includes the

following phases: (1) pre-observation planning conference to establish observation criteria; (2) classroom observation to collect data; and (3) post-observation conference to reflect on practice, analyze the data, and form instructional goals and develop subsequent observation criteria.

2.2.4 Peer Observation

Freeman (1982) presented three approaches to observation by focusing on the observer's role: (1) supervisory approach, in which the observer acts as a supervisor and provides prescriptive feedback; (2) alternative approach, in which the observer provides non-judgmental alternatives for what he/she observed; and (3) non-directive approach, in which the observer aims at understanding teachers' experiences and goals. Literature presents us with three other approaches, one of which overlaps with Freeman's (1982) classification: (1) collaborative model which requires a sharing of ideas between the teacher and the observer; (2) creative model which focuses on teachers' initiatives and innovations; and (3) self-help explorative model which aims at developing awareness-raising in the observer in the process of observing someone's teaching (Gebhard, 1999). Taking the collaborative model into account, teachers can also collaborate and learn from each other by observing their colleagues' classes. Peer observation is the process by which university instructors provide feedback to colleagues on their teaching efforts and practices. The process might include a review of course planning and design, review of instructional materials (handouts, exercises, readings, lectures, activities), review of learning assessments (tests, graded assignments), review of in-class interaction with students, and of instructor presentations (Roberson, 2006). Despite its potential for teacher development, some scholars have criticized this mode of collaboration since: (1) it can be judgmental and threatening in nature (Cosh, 1999); (2) it has some drawbacks in terms of both objectivity and psychology (Çakir, 2010); and (3) there is no active self-development through reflection (Çakir, 2010).

Hence, for the purpose of continued learning and exploration, it is essential for the observer to: (1) capture the events of the classroom as accurately and objectively as possible and not only to make a record of impressions (Wajnryb, 1992); (2) collaboratively review the collected data to increase the likelihood of a positive outcome—in terms of a useful dialogue about strategies,

and the identification of future foci for lesson preparation/observation (Murdock, 2000, p. 58); (3) collect “valid, objective, and recorded” data (Hunter, 1983, p. 43); (4) discuss specific events instead of his/her impressions (Murdock, 2000, p. 54); (5) be trained since poorly trained observers and inconsistent brief observations can create biased results (Shannon, 1991); (6) increase the frequency of the observations since when observations occur more frequently, their reliability improves (Denner, Miller, Newsome, & Birdsong, 2002); and (7) increase the length of observations since when observations are longer, their validity improves (Cronin & Capie, 1986).

Rayan (2013) suggested a three stage process for peer observation to be effective: pre POT, during POT, and post POT. During the Pre-POT stage both the observer and the observee agree on that observer is going to observe the observee’s instruction and then s/he will share his/her observation with the observee and if necessary the observee can also observe the observers' teaching and share his/her observation with him. During the observation phase, both of the teachers follow assured procedures including to be arrived in time, to be record what had happened during different stages of the teaching session, the interactions of students to be observed, and observation form to be filled, etc. And lastly during the post-POT, both of the teachers will discuss what had happened during the teaching session. Literature has pointed out a number of key principles in exploring peer observation of teaching:

- Confidentiality (Gosling, 2005; Carter & Clark, 2003)
- Departure of POT from other school procedures (Gosling, 2005; Carter & Clark, 2003)
- Making sure all teachers irrespective of grade or status are involved (Gosling, 2005; Carter & Clark, 2003)
- Mutuality with a focus on reciprocated benefit to observer and observed (Gosling, 2005)
- Insuring development rather than judgement (Carter & Clark, 2003)

2.2.5 Pair mentoring

Coaching is different from mentoring relationship. Mentoring is guidance, support and advice offered by the experienced mentor to the less experienced mentee for the purpose of developing his/her academic career. In contrast, coaching is characterized by a collaborative relationship between equal teachers for the purpose of facilitating the development through feedback, reflection and self-directed learning (Greene & Grant, 2003). Mentoring is the process of serving as a teacher who facilitates and assists another teacher's growth and development. The process of mentoring automatically includes modeling since the mentor should be able to model the techniques he suggests for the novice teacher's development (Gay, 1995).

For the mentoring process to be effective, the mentor should: (1) be able to articulate the art of teaching; (2) have strong interpersonal communication skills to establish rapport and trust; and (3) act as a patient and active listener. According to Freeman (1993), the most distinctive characteristic of an effective mentor is his or her willingness to nurture another teacher; hence, mentors should be people-oriented, flexible, emphatic and collaborative.

In pair mentoring two teachers observe each other's lessons, discuss areas of reciprocal interest and design future schemes (Whisker, 1996). This is less threatening; teachers can see their own teaching in the teaching of others, and when teachers observe others to gain self-knowledge, they have the opportunity to recreate their own knowledge (Çakir, 2010).

In some countries students-teachers are required to join for a certain period of time to experienced teachers' classes and observe their classes as a Practice Teaching course. After this period, they are asked to start teaching. Their teaching will be observed by the mentor teacher, who will be responsible for providing feedback later. Through this course, they both progress and develop an optimistic attitude towards the teaching profession (Daloglu, 2001). In short, mentors can help beginner teachers : (1) make connections between what is learned and the teaching context; (2) reflect on practice; (3) develop versatility in his instructional approaches; (4) be responsive to the learners' needs; (5) articulate their implicit assumptions about teaching

2.2.6 Teacher study group

A teacher study group (TSG) is defined as a group of teachers who meet on a regular basis to share and discuss professional topics and issues based on their shared interests, beliefs, and practices (Pfaff, 2000). Much research has documented that a TSG can be an effective avenue to support modern teachers who need to emphasize their ongoing lifelong professional development and can have a great impact on teaching effectiveness (Clair, 1998). Freeman (2001) believes that in a TSG “the content can be generated through reflection and discussion, or journal writing, or it may be triggered by a reading or other external input” (p.76). Forming local TSGs that get together to present the teaching problems they sense, stating them, and finally solving them through collaborative reflection and discussion is an efficient alternative to the once popular teacher training courses, where teachers were at the consumer end of the initiatives.

Aiming at professional development and being up-to-date, teachers in a TSG gather together to stimulate trust and honesty, and reduce feeling of isolation that is experienced by most teachers. According to Matlin and Short (1991), “for the teachers, the study group is an opportunity to think through their own beliefs, share ideas, challenge current instructional practices, blend theory and practice, identify professional needs-as well as develop literacy innovation for their classrooms” (p. 68). Similarly as Short (1992) states, participants in teacher study groups are encouraged to reflect on their current beliefs and practices on subjects such as literacy learning, English language acquisition, and teacher education.

When professional development is examined through a constructivist lens, in contrast to participating in scattered traditional teacher training in-service programs, teachers in TSGs are able to construct new knowledge through a process of linking their schemata and valuable experience. In the teacher study group model, knowledge is not meant to be transmitted by experts. Constructivist notions of collaborative construction, context, and conversation (Jonassen et al., 1995) are crucial components in the teacher study group communication. TSGs build up a community in which teachers interact with a small group of people (ideally four to six) to share their hopes and concerns.

In study groups, the teachers bring their specific needs and explore their profession together to identify problems and engage in ongoing professional

development dialogue. By doing so, teachers can further comprehend their own experiences and the insights of other teachers, which leads the group to a new vision (Freedman et al., 1999). This reflects Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin's (1995) professional development model that entails providing circumstances for teachers to reflect critically on their experience and to fashion new knowledge and beliefs about content, teaching, and learners.

TPS has received increasing attention as effective tools for professional development at all educational levels. They provide a crucial format for teachers to gain ownership and autonomy over their learning, serving as a forum in community learning and offering possibilities for self-actualization. Many schools have offered various groups for professional development. However, they are often run by administrators, supervisors or others *outside* the group. Thus, the control lies with outsiders and so the teachers in these groups do not have any autonomy, but are just passively completing a predetermined agenda. In other words, teacher study groups refer to meetings held by teachers for teachers rather than imposed on teachers by people external to the teaching circle. More specifically, teacher-initiated study groups are composed of teachers who voluntarily join a collaborative community to meet individual needs as well as to set collective goals as a group.

2.3 Empirical Findings

Having reviewed theoretical perspectives on different modes of encouraging collaboration, we should now review the effect of these initiatives on actual teaching and learning. Barber and Mourshed (2009) found that schools with the best systems focused on providing the high-quality, collaborative, job-focused professional development representative of professional learning communities. A similar study, Rosenhaltz (1989) found teachers' professional collaboration to be profoundly effective in improving teachers' efficacy and enhancing teachers' effectiveness. A study done by Miller, Harris, and Watanabe (1991) which aimed at determining the effectiveness of using professional coaching to increase positive teacher behaviors and decrease negative teacher behaviors, shows that two coaching sessions in a 5-week period were effective in improving teacher performance.

Some studies present us with empirical evidence supporting the facilitative role of peer coaching. Kohler, MacCullough and Buchan (1995) found that peer coaching leads to procedural change during coaching phase of their program. Kohler, Crilley, Shearer and Good (1997) found that teachers who are in coaching relationships are more likely to try new skills or techniques compared to other teachers and areas not routinely discussed with a coach showed little or no refinement. In another study participants reported that the feedbacks they received from peer coaches were meaningful and this: (1) gave them motivation to direct their learning;(2) increased the level of trust and morale among them; and (3) led to a justification to do more work (Arnau, Kahrs, & Kruskamp, 2004). Still in another study by Bagheridoust and Jajarmi (2009), the effect of Peer Coaching on teacher Efficacy and professional development was analyzed. All the participants within the study found peer coaching and the collaboration with peers as a non-evaluative and low-stressed means to reflect upon and improve their own teaching. Despite its potential for teacher development and growth, peer coaching can create conflict between teachers because it interrupts norms of autonomy, privacy, and equality in school (Little, 1990).

Other studies have focused on presenting empirical evidence in support of POT. Scholars found that POT makes discussion of teaching – which is often an unseen exercise – a noticeable practice (Blackwell & McClean, 1996), and improves the value of teaching (Gosling, 2005). It also enhances the sharing of good practice and more personally enables staff to receive positive feedback on what they do well (Whitlock & Rumpus, 2004). Moreover, it reassures staff that their teaching is seen positively by their peers, whilst also being useful in helping to reveal hidden behavior that individuals may not be aware of within their own practice (Blackwell & McClean, 1996). Moreover, Bell (2001), reported that observers grew considerably from the chance to observe another teacher's teaching. Another study suggests further benefits for the observer including learning about a new strategy, improving their confidence to try this strategy in their own teaching, and receiving feedback from the peers (Hendry & Oliver, 2012).

2.4 Implications for Practice

This study aimed at reviewing: (1) the causes of teacher isolation; (2) negative effects of isolation on teachers' professional and personal life; (3) different modes of voluntary collaboration among teachers, (4) empirical studies which present substantive evidence in support of collaboration. The review has clear implications for practitioners since they can use the review as a guide to move away from isolation towards collaboration. It is also useful for principals and managers in creating a friendly environment which is conducive to growth and development for teachers and students. Taking the negative effects of isolation on teachers' professional life and the inherent potential of collaboration for teacher development and growth into account, it is suggested that:

- managers structure schools in ways that promote teacher collaboration and schedule classes in a way that maximizes professional interaction;
- teachers collaborate to improve efficacy and hold regular meetings to share their problems and suggested solutions; and
- schools move away from the once-popular teacher training courses towards teacher study groups, peer observation of teaching and mentoring, which are conducive to constructing knowledge; rather than stick to the applied science model of teacher education which encourages teachers to passively wait for externally imposed change initiatives.

2.5 Summary of Empirical Finding

To put the empirical findings in a nutshell, it can be said that:

- Schools must focus on providing the high-quality, collaborative, and job-focused professional development (Barber & Mourshed, 2009).
- Teachers' professional collaboration is effective in improving teachers' efficacy and enhancing teachers' effectiveness (Rosenhaltz, 1989).
- Professional coaching is effective in increasing positive teacher behaviors and decreasing negative teacher behaviors (Miller, 1991).
- POT makes discussion of teaching a noticeable practice (Blackwell & McClean, 1996).

- POT improves the value of teaching (Gosling, 2005).
- POT reassures staff that their teaching is seen positively by their peers (Blackwell & McClan, 1996).

2.6 Statement of the Gap

According to the literatures, it is safe to conclude that schools must organize in a way that promote professional development and that professional collaboration ensures teacher professional development. To be able to collaborate, teachers need techniques of collaboration. The literature has pointed out different ways of collaboration for teachers. However, it lacks a qualitative research elicits teacher collaboration mode. It also lacks studies on why teachers are isolated. Therefore, studies on primary English language teachers' collaboration obstacles are needed since such studies would serve as a basis for promoting conditions needed for collaboration.

Generally, literatures show a lack of concentration on why teachers are isolated and how to put teachers in the conditions to collaborate. Since promoting teachers collaboration needs an understanding of teachers' collaboration obstacles, it would be beneficial to review the underlying causes of teacher isolation and trace and uncover occasional collaboration among EFL teachers and promote them through teacher education programs.

Chapter three
Methodology

3.1 General Overview

In attempt to identify Iranian EFL obstacles in cooperating together and their strategies to overcome these obstacles the current researcher decided to use grounded theory methodology. One of the reasons that grounded theory has received increased attention is because this method emphasizes understanding the “voice” of the participant to build a theory about phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In the current study interviews with EFL teachers were analyzed to develop a theory that explains the reasons of Iranian EFL teachers. This theory addresses the strategies used by these teachers in overcoming isolation and cooperating.

This chapter describes the type of the research, besides, the chapter describes the population and the sample for the study .Further ,provides information about the research procedures. In addition, it describes the data collection in details.

3.2 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory has established an eternally accepted selection of methodology for social researchers since its growth in the 1960s, with more than 3,650 journal articles published ,equally on the methodology itself and coverage research conclusions. Over time, the deviating approaches and situations accepted by the founding fathers, Glaser and Strauss, have aggravated a large amount of conversation (Corbin, 1998). The subject of which theorist has broadened the methodology in a way that is realistic to its innovative objective of developing theory from data has been systematically debated (e.g., Duchscher & Morgan, 2004; Heath & Cowley ,2004). Grounded Theory method builds up by Glaser and Strauss (1967). It is a broad methodology for mounting theory that is grounded in data scientifically collected and analyzed (Strauss and Corbin 1994). Theory develops and evolves through the research procedures due to the interchange among data collection and analysis stages. It is essential to note that the result of a Grounded Theory study is the generation of a theory, on the basis of concepts and sets of concepts instead the information is often presented with little comment from a researcher as other ethnographical methods.

A Grounded Theory is a theory which is inductively resulting from the phenomenon it symbolize and assemble four essential criteria: fit, understanding, generality and control (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Fit necessitate that the theory fits the substantive data.

Understanding necessitate that the theory be graspable to all concerned in the area of study. Generality necessitate that the theory is appropriate in a variety of contexts. Control implies that the theory should supply control with regard to action toward the phenomenon. Grounded theory provides a organized method connecting numerous stages which is used to 'ground' the theory, or narrate it to the authenticity of the phenomenon under consideration (Scott 1996). A Grounded Theory is derived from the phenomenon under study. This contrasts with the hypothetico-deductive method, where theories are generated from cyclical testing and sanitization of a formerly constructed hypothesis .In Grounded Theory studies, theory emerges from the logical and systematic assessment of the phenomenon.

3.2.1 Beginning of Grounded Theory

The grounded theory method developed in significance and gratitude over the years from the seminal work of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967). These two sociologists come from diverse setting and their joint work melds primary background in sociology (Glaser, 1978 ;Glaser, 1992; Glaser, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

On the one hand, Herbert Blumer, Evert Hughes and Robert Park trained Anselm Strauss in symbolic interaction at the University of Chicago's school of qualitative research, wherever Strauss was prejudiced by the pragmatist philosophical tradition (Charmaz, 2001; Glaser, 1998 ;Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Additional Barney Glaser was trained in quantitative methodology and qualitative mathematics at Columbia University by Paul F. Lazarsfeld, a trendsetter of quantitative methods (Glaser, 1998; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Glaser was also trained in theory construction by Merton; particularly in theoretical coding, which Merton learned from Talcott Parsons and others (Glaser, 1998). Furthermore, Glaser acquired training in explication of text at the University of Paris (Glaser, 1998).

The grouping of the diverse conditions of Strauss and Glaser, whereas functioning jointly during the early 1960s, created the constant comparative method presently recognized as grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

3.2.2 School of Thought of Grounded Theory

The originators of grounded theory continued to build up the method over the years independently of each other. Their separated pathways led to what now is recognized as the ‘Straussian’ and ‘Glaserian’ descriptions of the grounded theory method currently there are two school of thought of grounded theory the ‘Glaserian School’ and the ‘Straussian School’(Stern, 1994).

Glaserian and Straussian perspectives of GT are different especially in terms of the paradigmatic dimensions, formulation of research questions, analysis procedures used, usage of literature, sampling procedures, and the procedures for validating the resultant theory. The Glaserian perspective in GT is more towards the post-positivism (Annells, 1996). Based on its philosophical roots, Glaserian grounded theory relates to critical realism ontologically, modified objectivist’s epistemology, and methodologically discovers theory through verifying it using sequential researches (Annells, 1996). However, Corbin and Strauss (2008) rejected and label them as post-positivists. Instead, they preferred it to be called ‘constructivists’. Thus, it has taken a shape as a relativist ontologically, subjectivist epistemologically, has recognized the interactive nature of the inquirer and the participants, and has placed it in a constructivist paradigm of inquiry.

Referring to formulation of research question, Glaser rejects starting the research process with a research problem followed by research questions (Glaser, 1992). In contrast, Straussian perspective enters the field with some research questions. In fact, when formulating the research problems and questions, the researcher can use his experience, knowledge and even the literature if it is needed (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

In using the literature both perspectives in GT recognize the role of literature in developing a new theory. The difference is where the literature is used. Glaser (1992) strongly opposed the use of literature at the beginning of the research so as to avoid ‘forcing the data’ with the researcher’s preconceptions. Instead, he suggests comparing and contrasting the emerging theory with the extant literature at a later stage especially when the substantive theory is beginning to emerge. In contrast, there is no such hard and fast rule in the Straussian approach, with regard to the use of literature. The Straussian believe that it can be done at any phase of the research (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

For sampling Procedures both perspectives agree on the use of theoretical sampling as the method of sampling. The procedures of theoretical sampling also seem to be not of much difference. However, Glaser identifies and criticizes some aspects of Straussian theoretical sampling procedures which he called as ‘model sampling’ that ‘forces the data rather than letting them to emerge’ (Glaser, 1992).

In analysis procedures, in both approaches, the main analytical methods are coding and constant comparison methods controlled by the theoretical sampling. Coding consists of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Glaser (1992) criticized the Straussian coding approach for the so called ‘force to data’. Furthermore, Glaser (1992) argues that selective coding should only begin when the core category emerges, in contrast to Straussian’s approach which recommends selective coding to be done from square one in order to generate the core categories themselves (Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

In validating the resultant theory, Glaser (1992) focused on four criteria: ‘fit’, ‘relevance’, ‘work’, and ‘modifiability’. In contrast, Corbin and Strauss (1990) used variety of techniques such as validity, reliability, credibility, plausibility and value of the theory, adequacy of the research process, and the empirical grounding of the research process.

Having compared and contrasted between the Glaserian and Straussian GT approaches, the main distinction that is rooted in their paradigmatic differences can be identified. Glaser (2002) believes in a ‘true reality’ while Strauss believes in ‘constructive reality’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The concept of ‘true reality’ denotes that it is now real and independent to our beliefs about it (Wright, 1992). In other words, ‘there is a real reality or ultimate truth’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). So in this case the challenge for the researcher is to collect exact data that can reveal the real reality. It is not determined relatively to the people, place, and time that are the major factors of subjectivity as Glaser (2000) explained. In other words, it (the reality) is there. Glaserian approach is more applicable here as it tries to see the reality by collecting and fixing the needed data. This process is like a puzzle game. In the puzzle game, ‘this time piece of picture determines the requirement of the next level pieces of pictures’. Similarly, this time data will guide and suggest the next level data requirements. In the Straussian perspective, since there is no true (one) reality (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and

it is relative to the interaction of people and their context; the challenge is to see how the reality is constructed relative to people, time, and place and their interactions. So, Strauss's approach allows the researcher to interactively construct the reality with the participants, which is strictly prohibited in the Glaserian perspective.

3.2.3 Theoretical Sampling

This involves collecting further data in the light of categories that have emerged from earlier stages of data analysis. Theoretical sampling means checking emerging theory against reality by sampling incidents that may challenge or elaborate its developing claims. While the earlier stages of grounded theory require maximum openness and flexibility to identify a wide range of predominantly descriptive categories, theoretical sampling is concerned with the refinement and, ultimately, saturation (see below) of existing, and increasingly analytic, categories.

3.2.4 Theoretical saturation

The researcher must also ensure that constant comparison is an ongoing feature of the process. Theoretical sampling should direct the researcher to further individuals, situations, contexts and locations and the theory should only be presented as developed when all core categories are saturated.

Theoretical saturation is achieved through staying in the field until no new evidence emerges which can inform or underpin the development of a theoretical point. There are no clear-cut rules of thumb for when this will occur, but it is important to saturate the data if the theory is to have substance. This may also involve searching and sampling groups that will stretch the diversity of data in order to ensure that saturation is based on the widest possible range of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1968). When similar incidences occur over again, the researcher may feel confident that the category is saturated.

3.2.5 Data Collection

Qualitative data in GT are derived from the same sources as those of other qualitative approaches. This involves collecting data by means of interviews and/or

observation of the phenomenon that is being researched. In addition, health-care practitioners may collect data in the form of records such as medical or maternity notes, off duty rotas and minutes of meetings. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest diaries; autobiographies, letters and historical accounts, but many other sources can be used.

Interviews may be unstructured or semi-structured. Unstructured interviews generally consist of one or two open-ended questions. Participants are then free to say as much or as little as they wish and the researcher does not impose their own ideas. Questions that prompt or encourage participants to elaborate can be posed (Patton 2002). It is at this stage of the research process that having knowledge and experience of the topic can facilitate data collection (Strauss 1987). Indeed, Pid-geon (1996) believes that without some prior knowledge sense cannot be made of any research data. Smith and Biley (1997) acknowledge the tension that exists between putting aside any preconceived ideas and using knowledge and experience to facilitate the development of theory. The use of a reflective diary can raise researchers' awareness of their preconceived ideas and the influence of these on data collection and analysis. This awareness is also important if the perspective of another is to be understood (Hutchinson and Wilson 2001). Obtaining the insider perspective and interpret it requires empathy or the ability to place oneself in the shoes of another. This process of looking back on the self (Mead 1934) continues throughout the research. The researcher is an integral part of the research process. The desirability of being able to suspend knowledge is likely to be difficult or even impossible to achieve.

The study may begin with semi-structured interviews (indeed Strauss himself prefers these). There are no guidelines to stipulate the number of questions this involves. It is, however, important to remember that the more questions that are asked the more structured the interview becomes. Too many questions, and the researcher determines the agenda. The process of discovery is then inhibited, and what is important to participants may never be revealed. Morse and Bottorff (1992) in a study that explored the emotional experience of breast expression following the birth of a baby posed three questions. Landmark and Wahl (2002) sought to explore the experiences of women who had recently been diagnosed with breast cancer. They identified six key issues which included reactions to the diagnosis, everyday living patterns and thoughts

about the future. Although these were stated to be guidelines their purpose was to provide structure to the interview.

In reality most grounded theory interviews become semi-structured because, as the key issues emerge, there is a need to focus on these to facilitate development of the theory. Issues that lack relevance to the emerging theory are not pursued. An interview guide can be used to record questions that highlight these key issues (Holloway, 1997). If these issues do not arise spontaneously the researcher can then address them; such questions will be important in developing the emerging theory. An alternative to the individual interview is the focus group, an approach adopted for instance, by Rogan et al. (1997). Interactions of a small group of individuals generate ideas and facilitate exploration of the phenomenon (Holloway, 1997). It might, however, be more difficult to carry out theoretical sampling with focus groups.

3.2.6 Data Analysis

The process of analysis can begin as the data are being collected and fairly soon after the interview or observations have been undertaken and transcribed. The transcription includes coughs, pauses, laughs and so on, while in observations actions and interactions are described in the fieldnotes. All of these have meanings and may influence interpretation of the data.

A key feature of grounded theory is the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss 1967) in which data collection and analysis is a simultaneous and interactive process. The process also involves constant comparison between words, sentences, paragraphs, codes and categories. The purpose of this is to identify similarities and differences in the data. Each interview and observation is also compared. This process continues until the final write up of the report has been completed. It is a detailed and thorough process involving repeated reading or listening to the tape recordings. The interaction with the data enables the researcher to understand the phenomenon that is being researched.

3.3 The Study

3.3.1 Why Grounded theory

Grounded theory is recommended when investigating social problems or situations to which people must adapt (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Schreiber, 2001; Benoliel, 1996). In this study we have tried to investigate on teacher isolation which is a hindering problem for teachers. The next part of the research concentrates on helping teachers to be adapted to a situation in which they can collaborate.

Its goal is to explain "... how social circumstances could account for the interactions, behaviours and experiences of the people being studied" (Benoliel, 1996). Grounded theory facilitates the move from a description of what is happening to an understanding of the process by which it is happening (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Stauss and Corbin, 1998). Using grounded theory permitted the development of a substantive theory, which increased understanding of residents' experience of life in long-stay care, their QoL, the extent to which they felt at home and what helped them to feel home.

3.3.2 Research Context

The present study has carried out in Sannandaj, the center of Kurdistan province, that is a relatively big city in west of Iran. There are many language institutes there and consequently there are many experienced and skilled teacher.

3.3.3 Participant

All participant of the study are experienced teachers or head teachers that are willing to share their ideas with the researcher. For the current study the researcher has decided to use snowball sampling. As it has been pointed out in Ary et al. (2006) "Snowball, chain, or network sampling occurs when the initially selected subjects suggest the names of others who would be appropriate for the sample. These next subjects might then suggest others and so on" (page 432). As it is the case with grounded-theory design, this process will continue until a state of theoretical saturation is reached.

3.3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis take place in alternating sequences that can be described as an iterative cycle of induction and deduction, consisting of collection of data and constant comparison between results and new findings in order to guide further data collections (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data is collected until theoretical saturation is reached, in other words until no new or relevant data emerges regarding a category and relationships between categories are established (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

The data for this study has been collected through an unstructured open ended interview with the informant of the study. Interview questions should give as little guidance as possible to allow the interviewees to talk about what is of importance to them regarding a given context. The researcher then needs to extract those phenomena or experiences significant to the interviewee by assigning a conceptual label, known as a code. Several codes can be grouped into more abstract categories which will eventually form the basis for the developing theory. The interview is one of the most widely used and basic methods for obtaining qualitative data (Ary et al, 2006). Interviews provide insight on participants' perspectives, the meaning of events for the people involved, information about the site, and perhaps information on unanticipated issues. Interviews allow immediate follow-up and clarification of participants' responses. One disadvantage of the interview as a data-gathering tool is that interviewees may not be willing to share information or may even offer false information. In this study participant will be chosen based on their willingness to participate in the study.

3.3.5 Coding

Open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) is initially employed to name and give meaning to the data. This may involve use of 'in vivo' codes that are the participants own words. Codes with similar meaning are linked together and renamed as categories to provide more abstract meaning. In addition, each property or characteristic of the category can be located along a continuum (Strauss and Corbin 1998). For example, in a study that analyzed women's initial experiences of motherhood, Barclay et al. (1997)

developed a category that they entitled 'unready'. At one end of the continuum women were totally unready for motherhood while at the other extreme were those who were completely ready. This process is known as dimensionalization.

Glaser (1992) adopt a different, though similar, approach to coding. While the naming of categories and identification of properties and dimensions appears to be the same whichever method is used, the approach to initial coding adopted by Strauss and Corbin is a very detailed one.

During open coding and the subsequent analytic process, questions are generated and answers sought in the data. Future participants can be asked these questions if they are likely to facilitate the development of a theory. These questions can also generate working hypotheses or propositions that can be validated in subsequent data collection. Unlike other qualitative approaches, grounded theory is therefore an inductive and deductive process. According to Glaser (1992) neutral questions should be asked such as what is actually happening in the data? This permits the data to tell their own story. In contrast, Strauss (Strauss & Corbin 1998) asks 'what if?', and considers all possibilities whether they are in the data or not. This involves asking questions such as who?, what?, where?, how? And when? According to Glaser (1992) his approach permits the theory to emerge while Strauss forces the data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) dispute this, saying that the data are allowed to speak for themselves.

Axial coding follows open coding. This process is used to make connections between categories and sub-categories and allows a conceptual framework to emerge. Using a paradigm model, relationships are established by determining causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances and conditions (Glaser, 1978). At this stage some open codes may be discarded because there are no connections. The relationship between concepts is verified by constant comparison and enables the theory to be developed. The link between conditions, consequences and interaction can be expressed in the form of a conditional matrix (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Lujana et al. (2002) provide a good example of this, while Rogan et al. (1997) acknowledge that their theory was not fully developed. The data are therefore put back together in new ways. According to Glaser (1992) the paradigm model forces the data into a predetermined structure hence his use of the term 'full conceptual description' for the work of Strauss.

Selective coding for Strauss and Corbin (1998) is the process that links all categories and sub-categories to the core category thus facilitating the emergence of the 'storyline' or theory. Perhaps unsurprisingly Glaser (1992) disagrees and clearly states that selective coding is about confining coding to those categories that relate to the core category. Keddyet al. (1996) in a discussion of how grounded theory can be used for feminist research acknowledge that more than one story might emerge from the data. A decision therefore has to be made about choosing which story to develop.

The core category is central to and links the data; it accounts for the variations in the data (Strauss and Corbin 1998). It therefore provides a theory to explain the social processes surrounding the phenomenon. Integrating ideas from the literature and undertaking further sampling can expand this theory (Stern 1980). Subsequent interviews can verify this theory and enhance its development. Concepts and codes that lack relevance to the developing theory are discarded, but negative cases are retained. Roganet al. (1997) identified six categories: 'realizing', 'unready', 'loss', 'aloneness', 'drained' and 'working it out'. Linking these together was the core category 'becoming a mother'. Their theory explains how women move through a trajectory of recognizing life changes, something that they were not ready for, to making the adjustment to motherhood. The ability to give meaning to the data, in other words to recognize what is relevant and important, and what lacks relevance for the emerging theory requires theoretical sensitivity (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1978). It is this that also helps to determine theoretical sampling. Pidgeon (1996) believes that novices may be unable to theorize beyond the context in which their own study took place, and grounded theory therefore may become little more than content analysis.

It has been acknowledged that the Straussian version of grounded theory is very structured, and concerns have been expressed that some researchers may follow it as a prescription (Pidgeon 1996). This implies linear thinking which is contrary to the intention of constant comparison. In contrast, the Glaserian approach could be perceived as being rather vague. When each category is conceptually dense, variations in the category have been identified and explained, and no further data pertinent to the categories emerge during data collection, saturation is said to occur (Strauss and Corbin 1998). At this point in the study all participants are expressing the same ideas relevant to the developing theory, and nothing new is emerging from observations in the field.

No further data collection is necessary, and the final sample size is known. Some codes and categories will be saturated before others, hence some data collection appears to become irrelevant but confirms what has already been said.

3.3.6 Illustration of the Coding Scheme

Data were collected over a period of time through unstructured tape-recorded interviews. One open-ended question was posed to teachers: ‘Would you please describe the workplace atmosphere? That is, do language teachers work in isolation or do they collaborate to improve their practice? If they work in isolation, would you please tell me the reasons for this mode of action? If they collaborate, would you please describe their actual modes of collaboration? As important issues emerged, these were listed on an interview guide. If not spontaneously included in the conversation by participants in sub-sequent interviews questions were raised relating to these issues. Topics were excluded from the interview when it became apparent during the research that they lacked relevance to the emerging theory.

The data were analyzed by the constant comparative method. Open coding enabled the data to be conceptualized. Codes that reflected my own interpretation of the data were identified. These included ‘Negligible Recess Time’, ‘Lack of Shared Concerns’, and ‘Theme-Focused Talk Shows. Axial coding took place when categories and sub-categories were linked together by using the paradigm model. This was established by determining their relationship to each other, using the ‘six cs’ (Glaser 1978): causes, context, contingencies, consequences, covariances and conditions. A sub-category of Teacher Isolation for example was labelled ‘Salary’. The process of ‘selective coding’ identified the two core categories entitled ‘Causes of teacher isolation and Patterns of Collaboration among EFL Teachers’. It was these categories that linked all the data together and helped to provide an explanation of what are the causes for teacher isolation and how they can escape of this isolation toward collaboration. In retrospect this sequential coding was too prescriptive. Relationships between codes were often identified, but these sometimes changed as the core category emerged. It was only at this point in the analytic process that clarity was achieved and axial coding completed. In addition questions posed to participants facilitated the development of the

core category rather than establishing the relationship between categories and sub-categories as Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) suggest. Examples of questions, properties and dimensions provided by Strauss and Corbin (1990) were beneficial in offering an initial understanding of the grounded theory process. These were, however, too obvious and simplistic. Attempts to use these questions were ultimately abandoned as it meant forcing the data and inhibiting the process of discovery.

Chapter Four Results

4.1 General Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the data collected from the interview with EFL teachers to answer the following questions:

1. Would you please describe the workplace atmosphere? That is, do language teachers work in isolation or do they collaborate to improve their practice?
2. If they work in isolation, would you please tell me the reasons for this mode of action? If they collaborate, would you please describe their actual modes of collaboration?

The researchers used Grounded Theory to collect and analyze qualitative data. Analyzing the driven data revealed two core categories: Causes of teacher's isolation and techniques for collaboration. Tight schedule, lack of mutual lessons in the same time, teachers' fear of being judged, teachers' egotism, their salary, and teachers' low literacy in English language, were among the reasons for teacher isolation. Also five major techniques for collaboration were coded as holding regular meetings, speak show classes, workshops, observing other classes, and using technological facilities.

4.2 Causes of Teacher's Isolation

4.2.1 Negligible Recess Time

The first reason for teacher's isolation is the tight schedule of private institutes. Language schools usually schedule their classes so that they can take the most useful time during the day. In this regard, managers try to inconsiderably minimize teachers rest time between classes. Even in some institutes no time is allocated to the break between classes. When the first class is finished, the next class starts immediately and practically teachers have

no time to speak between their classes and thus cooperation does not take place. Ali explains this:

I personally do not cooperate with other teachers because my classes are scheduled in a way that when the first one finishes the next one starts immediately. So no time remains for speaking. Even if there is some, I prefer to use it for drinking a tea, not co-operating. In my opinion, the main cause of teacher's isolation in schools and private institutes is the lack of recess time.

Managers do away with recess time to leave room for more classes and in turn, benefit more. As it was mentioned earlier, tight scheduling affects teaching and hence teachers have no time for cooperation. Verifying this Mohamad says:

Due to lack of classrooms in many private institutes, the managers have to plan a tight schedule in order to cover as many classes as they can in a working day. So they successively schedule the classes without considering teachers' break time. When I am there in institute I have no chance of cooperation with my colleagues.

The insufficient break time between the classes makes teachers mentally exhausted. As a result of this mental burden, they try to avoid educational discussions in the interval time. Teachers mostly prefer to rest and get ready for the next class than try to cooperate together. Ali says:

The only time I have between my classes is just 5 minutes. I use it to relax and save my energy for the next class rather than discuss my classes with other teachers. The best thing you can do in the break time is just to remain silent.

Furthermore, even if the teachers want to use their resting time for discussion with others, it seems quite difficult to educationally benefit from these discussions or draw any conclusion due to lack of time. No one can collaborate in a community like a language institute in five minutes. To have a mind-provoking discussion , teachers need more time. Mohammad explained:

The only time I can collaborate with other teachers is just the break time between my classes. However, this time is so short that it leaves no time for discussion. If you want to have a discussion on even the smallest teaching tips with the other teachers, you need more than one hour at list. We just have enough time for asking the pronunciation or meaning of vocabulary in 5 minutes.

The tight schedules of the classes that prevent teachers from collaboration is not just limited to the time between the classes. Some of the teachers refer to the time interval between the semesters in their interviews. Their semesters run successively with almost no off days in between which results in lessening teachers' energy. This mental and physical exhaustion directly create the exhaustion of pedagogical efficiency. Ali says:

Every semesters during the year starts immediately after the final exam of the previous semester but summer semester. If the semesters are held for 30 session like our institute, it can extremely reduce teachers' energy. If a few days holiday was possible between two successive semesters, teachers can recover and work more energetically in class. By doing so, teachers have much more willingness and passion for educational collaboration.

4.2.2 Lack of Shared Concerns

The second reason for the isolation of language teachers is the lack of a unity among the students (considering students proficiency level). teachers who teach at the same period, teach at different levels and as such they do not have any shared concerns and problems. For example, intermediate level teachers

mostly see their advanced level colleagues. So due to the lack of similarity in their classes and levels, they are reluctant to collaborate. Atefe explained:

My classes are not scheduled with other classes of the same level. Rather they are scheduled with upper or lower levels. So we as teachers cannot find any mutual point in our teaching considering either teaching points or the textbook. For example on Tuesdays I should teach students who are reading American File 4, but my colleagues teach Family Friend 1, so we can not find any mutual point to be discussed. Consequently, we cannot collaborate.

In some cases, teachers teaching young children and teachers teaching adults teach at one period. Thus, the difference in the learners' age and textbook and teachers' own points of view as well, make a pedagogical gap within the teachers and keep them far away from collaboration.

I have just taught at the younger levels, but the schedule of my classes has been designed in a way that at times I have class, the rest of all other teachers are teaching at the adult levels. If there is a problem neither they can help, nor I have teaching experience in the other levels to help them.

The same time presence of teachers who are teaching at different levels in workplace, have prevented them from engagement with each other. Even if there is an opportunity to engage, it has no constructive value. This is because the teaching methods and materials that are used for different age groups vary and most teachers usually teach only at one level so they can only collaborate with those who have teaching experiences at almost the same level. Atefe said:

Individual differences in students can be one of the reasons that I cannot share my own experiences with other teachers or use theirs. For example, my students are young, and my colleagues' students are

adult. Maybe games work well in my class but this would not be true for other teachers'.

4.2.3 Fear of Being Judged

Other reasons for language teachers isolation is the fear that their ability in teaching and even their general competence might be negatively judged by others. During few meetings they have together in one semester, teachers rarely speak about language because they are afraid to say something wrong that is to their detriment. Teachers' fear of being judged by their colleagues, managers, and supervisors makes them unwilling to have any educational and methodological discussions. So they don't have anything to do with each other. Consequently, they do not apply techniques and strategies in their classes. Reza explained:

Based on my own experiences, teachers rarely get together in language institutes and even if a situation arises nobody dares speak about that issue. This is because with the smallest mistake they might get into trouble with their colleagues or even with their job. The fear of being judged and compared makes them speak about everything but teaching methods.

Even in some cases if teachers ask for help from others, their question may be considered as a kind of test and their colleagues may refrain from helping them. The pressure among teachers created by the manager and supervisor creates skepticism among teachers toward each other. This has a determining role in the isolation of the teachers. Sina stated:

Whenever I ask for help from my colleagues about my teaching issues, they consider my request as a way of evaluation. For example, once I had a problem in teaching a grammatical point to my students and asked one of the teachers to show me how I can make my students understand it, she said "You're not in the place to evaluate me". From that time on, I tried to solve my own problems without asking for help.

The fear among teachers creates this misunderstanding that if teachers asked for help about teaching, their teaching is poor and can't be trusted in their outputs. This misunderstanding makes teachers not seek help or to learn from each other, so they are in complete isolation in schools and institutes. Sana declared:

In my opinion, asking for help in teaching issues or observing other teachers' classes in private institutes in Iran in order to add new experiences and techniques to the existing repertoire is another way of saying that, "hey everybody will find out soon that I don't know English well, so I can't teach." This would allow others to comment on your teaching.

This fear increases dramatically for novice teachers. They are afraid of making contact with expert teachers. Due to their lack of experience in teaching, they have the fear of making mistake and being ridiculed by others. So they prefer to remain isolated and do not contact with experienced teachers. Atefe said:

I think I am isolated in workplace maybe because I am still fresh in this field. I have started teaching recently and my colleagues are all experienced teachers. I am afraid of saying something to be ridiculed by them, or they say to themselves "she herself needs learning, so how she can teach".

Fresh teachers may use worthy and effective methods in their classroom, nonetheless they are anxious about the negative viewpoints of experienced teachers. Consequently, they are afraid of speaking about their teaching methods to their colleagues. So most of these fresh teachers or student-teachers are unwilling to communicate with other teachers. Amir said:

In one of our meetings, we a problem and we discussed it. But one of the novice teachers did not speak a word about it. Later when I

observed his class, I noticed that he had solved that discussed problem months before, but meanwhile, did not tell us anything about it. I think he had some kind of fear of negative judgments from other teachers.

4.2.4 Pride

Other factors affecting the isolation of teachers is the arrogance of some teachers. Teachers' false pride arose from their academic degree or teaching experience makes them avoid participating in basic professional discussions. This false pride among teachers keep them away from creating cooperation that is helpful for both side. Arezoo explained:

Another important reason why teachers are getting isolated is their pride. For example, I am a graduate student and I can't allow myself to an undergraduate student, although they be more experienced than me in teaching.

Teachers being observed by their colleagues may feel some superiority. That is others should just learn from observing their classes, and no one should criticize their teaching. Whereas observation is a reciprocal relationship in which both the observee and observer should benefit. This means that the observer should learn from the positive points and remind the observee of negative points. If this is not so, there is no cooperating.

When I was a fresh teacher I tried to observe other teachers' classes, doing this, my colleagues thought that they are better than me. So they prevent me from attending their classes as if I am stealing something from them. If there was a negative point in their teaching, I could not dare to speak, because they said that you're here just for learning. So I decided not to observe any one class from that time on.

Teachers pride makes them feel superior to other teachers and not to interact with them. That is because of the wrong belief among Iranian language teachers that the isolated teachers are better teachers. This also may come from the misunderstanding that only naive teachers need to learn. Maryam explains this:

Being isolated in workplace makes me feel better. When you are isolated and mind your own business, everyone thinks you are the best teacher. After teaching for 6 years I came to this conclusion that in working context being silent means having knowledge.

Some teachers are so proud that even if there is a problem with their teaching, their sense of superiority prevents them from asking for help. Conversely, if anyone asks for help, to avoid being trapped, they reject their request. Sana said:

Unfortunately, there are some teachers that think they are better than every other teacher. Because of this false pride, they would not ask for help about their teaching. One of my colleagues had problem in teaching different parts of the book and he was aware of this problem. However, he cannot ask others for help because of his pride.

4.2.5 Salary

The most important factor in teacher isolation is teacher's salary. Insufficient income for a living makes individual teachers try to devote all their time to earn more. This means that teachers try to work more in order to increase their salaries . Kaveh declares:

The money we earn from teaching cannot support our family. Thus we need to work more to increase the salary. So, there left no time for professional development. You cannot increase your salary by cooperating with your colleagues. Nobody would pay you for your cooperation.

Low wages of teachers put them psychologically under pressure until they are completely marginalized in society. Insufficient teaching income makes the teachers lose their motivation for further improvements in this field. That is why teachers are getting isolated in private institutes. Aram explained:

English teacher's salary is really low in Iran. If you teach 12 hours a day and 6 days a week still you are below the poverty level, and you know that thinking about this reality makes you not only isolated at school but also in society. I have lost all my motivation for progress with such an insufficient earning.

As mentioned above, low income makes teachers work longer hours which seriously reduces their energy and efficiency. As a result, teachers do not have sufficient energy to engage and collaborate. Reducing teaching hours and assigning this time to collaboration with other teachers entails forgoing income that teachers are not willing to do so. Mohamad said:

I am teaching 8 hours a day, this means that I am dealing with 80 people during a day. This work is harder than labor, but because I need more money still I tolerate this. My time is too tight and I do not have any break time. After the working day is finished, there is no energy left for me to even speak with my own wife let alone my colleagues.

Some teachers simply do not want their experience to be at the disposal of others. They believe that many years of teaching experience and hardworking services should not be simply given to the others. After all, the difference in payment is due to the differences in experience and education of the teachers. If the teacher wants higher wages, they should not simply share their experiences with others. Sara explained:

There is always a feeling that why I should give my experiences to others for nothing. That is why I often avoid discussing with my

colleagues. Finally, the money that I get is the result of my experiences. If everybody knows what I know, why the manager should have given me more money.

The last contributing factor is the unethical and unprofessional belief that some teachers have: with little income made from teaching, we too should teach equally. Most of the teachers have no incentives to progress in their job due to the low wage they get from teaching. This results in reluctance of collaboration.

On the other hand, how much we earn. We can't just fill our time by discussing teaching together. We do much work and earn less, now for this kind of job, who will do more. Who gives us a penny for progressing and increasing the quality of teaching?

4.2.6 Low Command of Language

Weakness in General English can be another source of teacher isolation. Some teachers in private institutes are afraid of other teachers for their weakness in General English and the lack of ability to speak fluently and accurately in English. These language teachers in institutions feel safe being alone, so they get more isolated. Reza said:

Since I have started teaching, there have always been teachers who did not dare to converse with other teachers due to their inability in English speaking. Even if they come to these meetings they would stay silent for the whole time.

Most of meetings are in English and teachers must be fluent in English so that they can have an active role in these meetings. Teachers who do not speak English correctly, or at least they think so, and are afraid of making mistakes in the presence of other teachers are usually drawn in isolation. Sara said:

Language teachers are usually like it when they speak English with each other. They always need to show their ability in speaking to each other. So, most of the meetings will be held in English. Those who are poor in speaking are always silent and do not speak to anyone. They are afraid to say something wrong and make a negative impression among colleagues. Therefore, they do not interact with anyone and thus become isolated.

Not only can weakness in General English make teachers isolated but also low English language command in the field of teaching is among the reasons for this withdrawal. These kind of teachers cannot collaborate with other teachers and would be isolated in workplace. Kaveh stated:

Low English competence often causes teacher isolation. Because of low English command in the field of teaching some teachers cannot participate in discussions. Thus, in those little times teachers can get together and have the opportunity to chat about their classes, a number of teachers are silent because they have little knowledge in general English and teaching as well.

Some teachers come from other academic disciplines into the language teaching. They started teaching with only having a basic knowledge of general language. They have a little knowledge of teaching and teaching strategies know few techniques about the specialized teaching topics. These teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and strategies to help others and cannot use the knowledge of others. Kave said:

Some may not even studied English at university and with studying other university courses start teaching profession. Well, they do not understand much of the language debates. For example, they do not understand anything about testing. In teachers meetings, these teachers generally sit at a corner and do not involve in the discussions.

4.2.7 Internal Problems.

Language teacher isolation does not always depend on external reasons but sometimes is entirely internal and irrelevant to the teachers' language ability. Some people are inherently incapable of engaging in teamwork and cannot interact with others. They like to be independent and work away from the other teacher's decisions and ideas. Sina explained:

I am not an introvert person but I cannot work with others. I do not have the ability to involve in teamwork and I would like to work alone and be responsible for my own results. I do not like others to comment on my teaching. My class is my privacy and my students are my red line. I will not allow anyone to comment on this matter. Also, teaching of others is not related to me, because I believe that teacher should be independent.

Some teachers are also socially isolated people and their isolation is not just in the workplace. These introvert people usually do not have the ability to communicate with others in the workplace which results in their isolation. Maryam stated:

I have dealt with many teachers who were socially isolated people. Their isolation in society makes them isolated in workplace too. These teachers cannot interact with their colleagues in a proper way. I work with one of my colleagues for two years but we never sit together for a friendly chat now let alone collaborating in teaching field.

Perhaps isolation of many teachers is due to their personal problems. Because of some personal family problems some teachers may be isolated to some extent and cannot cooperate with others. However, this kind of isolation is usually temporary and finishes as soon as teachers problem is resolved. Javad declared:

Some times in life personal problems get too expanded that they get out of their control. These problems provide a lot of mental burden

and concerns that one may drown in them. These problems sometimes obsess the teachers and isolate them in their social relationship. Sometimes I've had so many problems that how to cooperate is the last thing that I could think of.

Some teachers are so immersed in their own problems that do not have the necessary focus on their work. This lack of concentration makes teachers unable to interact and communicate with others.

I have dealt with many teachers who were socially isolated people. Their isolation in society makes them isolated in workplace too. These teachers cannot interact with their colleagues in any way. I have been teaching with one of my co-teachers for two years, but we had not yet sit together to even drink a tea, now let alone collaborating in teaching field.

These teachers, if they have a chance to be in a meeting with other teachers, they just lead the discussion to their problems rather than teaching issues. These teachers are all concerned about their personal problems and never focus on other things. They always want to seek advice from colleagues about their personal problems rather than on teaching issues. Hussein said:

Imagine two young teachers start speaking with each other. They may speak about anything but teaching. Well, they may never have a chance to speak about their classes, school and relevant topics. For example, my main concern was making a house for years. I spoke with colleagues about the price of lands and constructional materials with the least concern about the teaching problems.

4.3 Patterns of Collaboration among EFL Teachers

4.3.1 Regular Meetings at the End of the Term

Some language schools hold regular meetings at the end of each term. In these meetings teachers are invited to present their perspectives on issues related to the policy and practice of language teaching in the language school. Participants find these meetings quite useful since they find it as a chance to share their perspectives with their colleagues and raise their awareness of teaching practice. Commenting on the strengths and weaknesses of these meetings, Sara says:

At the end of each term, the school principal holds regular meetings and asks teachers to provide him with their evaluation of policy and practice in the language school. I do like these meetings since we learn from each other's experience. Although they are useful, they are not sufficient and they should be held more frequently. Another problem with these meetings is that attendance is not required as such many teachers skip these useful but rare meetings.

In these meetings, teachers can also comment on each other's teaching in a nonjudgmental atmosphere. Moreover, in these meeting teachers are involved in decisions concerning scheduling and future course of events in the institute. Sana states:

In this institute, and as far as I know, in some other institutes, teachers take part at meetings held at the end of the term. Here, we decide on better scheduling of classes in the forthcoming term. Moreover, we share our views on effective presentation of skills and sub-skills. I myself find it a good chance to improve my teaching skills. I like it when I am exposed to alternative ways of say presenting a reading passage.

Moreover teachers who teach the same textbook present the problems they faced during the term and come up with effective solutions through reflective discussions. Moreover, these meetings give them a chance to talk about and share the teaching techniques they find effective in presenting the different parts of the textbook. Believing that these meetings are useful, Atefe explains:

In these meetings we usually talk about the problems we face in teaching different sections of the textbook. These meetings are very valuable to me since I can share the problems I have in teaching the syllabus. You know, I present the problems I have and receive useful comments and solutions from my friends. Moreover, I like it when I see I can improve my colleague's practice by presenting a solution to problems others faced in teaching the textbook.

Of course, because of the presence of the director and supervisor in these meetings, teachers may not prefer to speak about each other's negative points. Directors should ensure the teachers that their talks would be confidential and are used for educational and instructional purposes. Also, teachers that are participating in these meetings should be justified not to react impulsively to negative comments on their teaching and accept them, or properly provide documentation in support of their questioned work. Javad said:

Meetings where teachers comment on each other's teaching have always its own problems. Teachers would not be present at these meetings because they think these meetings are held to test them, not to establish cooperation. Holding the meetings may even lead to conflict since teachers criticize each other. Teachers who present in these meetings should be quite receptive to criticism.

4.3.2 Theme-Focused Talk Shows

Participants found talk shows an effective way of sharing their views with their colleagues. These shows are organized by the supervisor. Focusing on teaching a specific skill or sub-skill to a specific level, he involves teachers in reflective discussions until they agree on an effective mode of presenting it. The session does not end until they come to a consensus. Verifying the efficacy of talk shows in teacher development, Aram says:

In this institute, the supervisor holds a class every Thursday at 8 o'clock. All the teachers teaching in that term have to take part in this meeting. Each week he focuses on one aspect of teaching and involves teachers in discussing their views. For instance, last week we talked about the best way to teach a text to a group of advanced language learners. The session finished after two and a half hour of debate. Everybody likes it since the agreed procedure helps them improve their practice.

A noticeable feature of these talk shows is that the participants compare their entry and exist behavior and identify the difference they notice in their practice. Ashkan comments:

You know, last session we focused on post-reading activities. As a result of this show I came to notice a problem in my teaching. During the post-reading phase of teaching reading I used to expose my students to referential questions. However, during the show I learned from my colleagues that inferential questions can deepen learners' reading comprehension.

Moreover, talk shows give the language teachers a chance to get to know each other and become familiar with each other's knowledge and skills. Due to lack of contact with each other, teachers may judge other's performance without having a chance to know him. Talking about the effect of this talk show on his attitude, Arman explains:

Before attending these talk shows I lived under the illusion that my teaching skills are superior to any other teachers in the language schools. In the very first talk show I came to realize that I have been wrong all the way long. During these shows I have become familiar with two super-performers whom I really admire and take as a role model for teaching.

4.3.3 Camping

Recreational camps can be useful in the development of interaction among teachers. Camping cannot be the cause of cooperation and collaboration among teachers, but by doing so, the manager can create an intimate atmosphere. If such a climate prevails in the institutes, teachers can accept each other better and work and interact with each other easier. Arezoo said:

Going out with colleagues gives us the chance to know them better. When you have a chance to know someone better, you can come to a mutual understanding about each other. Mutual understanding among partners can be a precursor to an environment that all help each other and cooperate.

Go camping in the leisure time, creates an intimate atmosphere among teachers. This certainly leads to a better acceptance of criticism of teaching. Teachers would even be pleased as it shows that they value each other and also their work.

As mentioned holding camps is very effective in creating an intimate atmosphere among teachers. The camping outside the institute can be held to learn more about new teachers in different situations. Arezoo said:

I remember one of my colleagues. We were teaching almost two semesters in an institute. We did not have a working relationship together other than greeting. But after camping out, we became friends and helped each other a lot.

4.3.4. Theme-Focused Workshops

In some language schools teachers are required to run workshops, where one teacher is in charge of teaching the other teachers. Prior to the workshop, the teacher chooses something to talk about, collects information, and presents his or her findings through the workshops. Hossein explains:

Each month one teacher is held responsible to run a workshop at the language school. This workshop is great first for the one who runs it since he brings his knowledge and skills up-to-date and then it is good for others since he shares his findings with the others. Last month I was assigned to search techniques of presenting grammar and present them through the workshop. This assignment made me learn lots of techniques I was not aware of and then gave me a chance to present what I found to my colleague.

Instead of presenting techniques of teaching to the group, one of the teachers is held accountable to present a lesson or part of the lesson to the other language teachers. To know how to expose the techniques and procedures he follows in his own classes, the person who runs the workshop is instructed to teach the way he teaches in his own classroom. To better his teaching performance, other language teachers observe his lesson and provide him with some comments. During the next round of teaching, he should accommodate the recommended changes. Kave explains his experience of the workshop as follows:

I was once assigned to teach a dialogue the way I teach in the classroom. That is, the supervisor wanted me to simulate the classroom procedure for the other teachers. Having observed my performance, they told me

how I could improve my teaching. I did my best to apply what they said. When I compared the first round of teaching with the second round, I myself could notice the difference.

Sometimes the workshop is problem-centered. That is, one of the language teachers presents a problem he or she has faced in his or her teaching and others discuss the problem until a reasonable solution is found. Thus the workshop involves teachers in finding solutions to the problems they face. Commenting on problem-centered workshops, Sina says:

At the beginning of the workshop, a problem is presented and then teachers work in pairs or groups to find a reasonable solution. Having come up with a solution, each group shares the solution with the other. Groups comment on the solution, compare the presented solutions and choose the best. Discussion continues until a consensus is reached as to the effectiveness of the solution.

In some institutes managers usually invite an expert from other well-known institutes or even from other cities and sometimes other countries to hold professional meetings and discuss some specific issues of teaching. However, in these cases, teachers have the right to speak about their problems in their classes. Mohammad stated:

This is usually a good idea since it is possible to invite an expert or even a professor to discuss the necessary points to teachers. They can have a very impressive presentation because they have sufficient knowledge. Discussion among teachers raises a good opportunity for all teachers to speak out their own issues and problems.

4.3.5 Formative Observation of Teaching

Traditionally, classroom observation was judgmental and the observed focused on the weaknesses of the teacher and these weaknesses were recorded and were taken as a basis for reevaluating language teaching performance; hence, language teachers did not have a positive attitude towards summative observation of teaching. Today, however,

observation aims at teacher development. That is, the observer observes the class, focuses on the strengths of teaching and improves his teaching experience through observing others' experience. Welcoming the formative function of classroom observation, Amir states:

In the past I was really anxious when they informed me that my class is going to be observed since I knew that the observer observed my class to evaluate my teaching performance. I hated it when somebody negatively judged my teaching. Based on the newly adopted policy in this language school, teachers occasionally observe each other not to evaluate but to learn something precious from their performance.

While all the participants rejected observation for evaluative purposes, all of them welcomed it as a means of teacher development. They believed that observing classes to learn is an effective technique for developing their professional knowledge and skills. Reiterating the importance of formative observation, Akram states:

Last month I had a chance to observe one of my colleagues. Before teaching new words in the reading passages, she classified the words into active and passive words. She presented passive words very quickly since she believed learners should only recognize them. So as to save time, sometimes she provided the learners with the Persian equivalent of passive words. When she came to presenting active words, however, she never used Persian. Rather she tried to use the active words in sentences and contextualize their use. She stopped teaching them only when she was sure that the learners can use these words to express their own knowledge and experience.

In formative observation of teaching, the supervisor does not observe the class to evaluate teaching performance. Rather, he observes classes: (1) to identify teachers' strengths; (2) share them with others through very informal get-togethers. Explaining this innovative and constructive procedure, Mehran enthusiastically explains:

Last term our supervisor surprised us all. During the term he observed each and every teacher. At the end of the term, he invited all to a friendly picnic. Before having lunch in Mother Nature by a beautiful river, he told the teachers to get together. Then he talked about why he observed classes and made them get together. He said, "I observed all the classes to find useful techniques of teaching. I found lots of precious techniques. Now, I will first describe the technique and then I will ask the teacher who used the technique to show it to us in practice." That day, we learned lots of things from each other, had lunch and returned home with an uplifted spirit.

4.3.6 Formative Observation of Learning

Formative observation of learning shifts away from the traditional observation in two ways: (1) instead of judging the teacher's performance, the observer tries to learn from his or her practice; (2) instead of focusing on teaching performance, the observer focuses on learning performance. This strategy is in line with the proverb "beauty is in the eye of the beholder". That is, instead of focusing on the teaching strategies used, the observer focuses on their effect on the learner and whether the learners favor the teaching strategies. Reza explains his experience of formative assessment of learning as follows:

Instead of focusing on what the teacher does, I did my best to attend to how the learners respond to the strategies applied and the extent to which it facilitated their learning. In this process, instead of asking myself, "Is he teaching?" I asked myself, "Are they learning? Whenever I noticed that learners follow the instruction smoothly, I tried to shift away from learning towards teaching and jot down the teaching strategy that was used.

Another participant explains that he found some discrepancy between his observation of teaching and the feedback he received from the students at the end of the period. That is, what I supposed to be effective was judged to be totally ineffective by the learners. Hassan explains:

Having observed a language class, I asked the teacher politely to leave the class and let me talk with his students with a little while. In my informal talk with the learners I told the learners that I enjoyed it when your teachers involved you in communication and told you to present your ideas without any thinking. One of the students said he hated the teacher's approach since he left no time for thinking.

Thus while the observer considers involving students in spontaneous communication as effective since it is in line with the communicative approach, the learners rejected it since they believed it penalizes reflective learners who need time to think before they say something. Interviewing learners after a class he observed, Mehdi explains:

Based on my eye contacts with the learners during the class and the clues I received I supposed that the teaching strategies adopted by the teacher were quite effective but one of the learners came to me and complained, "our teacher bombards us with lots of examples when he teaches grammar and he never explains the rules but I learn it better when the teacher explains the rules prior to or after he presents examples."

This shows that teachers can develop their knowledge and skills through two types of interactions: (1) teacher-teacher interactions through which teachers exchange their views with each other; (2) teacher-student interactions which aim at uncovering learners' perceptions of the teaching strategies. Formative observation of learning involves teachers in interaction with the learners.

4.3.7 Using Communicational Technology

Due to tight scheduling or overwork, many teachers are not willing to participate in the workshops. Modern information communication technology (ICT) is an effective way out for these teachers. That is, instead of forming real groups, language teachers can form virtual groups and exchange their views and concerns. Participants found social

networking through Viber, Telegram and Facebook an effective way of improving their knowledge and skills and a very inexpensive way of collaborating with their colleagues. Commenting on the versatility of social networking, Javad states:

You know I am pressed for time. I don't have time to participate in workshops but whenever I face a problem in my teaching I pose my problem to the group and I receive immediate answers. Moreover, we share lots of information-rich materials through social networking.

In addition to finding immediate answerers to immediate classroom problems, language teachers can share information-rich text and talk and improve their knowledge and skills. To make sure that group members take the shared materials seriously, they are then asked to discuss the materials they have shared. Commenting on sharing and discussing useful materials through networking, Sara explains:

When we first formed this virtual group, we just shared materials. Later, however, we found that members do not use the materials we share. To solve this problem, group members were required to study the share materials carefully and discuss their contents with others. This strategy activated group members and made them take the materials more seriously.

Nowadays modern communication devices such as mobile phones are useful everywhere. These devices have also helped establishing teachers' cooperation. Using Social networks such as Line, Viber, Telegram, Facebook and software of this kind can be very useful in this regard. Many teachers form virtual groups in these networks to easily link together in every time and place, and no longer have to be present in institute. Javad said:

Many groups are formed in Telegram and Facebook that all my colleagues joined there. We can ask any question that we do not know and many answers are sent immediately. On these pages, even useful texts are shared that the teachers can use them.

In these groups, just sharing the content is not the end. Some teachers said in their interviews that after the contents are shared on the page, the members of the groups must read the contents carefully and then speak about them. If virtual groups turn to be a rule among language teachers, it can be assured that all teachers can benefit from the topics. Sara explained:

At the beginning when we set up one of these virtual groups for all teachers, they just shared a topic that we thought we had to share. This has little value because none of the materials shared were used. But then we said all content had to be discussed and then everybody was forced to read and discuss the materials.

There are also groups that all language teachers at a certain level all over the world can join. Tens of teachers can join the groups and cooperate with all other language teachers and interact in every time and place. Sana stated:

Now you can access the internet everywhere and use it to our benefits. I am a member of many groups specialized for language teachers. Many of the members are teaching at the same level I do. I can easily get help from them and help them in a place that I could.

In these groups, we can speak about anything regarding language. All members can take hours to speak and discuss because of the easy access. Teachers in these groups can even share sample questions and files they think may be useful for others. Amir said:

In these groups, we can discuss the problems related to class, books, teaching, and other things related to language and language testing.

We are in contact with each other. In this way, our knowledge of the field can increase during a specific time. If just one question is asked, several people get into the discussion. Colleagues may share sample questions, brochures, and PowerPoint files or other things related to the language.

4.3.8 Sharing Useful Materials.

Another way of cooperation and communication with other teachers is to share useful materials. Teachers can exchange books, articles, videos, audio files and anything else that can help teaching among teachers to have constructive interaction. Share useful materials do not take a long time and can help enhancing the quality of teaching. Mohannad said:

As language teachers we can get the most beneficial points from cooperation almost in no time. We can cooperate together even by sharing useful materials. Exchanging teaching materials, or a book does not waste our time and it is really useful.

Teachers can easily interact and cooperate in this way. According to the teachers, teachers can be helpful even by giving an address of a resourceful website in the field of teaching English or the resources that they have used such as vocabulary and grammar books, or books on teaching methods and playing a major role in their colleagues' professional development. Kaveh said:

In some cases, partners exchange address of sites that are useful and it can help in the field of teaching, and so if one of teachers knows such sites, he will try to introduce it to the other teachers.

Or

We have a shelf in institute on which every book that have been read by teachers and they think it will be useful for others too, is put there, such as dictionaries, grammar and books related to teaching methods, and the rest of the teachers are able to use it.

Language teaching needs hours for the preparation of sample questions, study design, preparation of the flashcard, and other educational aids. Language teachers can share these general issues in time to save in their own and others times. Reza declared:

Sometimes I feel like being a teacher without the help of other partners to take notes, take sample questions, hard lesson plans would be impossible. That means you cannot have everything alone. You can design a lesson plan, but you can collect ten lesson plans from the rest. Every time I see colleagues I borrow from them language leaflets, CDs, sample questions, or they ask me my lesson plan. For teaching language, you know, you cannot go empty-handed to the class. Always you should have aids, pamphlets and bring them to the class with yourself. Well, you cannot sort all of this out.

Chapter Five Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 General Overview

The objectives of the present study were to the investigate teachers' perception of isolation and their techniques of collaboration. The study aims at uncovering: (1) roots of isolation; and (2) modes of collaboration. To this end, this study elicits theoretically relevant interview data by making teachers answer the following questions:

3. Would you please describe the workplace atmosphere? That is, do language teachers work in isolation or do they collaborate to improve their practice?
4. If they work in isolation, would you please tell me the reasons for this mode of action? If they collaborate, would you please describe their actual modes of collaboration?

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, a discussion of these findings in relation to the previous studies in the field, the pedagogical implications of the study, the limitations of the study, and the recommendations for further research.

5.2 The Summary of the Findings

To continually develop professionally, teachers need to cooperate together. However, most of the teachers are isolated. In order to solve this problem among EFL teachers, we need to find out the reasons for isolation. Having found the reasons we can fight the problem better. In other words we need to move from isolation to collaboration.

So this study investigates teachers' perception of isolation and their techniques of collaboration, either used or suggested. Six major reasons for isolation were founded based on the results obtained from the study: compressed timetable, the lack of mutual lessons in the same time, teachers' fear of being judged, teachers' egotism, their salary, and teachers' low literacy in the English language. Also five major techniques were founded: holding regular meetings, talk show classes, workshops, observing other classes, using technological facilities.

Because of a lack of time and space, private language institutes and schools has compressed the time table so that there is no time left for teachers to collaborate. The lack of sufficient time between the classes for relaxing, makes teachers extremely exhausted and make them isolated. On the other hand, if teachers want to use their resting time for engagement with the others, due to lack of time it would not be possible.

The classes also have been scheduled in a way that teachers that teaches at the same period of time in the institute are teaching students that are in different ages and

levels. So, because of a lack of mutual point in their teaching, such as the books and topics that should be taught, they could not collaborate.

Other reasons for language teachers isolation is teachers fear of being judged. They are not asking for help or help the others, because they are afraid of making mistakes and to be judged ridiculed by others. This may be because of a lack of self confidence in their ability. This fear will be more for the novice teachers. Novice teachers due to their lack of experience in the teaching, have the fear of making a mistake.

However, the data driven from this study has shown that often the confidence that some teachers have, makes them so pride that not to feel an urgent in progressing professionally. Too much pride that some teachers have, makes them feel separated from other teachers and not to interact with them.

According to the result, the most important factor in teacher isolation is teacher's salary. Income insufficient for a living makes an individual tries to devote all his time to teach to earn more income. This situation makes teachers to teach all over the day, which seriously reduces their energy. Consequently, no time and energy will left for collaboration.

Teachers' low literacy in English language is another reason for teacher isolation. Teachers' weaknesses in general English and also their lack of sufficient knowledge in English language teaching makes them incompetent in cooperation.

The result also has shown that Language teachers Isolation does not always depend on external reasons, sometimes this isolation is entirely internal and irrelevant to the teachers' language ability. Some teachers are socially isolated people and their isolation is not just in the workplace. These people usually do not have the ability to communicate with others in the workplace resulting in their isolation.

Having found the reasons for teacher isolation, we can suggest the techniques for collaboration. The first technique suggested by the participants of the study is holding regular meeting in which all the teachers are present. There they are allowed to comment on each other teaching in a friendly environment. In these meetings, teachers can talk about their problems in teaching different parts of textbooks and other comments on that.

Holding talk show classes, in which all teachers participated can debate on their language teaching methods in English and share their experiences, could also be affective in establishing collaboration among teachers.

Recreational camps could be useful in the development of interaction between teachers. Camps and camping itself cannot be the cause of cooperation and collaboration between teachers, but by doing so the heads of institutions can create an intimate atmosphere. If such a climate prevails at the Institute, teachers will accept each other and can work together and interact easier.

Another way to create interaction among teachers is educational workshops. A teachers is assigned to research on a topic and explain it in the workshop classes or he/she should teach a lesson and others should comment on his/her teaching. In some of the institutions a topic is chosen by the teachers among the biggest problems that are common among all the classes, and teachers should give scientific and rational comments and ideas and hear others.

Almost all participants were agree that the best technique for collaboration is the observation of each other classes. In this way both observer and observee can benefit, since the observer should take note on both positive and negative points of the class and provide feedback for the observee.

Teachers could also communicate together using technological facilities. They could form virtual groups through communicative channels and share and discuss significant topics there. Another way of cooperation and communication with other teachers is to share useful materials. Teachers can exchange books, articles, videos, audio files and anything else that will help teaching among each other to have constructive interaction.

5.3 Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the study provide several points to be discussed. Firstly, the previous studies (Calabrese, 1986; Flinders, 1988; Gaikwood & Brantley, 1992; Lortie, 1975) have found that the school structure perpetuates professional isolation, restricting the possibilities for teachers to observe and interact with one another. Others consider scheduling as a cause of professional isolation (Lieberman & Miller, 1992; Lortie, 1975). This is in complete accordance with the findings of this study. The EFL teachers in this study have declared that negligible recess time of the institutes that is sometimes due to lack of enough rooms for holding the classes as the first reason of their isolation.

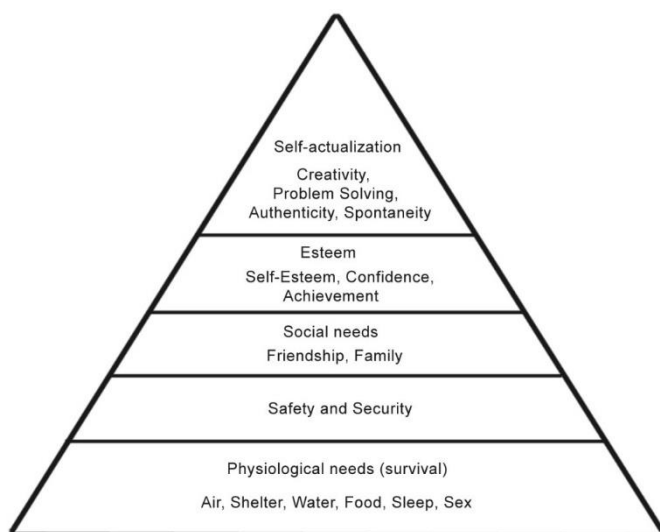
Another finding that is in accordance with the literature, and has added some part to it, is 'the teachers fear to be judged. According to the result language teacher isolation

could be the offspring of the fear that their ability in teaching to be judged by others. Timperley (2011) affirmed that teachers cannot freely engage in collaborative inquiry and professional knowledge building if they are feeling criticized or put down for not being competent within their profession. Similarly, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) noted that teachers often work in isolation for much of the day and so they are missing the evaluative process or positive feedback that can calm anxiety and stress related to work performance. What is new here, is the fear of some teachers that arises from their incompetent knowledge in language. Some teachers in private institutions because of weakness in general English, and the lack of ability to speak fluently, are afraid of other teachers.

The results of the study provide several other reasons for teacher isolation to be discussed. First, too much pride that some teachers have makes them feel separated from other teachers and not to interact with them. Second, some teachers are inherently incapable of engaging in teamwork and interacting with others.

However, teachers announce their insufficient income as the most significant reason of isolation which was not mentioned in the literature. EFL teachers' low wages in Iran, demotivate them, and they simply do not want to progress professionally. Collaboration and progression is not a priority for Iranian EFL teachers. Previous studies just ignore this part and just focused on professional development.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), each person had a different set of needs at different point of time in his life. All needs of humans could be arranged in a hierarchy.



Each person is said to move through the hierarchy by fulfilling each level of needs. Some people may have dominant needs at a particular level and thus never move through the entire hierarchy. Iranian EFL teachers still have dominant needs at primer levels and cannot think about collaboration which is in the upper levels. If language schools are serious in promoting professional development through collaboration they must help teachers to meet their premier needs first.

Solving the obstacle of collaboration which has been enumerated previously is vital for school stakeholders if they want to be organized in a way that ensure teachers collaboration. Having solved these problems teachers can collaborate through: holding regular meetings, participate in talk show classes, go camping, participate in workshops, observe each other classes, use communicational facilities, and share useful materials as collaboration strategies.

Holding regular meetings are very convenient to establish collaboration among teachers because all the teachers need to submit their suggestions in the presence of others. In this meeting teacher interact and exchange information. Teachers in interviews assrted that the more these meetings are held the better it is. Providing regular opportunities for teachers to collaborate is essential. Termly meetings are unlikely to be adequate in allowing colleagues to create productive partnerships.

However, giving colleagues regular time to meet may help to foster collaborative partnerships.

In approving the effect of these meetings Orebiyi and Orebiyi (2011) stated that interactions enable teachers to gain insight and knowledge about the background experiences, attitudes and behaviors of others. To them, when the interaction establishes friendship process, it affects the growth of the schools and the teachers positively. It is evident therefore that teachers' personal development on the job and the ability to maintain professional effectiveness depends on the interaction process established within the work order. This shows that the more teachers meet, the more days of isolative work order is over and teachers develop a productive work behavior.

Holding talk show classes in which teachers can participate and debate their language teaching methods in English could have similar effects. In these classes teachers can talk about their problems and even debate on the way they can solve it. According to Horn (2006) teacher conversation sustains professional engagement in such a way that high quality professional development is maximized. When there is effective interaction among teachers, it extends to establishing effective relationship with students, their families, parents, the school and the society at large. It can lead to sustained problem solving process in the profession.

Camping and going out together will improve teachers' relationship which in turn improve their collaboration and consequently affects their professional progression. To have good cooperation there should be a friendly atmosphere. The study of Kizza (2009), on employee relationships as correlates job performance among secondary school teachers revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between teachers' relationship with one another and their job performance. Creating a climate for collaboration is central to encouraging teachers to work together.

Other ways to create interaction among teachers are educational workshops, using communicational facilities, and sharing materials. In workshops teachers can instruct each other in teaching English. They could share hard materials together, and shares soft materials using internet and their mobile phones.

As declared by the participant of the study the best way to collaborate and interact is peer observation of teaching. POT is intended to contribute to enhancing the quality of teaching within the private institutes and to supporting staff personally in developing their teaching practice. All respondents pointed to the fact that the

monitoring should be done regularly for all the teachers. Of course, to increase the quality of observation, administrators should convince teachers that this is just for learning not evaluation.

Peer observation of teachings has been discussed by teachers as: 1) almost all participants pointed to the fact that both the observer and the observed should benefit from this observation and noted that learning must be mutual; 2) all respondents pointed to the fact that the monitoring should be done regularly for all the teachers; and 3) to increase the quality of observation, administrators should convince teachers that this is just for learning not testing teachers. These principles have been approved by the previous literature as: •Confidentiality (Gosling, 2005; Carter & Clark, 2003)

- Inclusivity – involving all staff with teaching responsibilities irrespective of grade or status (Gosling, 2005; Carter & Clark, 2003)
- Reciprocity with a focus on mutual benefit to observer and observed (Gosling, 2005)
- Development focus rather than judgement (Carter & Clark, 2003)

While interviewing teachers they argued that we can observe each other using video tapes recorded from the class. So there is no obligation to be present in the class for observation. In many institutions that have surveillance cameras in classes, video recordings of classes are available to other teachers so they can observe them, and without the physical presence in the class they can use other teachers teaching techniques.

5.4 Pedagogical Implications

In this study we have tried to describe the causes and effects of teacher's isolation and to suggest some collaboration methods for teachers in order to improve their social networks in workplace and to be able to collaborate with their colleagues. As such, the findings of this research will be precious for both teachers and stakeholders.

Teachers can use this research as a guide in the schools, to be able to work collaboratively with each other. They can work together without the apprehension of that they are being evaluated by the other teachers. Also the data can help schools and institute managers too. They can use this study to provide a friendly environment in

their schools and institutes where teachers can collaborate together without feeling that they are being judged or evaluated by their colleagues.

Despite being a localized and small-scale study, it holds relevance and significance for policy makers, school leaders and teachers in Sannandaj and beyond. It provides a real account of reasons of teacher isolation and the complex nature of collaboration and strategies that can be used to collaborate.

In order to provide conditions for collaboration, firstly we need to know 'why teachers are isolated. This study reveals why Iranian EFL teachers are isolated. Policy makers and school leaders need to know these issues if they are serious about developing the conditions necessary for effective collaboration. Teachers also need to have a proper understanding of how collaboration works and what techniques they use to collaborate.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

Having explored the reasons for teacher isolation and common techniques for collaboration, further research needs to be done into how these techniques can be developed, supported and sustained. However, a great deal of research has been done on the subject of collaboration which could be helpful for teachers, more enquiry focusing on how schools can improve interpersonal relations and influence personal motivation needs to take place in order to engage a whole teaching staff in a culture of collaboration.

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چکیده

هرچند وجود همکاری و تعامل در بین معلمان برای پیشرفت حرفه ای آنان در زمینه ی تدریس بسیار حائز اهمیت است اما عوامل بسیاری معلمان را از ایجاد چنین تعاملی باز می دارد. بیشتر تحقیقات انجام شده راهنمایی هستند بر ایجاد همکاری در بین معلمان. اما اطلاعات کمی در مورد دلایل انزوای معلمان و همچنین راهکارهای کاربردی ایجاد تعامل در بین آنان موجود است. بنابر این هدف مطالعه ی حاضر دو وجهی است: 1) یافتن دلایل انزوای معلمان، و 2) اکتشاف تکنیک های کاربردی در ایجاد همکاری که توسط معلمان انجام می شود. این مطالعه از نظریه ی زمینه ای برای جمع آوری و بررسی داده های کیفی از سیزده معلم باتجربه که مایل به ارائه ی نظرات خود به محقق بودند، استفاده کرده است. تحلیل و بررسی داده ها دو طبقه بندی را آشکار کرده است: دلایل انزوای معلمان و راهکارهای ایجاد همکاری در بین آنان. با وجود اینکه مطالعه ی حاضر محلی است و در مقیاس کوچک انجام شده است، اما دست آوردهای متناسب و با اهمیتی را برای سیاست گذاران، مدیران مدارس و معلمان در شهر سنندج و خارج از آن به همراه دارد. در این تحقیق دلایل اصلی انزوای معلمان و همچنین پیچیدگی کامل تعامل میان آنان و راهکارهای ایجاد چنین تعاملی فراهم آمده است.

کلمات کلیدی: انزوای معلمان، تعامل معلمان، ادراک، پیشنهاد، نظریه ی زمینه ای



گروه زبان انگلیسی

گرایش آموزش زبان

پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد

علل انزوای معلمین زبان و شیوه های ایجاد همکاری در بین آنان

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