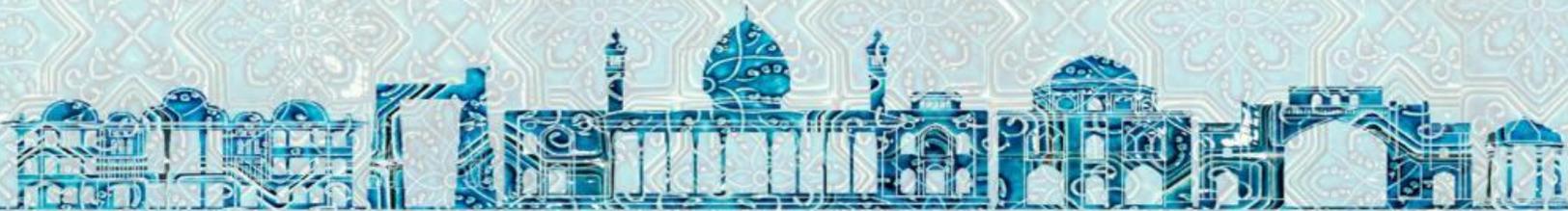




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Foreign Language Learners Dropping out of Language Classes: Honoring Dropouts' Voice

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Abstract

Many language learners in foreign language contexts leave their courses half-way before reaching advanced levels of proficiency. Despite a large body of research on dropping out of school or higher education programs, few have delved into this multifaceted phenomenon in language institutes and tutorial language courses. The current study, utilizing a qualitative approach, aimed at investigating EFL learners dropping out of face-to-face language classes in Iran. To this end, 20 participants were interviewed to explore their main reasons for abandoning classes in 44 dropout instances. Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) was used to analyse the interviewees' responses. Forty-nine major reasons were found which were classified into five themes of satisfying a need of higher priority, teacher-induced dissatisfaction, administrator-induced dissatisfaction, satisfied language-class-related need, and improvement-related dissatisfaction. Administrator-induced dissatisfaction, however, was specific to public classes in language institutes – not private ones. The session begins with a brief overview of the existing gap in the literature, the significance of EFL dropout studies, and the adopted methodology. The speaker will then present the major themes and subthemes of reasons, accompanied by a few tangible examples within each theme. Handouts, including an exhaustive list of reasons, subthemes, and themes, classified in a concise table, will be provided and the audience's opinion will be sought about the commonality of each of the major themes under their own teaching contexts. The session will conclude with implications of the findings for both researchers and practitioners, especially administrators of language institutes and language teachers.

Keywords: dropout, EFL, foreign language learners, reasons, reflexive thematic analysis