

Research Article

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Viewpoints of Social Studies Teachers about Oral History Method

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to reveal the viewpoints of social studies teachers regarding oral history method. The qualitative research approach was used to achieve this purpose. A total of 225 middle-school social studies teachers from various provinces of Turkey participated in the study. A standardized open-ended interview form comprising three sections was used to collect data. Data collected online and during face-to-face interviews were evaluated with content analysis method. At the end of the research, important results regarding the usage of oral history in social studies courses were obtained. First, it was observed that most of the social studies teachers were acquainted with the oral history method and that they learned about this method during their university education. Second, most of the teachers defined the method as an interesting and effective method that facilitates permanent learning. Third, they remarked that the oral history method presents first-hand information, develops historical thinking skills and ensures the establishment of a meaningful connection with society. In spite of this, the teachers who stated that they do not use this method in their courses mentioned some problems related to the school curriculum and oral history method. In the context of these results, it can be concluded that the oral history method has begun to gain popularity among social studies teachers despite some problems.

Keywords

Oral History; Social Studies; Teacher; Historical Thinking Skills; Evidence-Based Learning

Oral history is one of the methods of data collection in the discipline of history. This method began to be used in schools as a pedagogical tool in 1948, following the establishment of the Columbia Center for Oral History Research at Columbia University (Danacıoğlu, 2001). By means of oral history that is commonly used as a learning and teaching method currently (Dere & Dinç, 2018), students learn how to interview, listen

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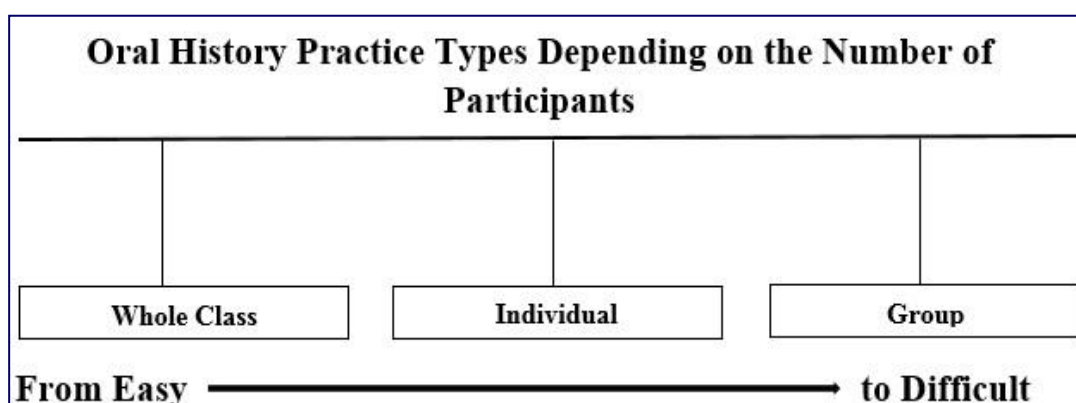
and reflect their knowledge (Foulis, 2018). Students also develop a variety of skills and have healthy relationships with the society they live in and their immediate circle (Barnard, 2014). Students who do oral history interviews can make sense of their families, previous generations and even the past and culture of their countries more easily (Burgo, 2016). In spite of the fact that oral history is based on the discipline of history; it is not limited to history and social studies education (Trofanenko, 2017). Numerous successful oral history projects are carried out in schools in various fields, including information communication technologies, arts, drama, sports, and geography (Letts, 2011).

Oral history studies can be conducted with a tape recorder in every topic where there is a witness. In the oral history studies conducted at schools, students generally examine the topics that are mostly included in social history, such as their family history and experiences, occupations changing and developing in time, cars, child-rearing methods, productive ways to do in vacation and spare time, cuisine, garments, types of entertainment, homes and old wares. All these topics are directly related to students' lives, and therefore, their own homes can be a center for a historical investigation most of the time. For example, when a student investigates his/her family history; he/she may examine the wares, photos, old documents and toys at his/her home (Erekson, 2011). At the same time, as family members and relatives are potential sources, he/she is able to investigate without any cost and safety.

Oral history studies at schools can be conducted either in or out of the school depending on the topic examined. In some studies, source persons are invited to school and the interviews made with them in privacy, such as in directors' offices, are recorded (Letts, 2011). Nonetheless, some topics require reaching the source persons who are out of the school. For example, nursing homes or retirement homes are visited to talk about the living conditions in the past.

There are three types of oral history studies at schools and they are based on the number of participants; in the class with all students, individually and in groups (Wassermann, 2002). These types and their properties are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Oral History Practice Types Depending on the Number of Participants



When the oral history study is made in the class, source persons are invited and answer the questions of students in the class. In-group studies of oral history, the students are divided into groups composed of at least two people and study by distributing the duties among them. When the oral history study is conducted individually, every student interviews with the source persons related to his/her topic and is responsible for the whole process personally. Among these three types of oral history studies, the most cost-effective and easily applicable study is the one conducted in the class as the source persons are invited to the classroom. Nevertheless, it is the weakest form in terms of contribution to students, since the students cannot be active enough. When groups are created and duties are distributed, oral history study in groups enables the students to develop their values and skills of team working, solidarity and cooperation (Trškan, 2016). However, social evasions are the greatest risk of group study. The most important advantage of individual oral history study is that a single student assumes all responsibility without being influenced by social evasions. In this case, a student can study easily without depending on anyone. The disadvantage of this approach is the lack of a fellow student with whom the student may cooperate (Dere, 2018a).

Oral History Practices in Education

The oral history method has contributed extensively to students and has been addressed in numerous theses, articles, and papers both in Turkey and around the world. The most innovative oral history practices in education are mostly observed in the U.S.A., where it was institutionalized for the first time, in England and Australia. Those who conducted studies on the integration of oral history in education in the U.S.A. have been pursuing their activities by being affiliated with the Oral History Association in the U.S.A. (OHA, 2019), the Oral History Society in England (OHS, 2019) and the Oral History Association of Australia Studies of educators and historians (OHAA, 2019) on oral history are mostly published in the pedagogy section of Oral History Review in the U.S.A. (OHR, 2019), in Oral History Journal in England (OHJ, 2019) and in Oral History Australia Journal (OHAJ, 2019). By virtue of the publications in these magazines, a significant oral history archive and vast knowledge are established in a pedagogical sense.

The oral history method was not included in educational practices in Turkey before; following the regulation of curricula in accordance with the constructivist theory in 2005, it has become to be known. In 2005, the oral history method started to be used in social studies and history curricula. The oral history method was first advised to social studies teachers in 2005 (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2006) and became one of the recommended methods in the Social Studies Curriculum that was updated 13 years later (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2018). After 2005, studies on oral history method have increased and a significant accumulation has been formed in 13 years. For example, while there were only 3 thesis studies on oral history in education before 2005, 24 thesis studies have been conducted between 2005 and 2018 (Dere, 2018b).

Apart from thesis studies, the oral history method has been also mentioned in various books and book parts (Somersan, 1998; Demircioğlu, 2007; Neyzi, 2010; Gökdemir, 2011; Sarı, 2014; Doğan, 2015; Gazel, 2015; Çaykent, 2016; Demircioğlu & Demircioğlu, 2017; Açıkalın, 2017). In addition to these studies, many studies (Arslan, 2013; Kabapınar & Kaya, 2013; Dilek, 2016; Yazıcı & Mert, 2017; Kabapınar & Sağlamgöncü, 2017; Kabapınar, 2018; Sağlam & Sayımlı, 2018) have been carried out based on the results of in-class or out-of-class practices. There are also studies revealing the opinions and perceptions of students at various levels and teachers (Akbaba & Kılcan, 2014; Tangülü, 2014; Akçalı, 2015; Dogan, 2015; Ablak, 2016; Demircioğlu, 2016; Beldağ & Balcı, 2017; Dündar, 2017; Kurtdede-Fidan, 2017; Tural, 2017; Aktın & Tekir, 2018). When these studies in the literature are examined, it was observed that Öz (2018) conducted the only study based on the opinions of social studies teachers about oral history method. In this thesis, 13 social studies teachers working in Beykoz district of Istanbul were interviewed. Practicing oral history method in the Ataturk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution course in 8th grade were discussed in these interviews. The results of the study have revealed that the teachers are acquainted with oral history method, frequently use this method and they consider it as a significant method contributing to students in various ways. However, this study is limited to the Ataturk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution course in the 8th grade and opinions of 13 teachers. Therefore, it was planned as a study broadly addressing the opinions and experiences regarding the oral history method of social studies teachers with a sample group. The purpose of this study was to reveal the viewpoints of social studies teachers working in various provinces of Turkey about oral history method. In this context, answers to the following questions were sought:

- What is the degree of acquaintidity of social studies teachers with oral history method?
- Where have the teachers who are acquainted with oral history learned the method?
- How frequently do the social studies teachers use oral history method?
- For which topics do the social studies teachers use oral history method in their courses?
- Why do the social studies teachers use oral history method in their courses?
- What kind of difficulties do social studies teachers face when using oral history?

Method

This section includes the research methods used in the study. Important steps of qualitative research approach such as the research model, study group, data collection tool, data collection process, and data analysis were clarified, respectively.

Research Design

This research is conducted by using the qualitative research approach. It is known that qualitative research does not pursue a product or output. On the contrary, this method aims to reveal people's perspectives and experiences and define how they

interpret their own experiences. In this approach, it is important to understand and make sense of the participant's perspective rather than the researcher's (Merriam, 2009). The qualitative research approach is preferred to benefit from these properties and to reveal the viewpoints and experiences of social study teachers regarding oral history.

Working Group

The study group of this research is composed of 225 social studies teachers working at secondary schools in various provinces of Turkey. Information about the study group is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Information of Working Group

Variables	Categories	<i>f</i>	%
Sex	Female	94	41,8
	Male	131	58,2
	Total	225	100
Educational Status	Undergraduate	180	80
	Master of Arts	40	17,8
	PhD	5	2,2
	Total	225	100
Departments	Social Studies Teaching	146	64,9
	History Teaching	39	17,3
	History	18	8
	Geography Teaching	15	6,7
	Classroom Teaching	7	3,1
	Total	225	100
School Types	Public	179	79,6
	Private	46	20,4
	Total	225	100
Length of service	0-2 years	10	4,4
	3-5 years	41	18,2
	6-10 years	41	18,2
	11-15 years	56	24,9
	15+ years	77	34,2
	Total	225	100

A total of 225 social studies teachers (131 males and 91 females) participated in the study. Of the teachers, 180 have a bachelor's degree, 40 have a master's degree and 5 have a doctoral degree. The vast majority of teachers (146) were graduates of the social studies department. In addition, 179 participants work at public schools and 46 work at private schools. Moreover, the majority of teachers (133) who participated in the study have 11+ years of teaching experience.

The study group was selected according to the maximum variation sampling method, which is among the purposeful sampling approaches. The maximum variation sampling method is based on the principle of identifying homogeneous different states in itself, in relation to the condition being examined (Büyüköztürk et. al., 2018). In accordance with

this method, we tried to contact teachers working in various provinces of Turkey. Only social studies teachers who filled their interview forms and shared their viewpoints were included in the sample group of the study. The provinces, where the teachers' work, were not selected on purpose. Distribution of social studies teachers who participated in the study by provinces is as follows:

Table 2
Distribution of Participants by Provinces

Provinces	<i>f</i>	%
Konya	79	35,1
İstanbul	25	11,1
Kütahya	18	8
İzmir	12	5,3
Uşak	10	4,4
Ankara	7	3,1
Bursa	6	2,7
Adana	4	1,8
Antalya	4	1,8
Denizli	4	1,8
Hatay	4	1,8
Kocaeli	4	1,8
Tekirdağ	4	1,8
Others	44	19,5
Total	225	100

The majority of social studies teachers who participated in the study (79) were from Konya province. Data were collected with online opinion forms and the social studies teachers appointed in Konya were visited and invited to participate in the study. As we achieve more replies that are positive during face-to-face interviews, most of the participants were from Konya. Istanbul and Kütahya followed Konya with 25 and 18 teachers, respectively. Social studies teachers working in 38 provinces were reached. Due to the ethics of research, codes (T1, T2, T3....) were used instead of the real names of teachers.

Data Collection Tool

A standardized open-ended interview form comprising three sections was used to collect data in the study (Büyüköztürk et. al., 2018). In the first part of the interview form, the purpose of the study was explained. The second part included closed-ended questions including options such as demographic information, acquaintance with oral history, place of learning and frequency of using the method. In the third section, standardized open-ended questions about the use of oral history in social studies courses were asked and the participants were asked to fill in the blanks. The interview form was created on Google Docs.

Data Collection Period and Analysis of Data

Data collection period started in October 2017 and ended in December 2018. Data were collected via an online interview form and face-to-face visits. In order to reach the participants during this period, the interview form was first shared in the groups of social studies teachers on Facebook. Furthermore, the interview form was posted on various websites and WhatsApp groups of social studies teachers. In the meantime, various secondary schools in Konya province were visited and teachers were invited to participate in the study. The reluctance of social studies teachers to participate in the study during this period was observed as the biggest problem in the data collection process.

Despite various problems, data obtained from 225 social studies teachers were assessed with the content analysis method. The frequency analysis and categorical analysis techniques proposed by Bilgin (2014) were used during the content analysis. In this context, data included in Google Docs were first transferred to an Excel spreadsheet with Google Tables. All data were read and notes were taken in relation to each variable or question. Data were coded in accordance with research questions. Similar and different codes in the tables were included in various categories and their frequencies were determined. Finally, the data were interpreted in consideration of the themes determined. Two field experts were consulted to increase the reliability of the research. Their comments were included in the analysis and interpretation processes.

Findings

The findings obtained from the data are presented in line with the research questions respectively in this section of the study. Data related to first, second and third research questions were collected with closed-ended questions. Data related to fourth, fifth and sixth research questions were collected with open-ended questions.

Findings Related to First Research Question

Social studies teachers have become acquainted with the oral history method following the 2005 Social Studies Curriculum. In order to understand the degree of recognition of oral history within the 13-year period, social studies teachers were asked if they were acquainted with the method. The findings related to this research question were given in Figure 2:

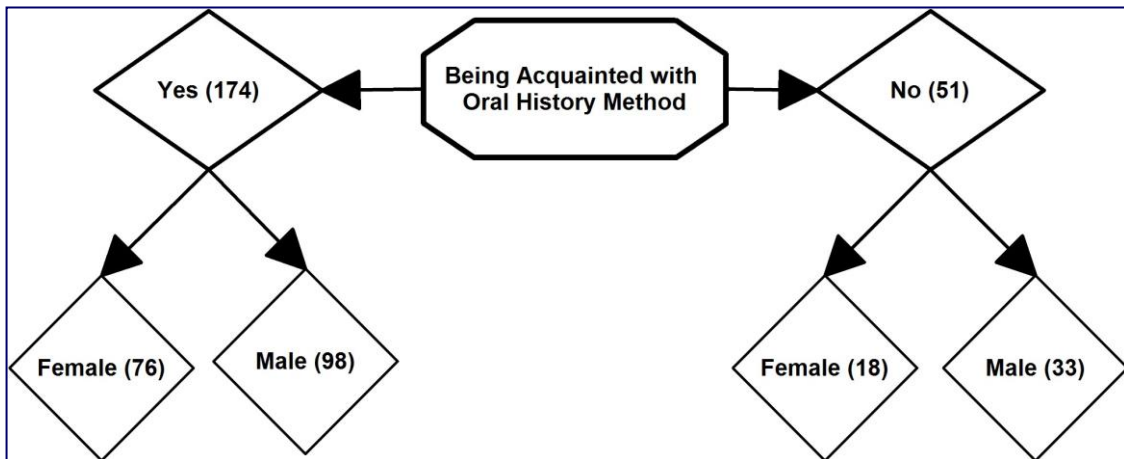


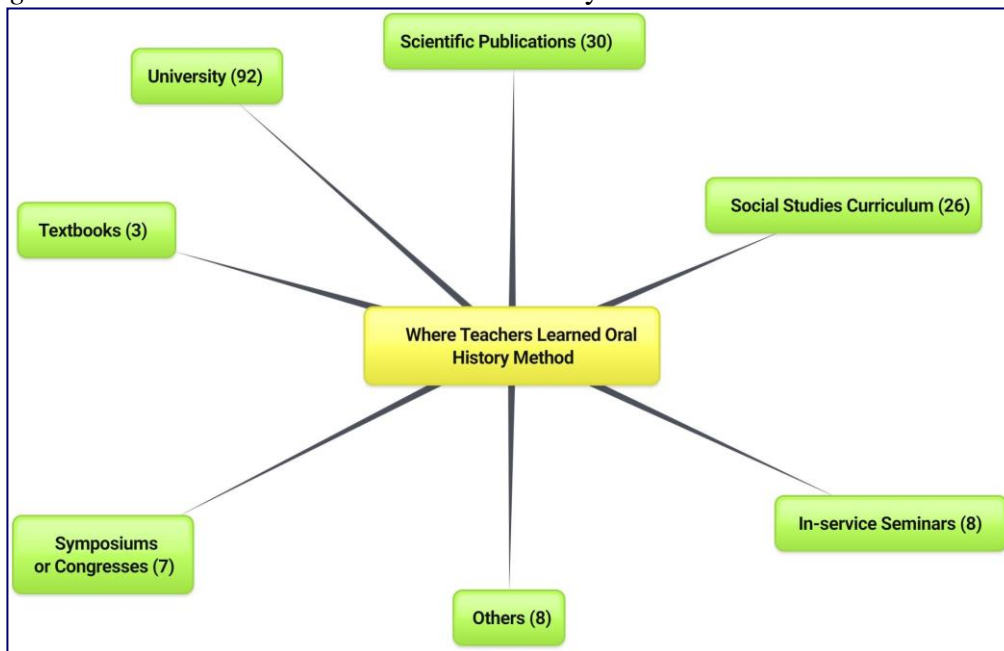
Figure 2. Being Acquainted with Oral History Method

In accordance with data given in Figure 2, 174 (98 males, 76 females) social studies teachers out of 225 participants were acquainted with the oral history method. On the other hand, 51 teachers stated that they were not acquainted with the method and they were hearing it for the first time. This shows that the oral history method has gained considerable recognition among social studies teachers within 13 years.

Findings Related to Second Research Question

Within the scope of the second research question, the teachers who are acquainted with the oral history method were asked where they learned this method. This question aimed to identify the institutions and other factors that contribute to the recognition of oral history. The findings are presented in Figure 3:

Figure 3. Where Teachers Learned Oral History Method



Participants have learned about oral history mostly during their university education (59 males, 33 females). Other teachers have learned about oral history from scientific publications (30), Social Studies Curriculum (26), in-service seminars (8), symposiums or congresses (7), textbooks (3) and from other sources, such as web sites, History Foundation, TRT Archive, TV shows and social media (8). These findings show that university education has the most important role in introducing and teaching oral history to social studies teachers.

Findings Related to Third Research Question

Within the scope of the third research question, social studies teachers were asked how frequently they use the oral history method. The findings are given in Figure 4:

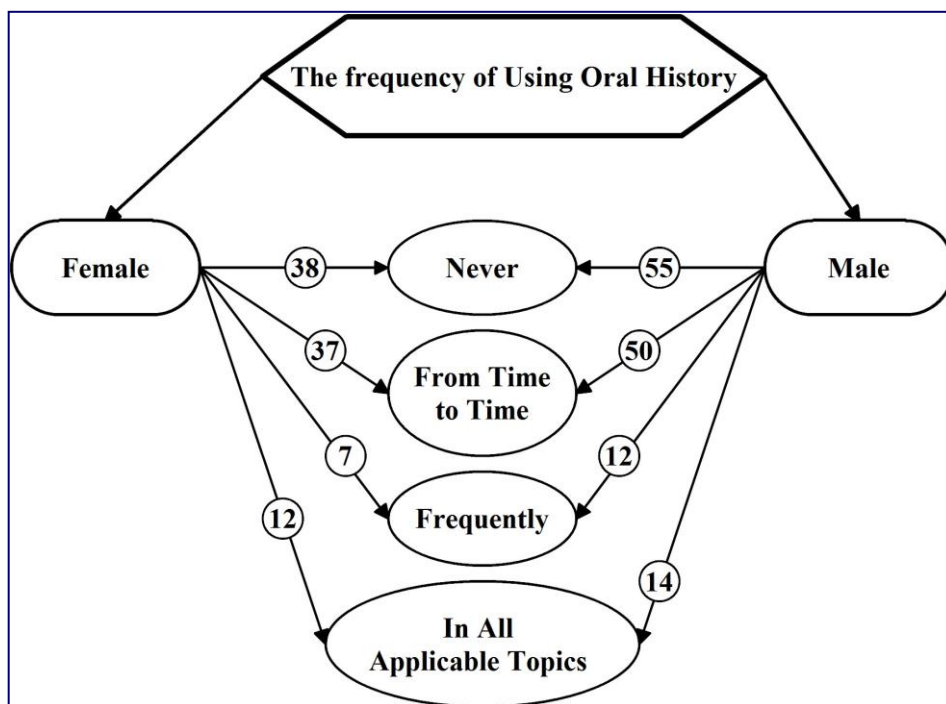


Figure 4. The frequency of Using Oral History

While the result with regard to the acquainted of oral history method is positive, it is rather negative here. The above figure shows that 93 out of 225 teachers "never" use oral history in their courses. The number of teachers who have stated that they use oral history "from time to time", "frequently" and "in all applicable topics" are 87, 19 and 26, respectively. According to these answers, 132 teachers who participated in the study use oral history in their courses. Despite the fact that the majority of teachers did not indicate that they use oral history method "frequently" or "in all applicable topics", we observed that the method has made great progress in the last 13 years.

Findings Related to Fourth Research Question

Social studies teachers were asked about the topics they use oral history depending on their acquaintance with and use of oral history. Findings related to this question are shown in Figure 5.

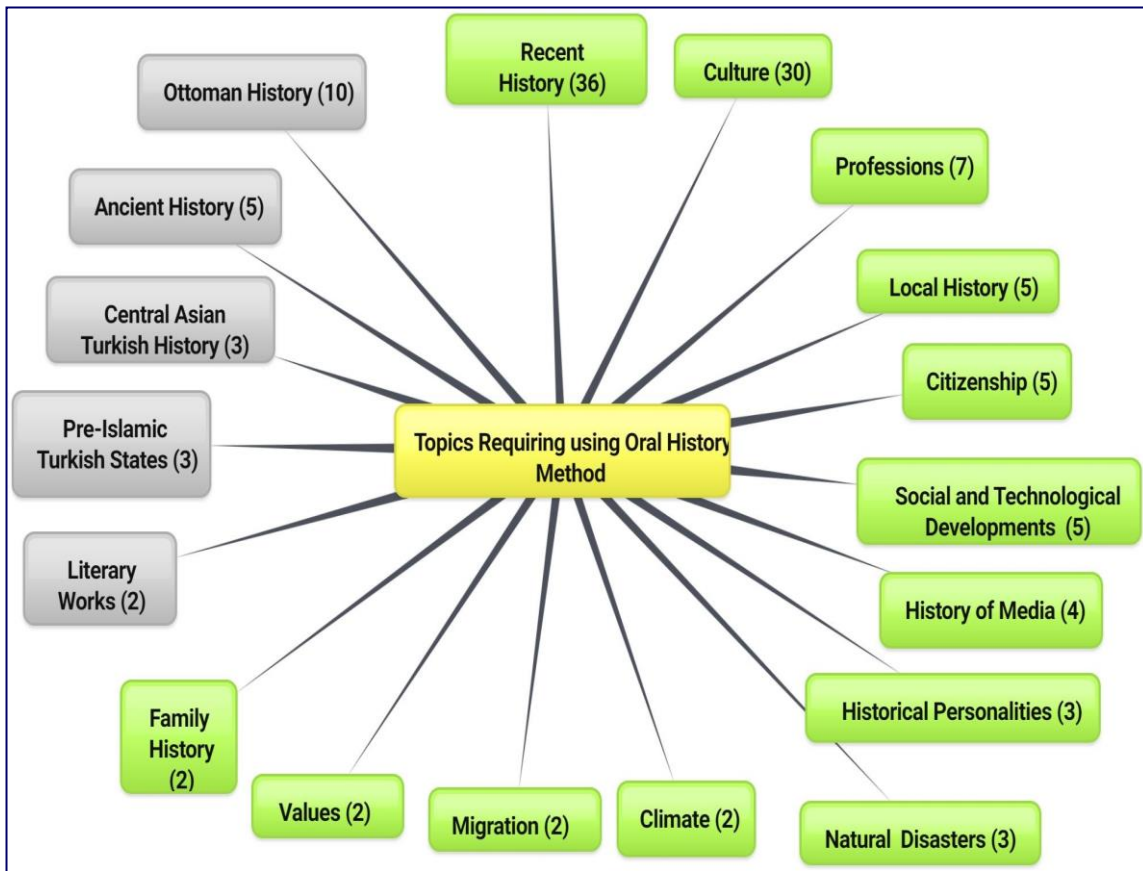


Figure 5. Topics requiring using Oral History Method

The answers of teachers are divided into two groups in Figure 5. Topics marked with green are more suitable for oral history method and those marked with grey and written in italic are not suitable. The reason for this division is explained in the following paragraphs. The findings show that the social studies teachers who have participated in the study mostly use the oral history method for topics in late history related to the Atatürk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution course. These late history topics include important events, such as population exchange, migration from the Balkans, developments after the World War II, the period of Democrat Party, Korean War, Cyprus Peace Operation and Gulf Crisis.

Oral history is mostly preferred in teaching cultural topics along with the topics of late history. Within the scope of culture teaching, topics like cultural change and sustainability, steppe culture, regional culture, and cultural history are predominantly addressed. Except of these, various topics such as changing professions (old and new professions), local history (liberation of the city), citizenship (history of concepts such as local administrations, elections, democratic life, rights, equality, justice and freedom), social and technological developments and history of media are taught through perspectives of living witnesses from past to present.

Apart from the topics emphasized mostly, some social studies teachers have stated that they use oral history method in teaching other important topics, such as economic

changes and developments, natural disasters, historical personalities, climate, family history, migration, and values. For example, a teacher (T12) has summarized the topics he/she uses oral history to teach:

Climates, values, local history, culture, development of technology, natural disasters in 5th grade, active citizenship, the place where we live and its economy, the population in our country, migration, Post World War II, Korean War, communication ...

It is possible to find living witnesses for teaching these topics by oral history. However, some topics are not suitable to be taught with the oral history method, since it is not possible to find living witnesses. These topics are shown in Figure 5 in gray and italic. The most obvious example of these may be Ancient History (Anatolian and Mesopotamian civilizations). Besides, some literary works (myths, epics, fairy tales), pre-Islamic Turkish states, Central Asian Turkish History and Ottoman History (state administration and army) are topics of the distant past.

This shows that some social studies teachers (23) have misinformation about oral history, have misconceptions and confuse oral history with oral tradition. Literary works such as myths, epics, and fairy tales are considered to be under oral tradition. In particular, the accuracy of any of these works obtained by the work of folklorists cannot be questioned and they are examined only as cultural elements. On the other hand, in oral history, the accuracy of the witness' statements are questioned and compared with other sources. Consequently, it is determined that social studies teachers are Acquainted with the oral history method, they use it in teaching various topics but some of them have misconceptions. These findings are promising for the future of the method.

Findings Related to Fifth Research Question

Social studies teachers use the oral history method in their courses for various reasons. The most important of these reasons is that oral history attracts the attention and interest of students and arouses their curiosity (64). The reasons stated by teachers for using oral history method in the courses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Reasons for Social Studies Teachers to Use Oral History

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>f</i>
Attention-grabbing and arousing curiosity	64
Ensuring permanence	54
Making the course more effective	29
Providing the primary source (proof) and increasing cogency	25
Presenting the events from the first person (living witness)	20
Helping to concretize abstract topics	18
Ensuring active participation of students	15
Developing scientific research skills	12
Connecting with real life and present time	11
Supporting written sources and making up their deficiencies	10
Making the courses enjoyable and entertaining	7

Developing historical empathy skills	7
Presenting information not found in textbooks and filling their deficiencies	6
Developing communication skills	6
Learning about immediate vicinity and (the city where they live) and local history	4
Gaining national and spiritual values	4
Perceiving change, sustainability, and chronology	3
Relieving the course of memorization and dullness	2
Establishing intergenerational connections	2
Arousing historical curiosity	2

As mentioned in Table 3, oral history attracts interest and attention and provides unforgettable information (54). Students actively assume responsibility in the process of accessing knowledge in oral history studies. Thus, their knowledge becomes permanent. According to one of the participating teachers (T153), contributions of oral history to students and courses are as follows:

It increases the interest in the course. It ensures the information to be learned more permanently. It also provides out-of-class learning. It provides a student-centered education. The learning becomes accordant with learning principles and the principle of from-near-to-far learning. In other words, the child first gets acquainted with his/her environment.

As emphasized by the teacher in the citation, the students continue to learn out-of-the-class in oral history study. They also primarily recognize their immediate vicinity and learn about local history in accordance with the principle of from near to far. Since this process also contributes to meaningful learning, social studies courses become more effective (29). Another teacher (T12) listed the reasons for using oral history in the courses as follows:

It is the most effective teaching method for suitable topics, it increases self-confidence of students, makes the students have the pleasure of producing knowledge, provides information to students about the formation of knowledge written in social studies books.

In other words, oral history shows the production process of knowledge and how the topics of social studies course are formed to students. Since oral history is based on the narratives of first persons (living witnesses) (20), it provides primary evidence (sources) to students. This evidence increases the cogency of the topics taught in the course (25). As stated by a teacher: *"Oral history is important to support, confirm or refute historical documents when presenting them."* (T158) Oral history interviews often contain many important information and details that are either missing or not included both in available written sources related to the subject of the research (10) and social studies textbooks (6). In this process, students also develop their scientific research skills. According to another teacher (T5), who participated in the study, the meaning of oral history for social studies course is as follows: *"The use of oral history where there are no written sources or to support written sources is a source of wealth for the human-centered social studies course."* Actually, availability or non-availability of a

written source about a subject is not a criterion for using oral history. The history is precious.

Oral history studies conducted with living witnesses ensure active participation of the students to the course (15), help them to concretize abstract topics (18) and establish a meaningful connection with real life and the present time (10). For instance, a teacher has answered the question "What is the role of oral history in social studies courses?" as follows: *"The students learn how they should ask and connection of time-space-human. They can learn the topics through more concrete examples."* (T169)

Furthermore, oral history is a method that makes the social studies courses more enjoyable and entertaining (7), eliminates memorization (2) and reinforces the topics apart from concretizing the topics of social studies. Having a significant potential of teaching national and spiritual values (4), this method arouses the curiosity of students about history. Moreover, the students can establish meaningful connections with the society they live in and past generations by way of oral history studies. A social studies teacher (T22) explains this as follows:

It contributes to students in terms of learning differently and joyfully. They learn about their families and family elders, relatives, people around them. They also notice the similarities and differences between their time and today. They are getting excited when they learn what their elders have experienced in the past and know them much better. In the meantime, they communicate with them.

The students who engage in family history studies are able to evaluate present conditions better when they learn about their elders' past and can compare two periods. During this evaluation, the students also develop some historical thinking skills such as using primary evidence, recognizing the evidence, interpreting historical data, chronology, change, perceiving continuity and historical empathy. In brief, oral history contributes to a great deal to students when used in social studies courses.

Findings Related to the Sixth Research Question

Social studies teachers who want to provide their students with some gains in social studies courses have stated that they have some difficulties when using oral history. These difficulties and problems are shown in Figure 6:

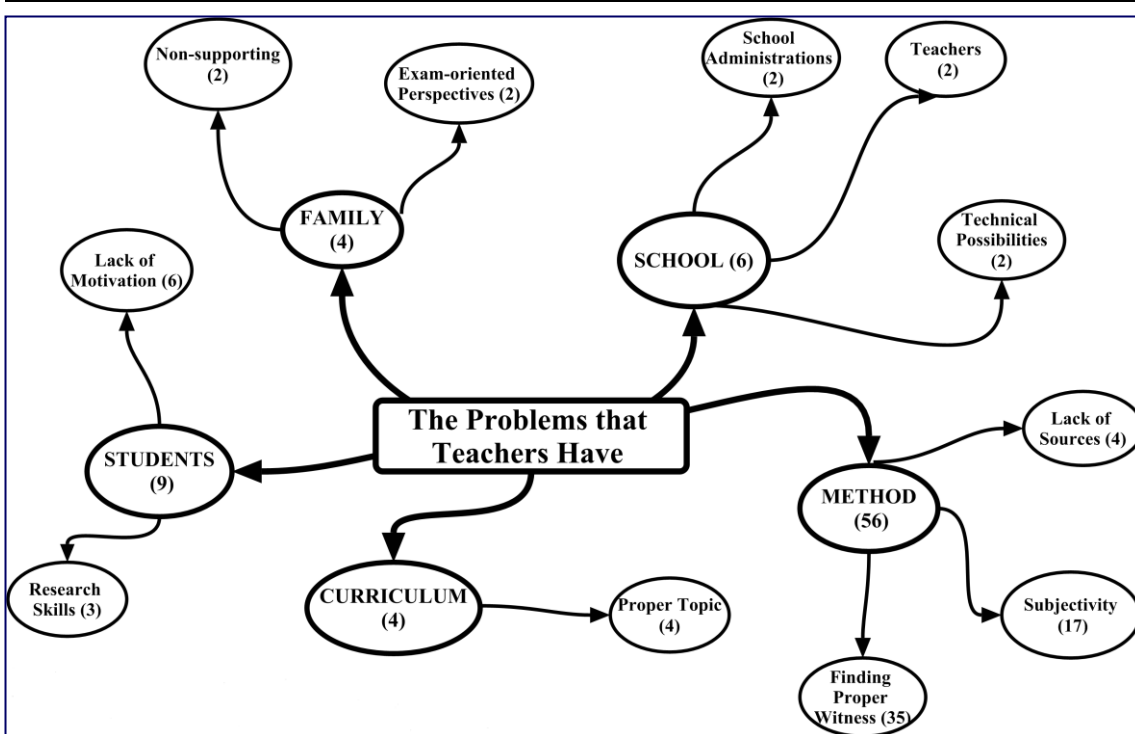


Figure 6. The Problems that Teachers Have

Figure 6 shows that the difficulties of teachers are mostly related to the oral history method. The biggest challenge is finding proper source persons (witnesses). The teachers have emphasized that it is rather difficult to find source persons in big provinces and bringing them to the class. Their opinions in this respect are as follows:

"It is difficult to find persons in the area of residents who would contribute to oral history studies." (T4)

"It is difficult to find people who have witnessed any period of historic events." (T146)

"As the structure of elementary family becomes widespread, it becomes difficult for the students to reach witnesses of late history, the elders." (T225)

Two important criteria that teachers seek in the proper source person are being knowledgeable and witness of the event. Nonetheless, as the structure of elementary family became widespread and the extended families live in distant provinces, it becomes difficult for students to reach the people who would be potential sources of information in oral history studies. This reflects badly on oral history studies. Moreover, it is observed that some teachers perceive the oral history method as a practice that can be applied only by bringing the source person to the classroom.

Some social studies teachers who do not have a difficulty to find the proper source person stated some other problems. According to them, the subjectivity of source persons and their deviation from the purpose when talking create serious problems for them. Furthermore, the participants have complained of preparedness and lack of motivation of students and rareness of late history topics suitable for the method in the

curriculum. However, all topics mentioned under the fourth heading of findings section are suitable to carry out an oral history study.

The teachers also complain of the scarcity of published oral history sources. Although there have been various model practices as a result of increasing interest in oral history, publications to be used as teaching materials are not enough. They have also stated that lack of motivation and insufficient investigation skills of students (data analysis, interpretation, and reporting) seriously cripple oral history studies. Finally, the school administrations, negative views of some teachers and particularly of parents based on examinations and grades cause the teachers to back down from using oral history in their courses.

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

The aim of this study was to reveal the viewpoints of social studies teachers working in various provinces of Turkey about oral history method. One of the most significant conclusions of the study was that 174 out of 225 social studies teachers are acquainted with the oral history method. In parallel with this conclusion, Öner (2015), Beldağ & Balçı (2017), Kurtdede-Fidan (2017) and Öz (2018) have conducted studies with social studies and class teachers and showed that the teachers are generally acquainted with the oral history method. When these conclusions are integrated, it is possible to say that the oral history method has become a known method among social studies teachers within the last 13 years after it was recommended in the 2005 Social Studies Curriculum.

It was found that social studies teachers have learned about oral history method mostly during their undergraduate education. This conclusion proves that the most important contribution to learning and recognizing the oral history method is provided by a university education. In spite of this, it was observed that almost one third (93) of teachers participating in the study do not use oral history in their courses and only 132 teachers use the method. Similarly, Kurtdede-Fidan (2017) has revealed that class teachers use the oral history method in their courses to a certain degree.

Social studies teachers use oral history mostly when teaching topics of late history and culture. Within the scope of culture teaching, topics like cultural change and sustainability, steppe culture, regional culture, and cultural history are predominantly addressed. In her study, Kurtdede-Fidan (2017) showed that class teachers mostly use oral history method in teaching the topics related to culture, daily life and social history. Apart from these, oral history method is preferred in teaching changeable professions, local history, citizenship, social and technological developments, and family history, and migration, national and spiritual values.

Most of the teachers were acquainted with oral history; however, it was found that some teachers have misconception and misinformation regarding the oral history method. Some teachers have stated that they use oral history method in teaching topics, such as Ancient History, Pre-Islamic Turkish States, Central Asian Turkish History, Ottoman History and literary works (legends, epics, and fairy tales) and this indicates that they have misconception and misinformation about the method. In order to carry

out an oral history study, it is necessary to find living witnesses and address the events basing on their narratives. The topics mentioned by teachers are not parts of the recent past but of distant past and oral tradition. Particularly accuracy of the literary works obtained in the studies conducted by folklorists cannot be questioned and they can be examined only as cultural elements. On the other hand, in oral history, the accuracy of the witness' statements are questioned and compared with other sources. For example, it is not possible to find and talk to the heroes of the War of Independence. Only camera or voice recordings may be used if there is any. On the contrary, it is possible to find and talk to the veterans of the Cyprus Peace Operation and listen to the events they have witnessed. Sarı (2007) has brought two Cyprus veterans to the course when practicing his doctoral thesis and students have asked them various questions about the Cyprus Peace Operation. In brief, social studies teachers had a contradiction in terms, because they have incorporated oral tradition into oral history.

In contrast to the conclusion of the study conducted by Akçalı (2015), it was found that all social studies teachers participating in this study regard people as sources of social studies course. In her study, Akçalı showed that teachers and teacher candidates mostly consider museums, archaeological sites and other historic places as sources of out-of-class history teaching; however, only a few teachers consider people as the source.

Within the scope of another research question, the reasons why social studies teachers use the oral history method in their courses are scrutinized. Teachers consider that oral history attracts attention and interest of students and arouses their curiosity and this is the most important advantage of the method. The students carrying out oral history study with this curiosity actively assume responsibility in the process of reaching the knowledge. This helps the students to concretize what they learn. Consequently, the knowledge learned becomes unforgettable and permanent. Class teachers have also mentioned these contributions of oral history in the study conducted by Kurtdele-Fidan (2017). Teachers have stated that oral history attracts the interest of students and help them to concretize abstract concepts. Furthermore, the teachers who participated in the study conducted by Beldağ & Balcı (2017) have emphasized that oral history is a constructivist method that makes the students active. Finally, Dere & Dinç (2018) have revealed that oral history is a constructivist learning and teaching method and enables the students to more actively participate in the whole process.

As the students become acquainted with their immediate vicinity and local history, social studies courses become more effective. Letts (2011), Barnard (2014) and Foulis (2018) have called attention to the fact that the students who collect data during one-to-one interviews have the opportunity to establish a connection with real life and society. Furthermore, Busby & Hubbard (2007) have conducted a study by combining oral history and local project and observed that the students are more interested in social studies courses and have a high opinion of the knowledge they learn.

Oral history provides primary evidence (source) to students as it is based on the first-hand narratives of living witnesses. This evidence increases the cogency of the topics discussed in the courses. In addition, oral history studies include numerous important

information, experiences and life stories lacking or missing in available written sources, social studies textbooks or curricula. In other words, as revealed by the study of Ng-A-Fook & Smith (2017) the students can even see the deficiencies of textbooks and curricula in oral history studies.

The results reached in this study are rather important to explain the role of oral history to develop historical thinking skills of students. Participant teachers stated that oral history helps the students to gain historic thinking skills, such as using primary evidences, recognizing the evidences, interpreting historical data, perceiving chronology, change and continuity, having historic empathy. Numerous studies (von Heyking, 2017; Van Nieuwenhuysse, 2017; Ng-A-Fook & Smith, 2017; Bertram, Wagner & Trautwein, 2017; Çelik, Karadeniz & Cabul, 2018) in the literature explicitly state the contributions of oral history to historical thinking skills.

While teachers state various benefits of oral history, they also face various difficulties while using it in their courses. These problems are mostly related to the oral history method. Participating teachers first have emphasized the difficulty of finding proper source persons (witnesses) in big cities and bringing them to classrooms. The teachers who have participated in the studies conducted by Kurtdede-Fidan (2017) and Öz (2018) stated similar problems. Social studies and class teachers have stated that finding proper persons and bringing them to the classroom is costly and difficult.

Teachers consider that subjectivity of the information provided by the source person invited to the classroom and their deviation from the purpose when talking are serious problems. This is a rightful concern. The source persons may confuse the events and persons due to the impact of selective memory in interviews or remember everything wrong (Burgo, 2016). In order to overcome this problem, it is necessary to accept the existence of it. It is also necessary to have the students make an investigation about the past at the beginning of oral history study and inform them about the source person if possible (Šetkus, 2016). Moreover, teaching the students how they can critically compare the data obtained from interviews with available sources may be a solution to this problem to a certain extent.

Apart from these difficulties, teachers complain of the scarcity of the published oral history sources and even if they are right about it, there are some thesis studies on this subject recently. Finally, social studies teachers have stated that the scarcity of topics suitable for oral history in social studies curriculum is a problem. Al-Rabaani (2015) and Winslow (2016) have also identified similar problems in their studies. It has been revealed in related studies that the biggest deficiency is that oral history is not sufficiently included in the curricula and teachers have to make a special effort to conduct oral history studies. Nevertheless, there are numerous topics suitable for oral history as specified under the fourth heading in the results section of this study.

Conclusions of this study are important in a couple of ways. First, it was observed that the majority of social studies teachers have known the oral history method. Second, it was understood that universities are important for oral history to be recognized and become widespread. Third, it was found that oral history is used in teaching the late history topics in social studies courses in accordance with its nature. Fourth, it was

noted that the teachers consider oral history as a method that attracts the interest of students, makes them actively participate in classes and develops their various skills. Finally, it was found that while social study teachers want to use oral history in social studies courses, they face various problems caused by source persons, school administrations and parents. Being able to reach teachers in 38 different provinces indicates that the strength of the study in terms of seeing the general picture of the method. In spite of this, the collection of a significant portion of data by way of online interview forms reflects the weakness of the study in terms of presenting in-depth conclusions.

In the context of the consequences, a few suggestions could be made. Some social studies teachers have imperfect knowledge about oral history method. In order to eliminate these deficiencies, the Ministry of National Education should provide training to teachers on how to use oral history in social studies courses. In addition, examples should be given in textbooks on how to use the oral history method. Finally, students' parents and school administrations should support the teachers in respect of oral history studies. To this end, teachers who would carry out oral history studies can draw up an information letter to be sent to school administrations and parents.

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