A Review of Communication Elements and Learner Support Services in Turkish Distance Education System

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Abstract
The aim of this study is to review the Turkish distance education system, Open Education Faculty (OEF), from the point of view of the communication' elements and learner support services. The study, firstly, introduces the related literature and the growth of distance education in Turkey; explains generally the communication and interaction processes; then review the communication' elements related to the support services in Turkish distance education system, OEF.

Keywords: Distance education; Communication; Learner support services; Interaction; Turkey; Open Education Faculty

Introduction

Communication is the activity or process of giving information to other people or to other living things.Communications are the systems and processes that are used to communicate or broadcast information ,by means of electricity,radio wawes,television,computer and satellites.The elements of a communication process are the following: sender (source); message; channel; receiver (learner or other living things) and; feedback. When people interact with each other, they communicate or work together.

Wagner (1994) defines instructional interaction as the events that take place and allow communication between the learner and the learner's environment. Collins and Berge (1996) state that "interacting with content means actively processing and combining this content with prior knowledge." Interaction is an active process which requires learners to do more than passively absorb information. Various types and levels of interaction exist in distance education courses. High level of interaction is possible despite the physical separation of the instructor and the learners. Technologies which are available today allow a high degree of communication between the instructor and the learners and among the learners.

Interaction aid in the transfer of knowledge and is conducive to active learning (Murphy, 1996). Various types of interaction aid in reaching various types of learners (Moore &Kearsley, 1996). Increased interaction can improve learner motivation, achievement, and attitude toward learning. Three types of interaction have been identified by Moore (1989). In addition, a fourth type of interaction has been identified: learner-interface interaction (Hillman, Willis., &Gunawardena, 1994). Examples of the various types of interaction include the following: teacher-learner interaction: questioning strategies, learner-content interaction: group discussion and case studies, learner-learner interaction: role playing and discussion, and learner-technology: synchronous and asynchronous communication (Paulsen, 1995).

Distance education programs worldwide use a variety of technologies that include print materials, audio and video cassettes, audio and video teleconferencing, computer-mediated communication (e.g., electronic mail, computer conferencing, and more recently, the Internet). Technologies that deliver instruction to distance learners are often classified as way videoconference, provide for learner-content interaction (Murphy, 1996).

A distance education program must design and applicate an effective learner support services and systems. But unfortunately, in many distance education systems more resources are invested in the technical system at the expense of the learner support system. Equal or more resources should be invested in the learner support system if the distance education enterprise is to be successful (Gunawardena, 1996, 271). Dillon and Blanchard (1991) describe four types of support systems; these systems are the following: 1) learner support and learner needs; 2) learner support and the needs of the content; 3) learner support related to the institutional context; and 4) learner support and technology. The aim of this study is to review the Turkish distance education system,Open Education Faculty(OEF),from the point of view of communication' elements and learner support services.

Review of the Literature

Garrison and Baynton (1987, 7) define learner support as the resources that learners can access in order to carry out the learning processes. Garrison (1989, 29) observes that in distance education "support is concerned with a range of human and nonhuman resources to guide and facilitate the educational transaction". He observes that these resources may be library facilities, various media and soft ware programs, or community leaders or they could be various socioeconomic variables such as student's financial self-sufficiency and capacity to cope with their roles and responsibilities in the family and community.,

The dominant feature of distance education is the physical and often temporal distance which separates the teacher and learner. Because distance students are often placed in a unique situation in which neither teachers nor fellow students are physically present to clarify, discuss, or provide feedback, effective distance education requires an sound learner support system (Gunawardena, 1988). One important means of analyzing the effectiveness of the teaching-learning experience in a distance education system is through the analysis of the learner support system. "Support systems contribute to the 'process' of a course as do the learning materials" ,and support systems developed in recognition of student needs help the distance learner become competent and self-confident in learning, social interactions and self-evaluation (Rae, 1989). Prideaux (1989) observes that the effectiveness of student support system of open/distance learning have not been adequately evaluated.

Support services are an important part of the feeling. Traditional students have many physical clues of their attachment to the institution. Providing support services to the distance learning population is an important part of creating the feeling of belonging for students who do not have access to traditional clues. Some other important issues to consider have been proposed by Martin, Moskal, Foshee, and Morse (1997). Some of the support services that should be considered have been detailed in the literature (Boettcher & Cartwright, 1997; Kovel, 1997).Dillon and Blanchard (1991) note that the review of literature offers evidence those systems which utilize teleconferencing technologies provide greater opportunities for learner control and tend to be higher in dialogue and lower in structure. However, the literature also suggests that, in general, two-way interactive systems tend to be more responsive to institutional needs, that is the needs of structure rather than to learner needs, that is the needs of dialogue. They further note that in interactive systems, the amount of dialogue and structure is more a function of the instructor than of the learner.

Hewson and Hughes (1999) present an evaluation of one postgraduate subject (Information Technology for Teaching and Learning at the University of New South Wales), which is taught entirely online and uses pub1ic-domain browsers, e-mail and file transfer, and is integrated with software developed by the authors. They say that Web Teach facilitate teacher/learner and learner/learner interactions.

Offer and Lev (1999) discuss the use of distance learning systems, teacher/learner interactions in the classroom as well as in distance learning, student achievement, training teachers to use interactions, the model of decision making to operate distance learning, and an example of a distance-learning system in Israel between universities and secondary schools.

Hassenplug and Harnish (1998) analyze learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner interactions in six distance-learning courses offered at technical institutes in Georgia. They indicate that both faculty and students were satisfied with all three types of interaction in these courses.

Repman and Logan (1996) explore techniques for creating cohesive active learning communities in which information can be linked to real-world experiences, discuss four types of interactions that take place in distance learning environments: learner-content, learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-interface.They offer strategies for overcoming common barriers to these interactions.

Based on a review of the literature Berge (1995) examines the roles of a computer conference moderator in distance education. He points out the role of technology in distance education; interactions in learning, including synchronous and asynchronous interaction; reliance on discussion; and pedagogical, social, managerial, and technical aspects of moderating.

Distance Education In Turkey

Although the distance education implementation in Turkey started in 1982, the discussions about distance education in general took place as early as 1927. This concept was thought to be beneficial in increasing the literacy rate among the citizens in Turkey. In those years, the other countries had already initiated the education through correspondence by mail. Due to the common belief that people can not learn reading and writing without a teacher, the idea of distance education was not considered in Turkey until 1956.

Between the years 1927 and 1955 the distance education merely remained as an idea. The first distance education project was initiated at the Research Institute of Bank and Trade Law, Faculty of Law, Ankara University in 1956. In this implementation, the bank employees were educated through correspondence by mail. In 1961, The Centre for Education through Letters was established as a sub-organisation of Ministry of Education, Turkey. This scheme targeted people who wish to complete his/her secondary education without attending courses. These attempts were extended in 1966. The establishment of Advanced Teacher Education School followed it. Later on in 1975 and 1978 two attempts to establish an "Open University" were unsuccessful. In other words, in Turkey, "Education through Letters" (called in Turkish as being YAY-KUR) was implemented as a correspondence education. However, required efficiency and success were not attained.

Again in 1970's, Eskişehir Economics and Commercial Academy, The Institute for Education through Television became a pioneer in the distance education area. In 1981, a governmental campaign was started to reduce illiteracy rate in Turkey. In this attempt, television was an important education tool. The program achieved a considerable success with a considerable increase in the literacy rate. In the same year, Turkish Higher Education Council provided an opportunity to implement distance education at Turkish Universities. After these pioneering years, we witnessed a well-planned, scientific and efficient approach to the distance education in Turkey (Demiray, 2002).

Turkey has a very visible and distinguished international presence and has one of the best known distance education programs in the World. John Daniels (1995), in his book named The Mega-Universities and the Knowledge Media describes Turkey as having one of the ten largest distance education institutions in the World. Mega-universities are schools that enroll over 100,000 students each year. Countries other than Turkey having mega-universities are China, France, India, Indonesia, Korea, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. These countries have all achieved remarkable success in increasing student numbers dramatically while lowering educational costs (McIsaac, 1996).

In November 1961, Anadolu University was given the mission to carry out distance education throughout the country. Consequently, Open Education Faculty (OEF) was organised and 29,479 students were initially enrolled in Economics and Business Administration programs. This program used various tools such as printed materials, television programs and face-to-face academic tutorials to reach distance education students. Later on these educational tools were extended to the use of video, computer, radio and newspaper.

The two primary forms of distance education are the Open Education Faculty (OEF) at Anadolu University in Eskisehir and the Open High School (OHS) through the Ministry of National Education. The OEF, which been operating since 1982, delivers undergraduate degree programs and other programs to Turks throughout Turkey, Europe, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

The Open Education Faculty teaches mainly at university level, using print materials, broadcasts and some face to face teaching called academic counselling. The faculty prepares its own teaching materials. Print materials that are the coursebooks are sent to students on a term basis. About 200 programmes are broadcasted on state television every year. Also there are radio programmes for language courses. When the OEF started, academic counselling was given in 22 provinces.

The other form of distance education in Turkey is Open High School (OHS) through the Ministry of National Education. The OHS is a widespread secondary education program, which has been operating since 1992. The purpose of the OHS is to allow traditional and non-traditional students, who for one reason or another have not completed secondary school, with an opportunity to earn a high school diploma. The OHS curriculum is the same as for traditional high school students. The technologies for both programs include specially designed textbooks and other printed materials including newsletters and bulletins, television and radio broadcasts.

Communication And Interaction In Turkish Distance Education

Learner-content interaction which teachers need to generate is "the interaction the student has with the subject matter… Every learner has to construct knowledge through a process of personally accommodating information into previously exiting cognitive structures" (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, 128).

The Open Education Faculty's system is based on the combination of three educational components as; printed materials, television and radio broadcasts and academic counseling (Demiray, 1990).Printed materials are prepared by the academic staff from various universities and edited by the faculty members of Anadolu University according to the principles and techniques of distance learning. These materials are sent to the students by the regular channels.

Murphy (1991) said that based on Turkey's roots in an oral tradition, it was not surprising that many first-year OEF students described the textbooks as the most useful instructional aspect. Others, however, found that learning solely from textbooks posed challenges and restricted interaction with the content.

Television and radio broadcasts are designed to be supplementary to the printed materials in OEF. As in the printed materials, various university members work on television and radio programs, either as authors or as tutors (or both). Broadcasting services are carried out by the state owned Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) Corporation (Demiray, 1990).

According to the findings of a study (Gültekin, 1989) student were beware of watching TV programs; but the watching rate of students generally wasn't fit. In an other study named "Evaluation of the Open Education Faculty's TV course programs" (Özbilgin, Işık., & Yıldırım, 1985) the results were following: students generally benefited from these programs, but broadcasting hours of these programs were not available enough to help students' learning process and students couldn't enough benefit from this TV broadcasting.Murphy (1991) states that despite the problem of access, the first year students who watched the programs in conjunction with their textbook lessons demonstrated a greater potential for learner-content interaction.

The researches concerning the use of video which has started to be used for educational purposes in Turkey in 1980's, stating that video was used rather as a leisure time instrument. By the way there are some opposing approaches stating that video started to be used for educational purposes-though not on a large scale (Demiray, 1990).Video education as it is planned at the beginning of the project is a supportive service. In other words it does not propose to teach English to complete beginners but to support OEF students learning English as an additive service to other instructional means like books, TV and radio broadcasts, academic supervising services, etc. Video education service is only for distance education students of Open Education Faculty.

Learner-instructor interaction occurs primarily with one-way technologies supplemented with two-way technologies in other distance education programs (Murphy, 1996,.421). Because of the technologies used to deliver distance education programs in Turkey are typically one way, learner-instructor interaction occurs at the OEF through lectures delivered weekly in university classrooms and auditoriums in cities and towns in the evenings and on weekends.

Academic Counseling Centers are located in 55 cities. At these centers, students receive advisory help provided by part time instructors and academic advisors who are selected from among the regional university members. One hour per week of counseling services per course is provided to students at these centers. Approximately 80 percent of the students have regular access to these centers .At these centers there are additional services such as videos, Anadolu Newspaper and other official services for students. These three parts of the distance education program work together as very functional components of a smoothly running system (Demiray, 1990).

These lectures were available for approximately 84% of the OEF students-those who lived in urban centers in 1987, Murphy (1991) found that only a small proportion of the OEF students reported regular attendance at the lecturers in one city.

Murphy (1991) observes that Turkey's patronage system influences traditional face-to-face education where students offer their continuing loyalty and respect to their professor, or patron, and in return receive knowledge and wisdom. It is the professor's responsibility to interpret "text" to students, just as the students are expected to memorize the words of their esteemed professor. She points out that Turkish distance learners, however, lack

access to an esteemed professor, and thus function outside of the traditional patronage system. The distance learners, therefore, formulate their own structures of alliances and cooperation, both within and outside of the OEF. These learners may attend the lectures in order to learn cooperatively with fellow students.

Learner-instructor interaction occurs informally when students ask faculty directly about their classes, something particularly possible for students employed at universities. OEF and Open High School (OHS) students can also interact with administrators through visits, telephone calls, and correspondence.

The third form of interaction is "interaction between one learner and other learners, alone or in group settings, with or without the real time presence of an instructor" (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, 131).Learner-learner interaction typically occurs in applications using two-way technologies, provided that learning experiences are designed to promote this interaction (Murphy, 1996, 421).

Learner-learner interaction is not part of the formal design of Turkish distance education programs. Because the educational system emphasizes rote learning and memorization, learners are typically required to recite and memorize from their texts. However, the Turkish culture itself fosters interaction among OEF students through their work sites, in face-to-face lectures, and in courses that students attend outside of the distance education programs (Murphy, 1991). To be two-way technology, computer-mediated communication (CMC), which includes e-mail, computer conferencing, electronic bulletin boards, and the Internet, promotes interaction among learners through discussion and resource sharing (Murphy, 1996, 421).

Murphy (1991) notes that in Turkey, distance learning, as a form of education, reflects traditional face-to-face education, and states that the communication technologies associated with distance learning may provide the impetus for overcoming learning impediments that are both unique to the culture and ingrained in traditional forms of education. She observes that Turkish students found substitutes for teachers (patrons) among their classmates and colleagues. It is possible that technologies such as computer conferencing that foster collaborative work may break traditional forms of teacher oriented education, and incorporation.

In 1992, a computer-mediated distance education was implemented between Turkish Open University and American universities such as the University of New Mexico, the University of Oklahoma, Florida State University, Arizona State University, and the University of Wyoming. In Turkey American and Turkish students took some courses from this system.

There is a great tendency toward Web-based instruction programs in most open universities and other educational institutions. Some already have started to offer on-line degree or certificate programs. For example, Anadolu University has provided on-line self-test opportunities for its distance learners since 1998. Anadolu University has also been trying to offer some on-line alternative courses for its on-campus students in order to be able to understand how feasible, effective, efficient, and appealing it is to offer on-line programs, and established a foundation for a "virtual" university in 1998. Starting Fall 2001, the University will offer an on-line two-year on-line degree or certificate program.

In 2000-2001 educational year, this program has served lesson materials on the Internet and also another instruction services as books, software, digital video, academic counseling service, exams, student department, support and virtual class break.

Communication Elements And Learner   Support Services In Turkish Distance Education System

In this section of the study, we review   each communication element in   Turkish distance education system, Open Education Faculty (OEF), related to the learner   support services.

1. Receiver in Turkish Distance Education

Receiver is a person (or persons) who takes (or take) the messages which sender (source) send.In a communication process receiver is a learner (student) or it can be another living thing.

Receiver(Learner) support that addresses learner needs will depend on the unique needs and characteristics of the learner. Dillon and Blanchard (1991) observe that one important factor that contributes to success is the motivation or confidence of the learner. Less motivated students may benefit from interaction with the teacher or

tutor. Less confident learners may need more group support than more confident learners. Older learners may need more support in testing environments. In the Turkish sociocultural context which supports a group ethos, distance learners will benefit from group work or collaborative projects with peers (Gunawardena, 1996, 277).Murphy (1991a, 227) notes the differences in roles and status between males and females in Turkish society and points out that barriers to achievement in the Open Education Faculty (OEF) may be gender-related. In her study, she observed that expectations for success differed across gender: "the males generally expected high marks, while the females either expected low marks or did not speculate". When designing support systems for Turkey, it is important to understand the influence of the sociocultural context and student characteristics of OEF.

Understanding the sociocultural context is key to developing appropriate support systems for distance learners. In her study of the sociocultural context of Turkish distance learning, Murphy (199la, 225) observes that "two elements of the Turkish culture - patronage Guy (1991, 163) advises that "it may be more appropriate to identify the cultures of the learners prior to the development of an institutional response so that it is sensitive to those cultural forms".

As above mentioned to design an effective support system and to determine learner needs, we should, first, take into consideration the sociocultural context in Turkey and student characteristics of OEF.

2. Message in Turkish Distance Education

A message is send to someone by a sender   or leave for them when you can not speak to them directly.The message is an idea that someone tries to communicate to people. Messages are symbols or sign' organizations which a source send to the receiver.Messages,in an other words,are contents in a communication'process.

This type of learner support will depend on the content and the learning environment. Is the content related to the cognitive, affective, or psychomotor domain? How the learning environment has been designed? The learner-centered and teacher-centered learning environments will be different (Gunawardena, 1996, 278).

The Turkish distance learning system, the Open Education Faculty (OEF); is a second generation one in that it integrates printed materials with broadcast media (Murphy, 1991b). Technologies used to deliver distance education programs in Turkey typically one-way and Turkey integrates technologies in distance education primarily by combining the one-way technologies of text and television. So, learner-content interaction in Turkey is designed to occur through self-instruction with textbooks and optional television and radio broadcast (Murphy, 1996; Gunawardena, 1996; Demiray, 2002).

Murphy (1991c) notes that in her study, while first-year distance learners in Turkey generally described the textbooks as the "most useful" aspect of the OEF, some found that learning solely from textbooks posed challenges and restricted interaction. In another study, distance education (OEF) students, living in Bolu (Turkey), generally described the textbooks as the "unique and most useful" instruments (Nartgün & Esen, 1996).Open Education Faculty offers associate degree, degree completion and vocational programs in the different fields.

The program's contents in OEF are generally related to the cognitive domain. The learning environment has been designed to occur self-instruction with textbooks and eight-five percent of the learning is expected to happen through the textbooks (Gunawardena, 1996, 276). Two elements of the Turkish culture, patronage and an oral tradition seem to play a significant role in (distance) learning environment. While the Turkish OEF system provides for various forms of interaction in distance learning, the sociocultural context determines the extent of learning environment. Technologies used to deliver contents of distance education programs in Turkey are typically one-way and are designed to reach the masses. But the effectiveness and the quality of the learning environment is depended on the use of advanced distance education technologies.

3. Sender in Turkish Distance Education

Sender or source is a person or an object who(or which) start the communication'process.The senders are the open üniversities in some developed countries and the open education faculties in the others such as in Turkey.

This type learner support will depend on the type of distance teaching institution delivering the institution. Open universities usually have a network of study centers, and emphasize student-tutor interactions, and flexible pacing. Institutional policies also impact access to media and libraries and can be problematic in mixed mode institutions which may treat distance learners differently from traditional on-campus learners (Gunawardena, 1996, 278).

Before explaining the relationship between learner support and institutional context of Open Education Faculty, we need to introduce this institute from the point of the organization. Because the institutional context, an a large scale, is related to the organization of an institute.

The Open Education Faculty, was established by Anadolu University, during the university reorganizations in 1982. The Open Education Faculty was organized as a faculty body but, it is now Turkey's largest faculty. In this manner, Anadolu University, is now the largest university on earth according to the World Bank. Open Education Faculty, which runs the system on behalf of Anadolu University was independently able to award its own degree, after secondary education graduation. It has administrative head quarters at Eskisehir, north-west part of Turkey, between Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir and Bursa and regional officies and study centers which are giving academic services throughout Turkey. The first Open Education Faculty degree courses began in 1982 December and first graduation ceremony was celebrated in November 1986. Until 1993, the OEF is administered as a separate Faculty within Anadolu University .

There have been numerous research and evaluation studies during the OEF's 15 year history. These studies and various reports have been published primarily in Turkish and some written also in English. Many are Master's and Ph.D thesises in Turkish, and some have been written about the system by foreign researchers and observers who have visited the OEF.

4. Channel in Turkish Distance Education

The chanells are the media and technologies(methods and techniques) carrying the messages which the sender(source) send to its receiver.Learner support related to technology will depend on the type of technologies used in the distance education system. Garrison (1989) describes the development of distance education three generations of technology; the first generation uses primarily correspondence, delivered through the regular mail system. In this system the availability of interaction becomes critical. Thus the provision for interaction between the student and the tutor is important.

The second generation of technologies provide for real time interaction and are exemplified by audio, audiographics and video teleconferencing. Because these systems provide for real time interaction, what is critical is the quality of interaction. The third generation technologies are microprocessor based technologies such as computer conferencing. In these systems the quality of interaction with the group becomes important and support understand the unique strengths and weaknesses of each medium, and how to access information through that medium.

Technologies used to deliver distance education programs in Turkey are typically one-way and she integrates technologies in distance education primarily by combining the one-way technologies of text and television. From the point of view of Garrison (1989) description, Turkey not using primary correspondence delivered through regular mail system still is not even in the first generation. Therefore, the main problem area is more the availability of interaction than the quality of interaction or quality of interaction with the group.

Learner-support related to technology is depend on the type of technologies used in the distance education system OEF. Learner-technology interaction is not part of the formal design of distance education programs of OEF. But in addition to the facilities for live TV broadcasting, research is being conducted at Anadolu University for the utilization of new communication and computer technologies in the distance education activities of Open Education Faculty. A videoconferencing center is established to use this technology for live lecturing and tutoring. Using internet as a medium for course material providing and communicating with students is another goal to increase the quality and the effectiveness of the education. The computer supported teaching is being improved utilizing the capabilities of new multi-media computer technology. Gunawardena (1996) observes that if telecommunication technologies are to be used to move distance learners from their dependency on instructors to take more control of their learning, then, adequate support systems must be provided to support these learners who have been influenced by the patronage system and oral tradition in Turkey.

In 2000-2001 educational year on-line two-year instructional technology certificate program that Anadolu University offered has served lesson materials on the Internet and also another instruction services as books, software, digital video, academic counseling service, exams, student department, support and virtual class break.

The CD-ROM softwares of Genereal Maths and Ataturk Principles and Revolution History lessons have been developed by Department of Computer Assisted Instruction(CAI) of Anadolu University Open Education Faculty.These CD-ROMs have television programs electronic books and also CBI softwares. The students who have internet connection have an opportunity to evaluate themselves by a link to an internet-based self evaluation exam system.

These lessons are developed by different teams in different times, have brought together with television programs and books so they have seen to become instructional sinergy. According to the findings of a research, the students of OEF said that the CD-ROM softwares are more useful and educational than textbooks, television and academic counseling .

5)Feedback in Turkish Distance Education System

Besides having specific,challenging,attainable learning goals and focusing on the task,the first factor that make goal-setting inthe classroom effective is feedback.When feedback tells a student that current efforts have fallen short of the goal,the student can exert more effort or even try another strategy.When feedback tells the students that the goal is reached or exeed,the student should feek satisfied and competent enough perhaps to set a higher goal for the future.There is evidence that feedbackemphasizing progress is the most effective(Woolfolk,1998,380-381).Feedback is a reaction(response)that goes towards sender(source)from the receiver(learner).An effective communication and interaction is directly related to the effectiveness of the feedbacks and the feedback is directly related to the channels(technologies and media)used in distance education processes.

As above mentioned technologies used to deliver distance education programs in Turkey are generally one-way and so the feedbacks are not sufficient and effective.Receiver(learner) sender(instructor and institution)communication and interaction occurs informally when students ask faculty directly about their classes,something particularly possible for students employed at üniversities.OEF' students can also interact with administrators through visits,telephone calls and correspondence.

Turkish culture itself fosters interaction among students of OEF through their work sites in face to face lectures,and in courses that students attend outside of the distance education programs.Learner-learner interaction is not part of the formal design of Turkish distance education programs.So,the feedback come not true between learners.

Conclusion

Communication and interaction is are important parts of all forms of learning. Interaction legitimizes distance education (Patsula, 2002), and Turkish distance education system, Open Education Faculty(OEF) of Anadolu University, already provides for three forms of interaction; learner-content, learner-teacher and learner-learner interaction. But learner-technology instruction already is not part of the formal design of OEF distance education programs.

Learner-technology interaction is not part of the formal design of Turkish distance education (OEF) programs. But, while a well-developed distance education requires an infrastructure of telecommunications and information technology, Open Education Faculty (OEF) of Anadolu University system has a moderate infrastructure and great capacity and a well-developed distance education system. OEF, already, strives to employ some distance education one-way technologies, such as video, computer, Internet, in distance education processes. The major problem area concerned with the learner-technology interaction in OEF is to apply instructional strategies and interactive technologies that are inspired by the Turkish cultural context, practices, beliefs.

Although Turkish distance education system, Open Education Faculty, provides for various forms of learner support such as learner support and learner needs; learner support and content; learner support and institutional context; learner support and technology, there are some important problems concerned in these forms of support.

According to the findings of the literature (Murphy, 1991**a**; Gunawardena, 1996; Demiray, 2002) patronage and oral tradition, which are two important elements of Turkish culture, seem to play a significant role in distance learning even in modern Turkey. The cultural and socio-cultural context of the students in Open Education Faculty affect the four type learner support above mentioned.

Effective learner support services are directly related to the distance communication and interaction processes and the most important elements are the channels and feedbacks in a communication process.In Turkish distance education system(OEF) ,the sender that is
Anadolu University is now the largest üniversity on earth according to the World Bank.The messages(contents) are generally related to the cognitive domain.The compositions of students varies from program to program and two elements of the Turkish culture; patronage and oral tradition seem to play a significant role in distance learning (learner)even in modern Turkey.The channels(technologies) are generally one-way and so the system can not realize the effective learner support services and feedback.

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