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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ABSENTEEISM IN ENGLISH CLASSES

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Abstract. This study deals with absenteeism in classes. Considering that the educational system pays little attention to this negative phenomenon, the existing challenges of absenteeism are more debatable issues than taking real action to eliminate them. This study, conducted among international students, aims to find out factors that affect absenteeism in English classes among public high school students. It further addresses the role of the teachers, the institutions and societies' attitudes towards English and offers practical implications for all stakeholders of the educational system. It serves as a system to guide the institutions, the teachers and the students to overcome this educative obstacle and minimize its negative effect.

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Introduction

Living in the 21st century as an illiterate person, or as a person who does not have enough knowledge to apply his/her social skills is considered as a disadvantage in a normal well-shaped educated society. The role of the educational system in the society formation starts and continues with the production of smart and qualified people. Therefore, the Ministries of Education in each country compel students to attend schools and classes. As said, education has had a considerable impact on society, specifically by critical thinking and building students' confidence within global society. All these 21st century skills such as, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity compel one's capacity to increase the education level which can be achieved through the teaching system that is improved, altered and/or by adding innovative 'extra' skills, suitable for the current society's understanding. When discussing the new teaching system, both current and future teachers and learn rescan play an important role in the modern education system which is crucial for current social maintenance. Following the reports of globalization and with the aim of ensuring collaborative/communicative access to the globalized world, the institutions have extensively encouraged the learning of English as a second or foreign language. However, even then there are reports from different countries such as, the United States, Jordan, Spain, and other countries, that (sometimes) scholars do not attend classes including different reasons.

As educational institutions are empowered to teach, many studies and surveys have been conducted on absenteeism, which has been considered as an obstacle that prevents efficient and effective teaching and learning process all around the world. Nonetheless, it is observed that institutions including those affiliated to the governments fail to take necessary precautions to overcome this socio-cultural problem (Devadoss & Foltz, 1996; Friedman, Rodriguez and McComb, 2001). On the whole, absenteeism is considered as an alarming problem with a very negative effect on our society. It is considered as a problematic phenomenon that constitutes a negative impact on education, and it seems that (currently) there is no firm solution. As it is debated by (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012), Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson and Kirk,(2003), it is "a problem recognized and tackled in most of European countries" (Grewe 2005, p.7) or for example, Jordan in Alayan (2014). However, it is still a concept that is 'superficially' debated. On the other hand, some states in the USA, such as Georgia, Florida, Nebraska, Oregon and Rhode Island, (in Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012), or Spain, Hungary, Portugal, Russia, Finland (Linsen & Grewe, 2005), have only 'officially tried to find out solutions'. So far, as Linsen & Grewe (2005) point out, there is no common European definition of absenteeism. When discussing about 'non attending classes', as Linsen & Grewe (2005, p. 7) point out, "occasional unexcused absence is mostly called "truancy", while permanent unexcused absence "absenteeism". Often both terms are used simultaneously (e.g. in Russia). Spain differs between 'non-significant' and

‘significant absenteeism’, depending on the duration of an absence”. Based on the upper mentioned terms, this study deals with ‘truancy’, and from the point of view of the researcher, it requires both dedication and commitment, and investigation and examination, while from the educative perspective, absenteeism as a step backwards in teaching is a struggle to address teaching/learning challenges related to successful teaching/learning class. It is also confirmed by psychologist Marburger (2001) who points out that those students who miss classes respond incorrectly to the questions relating to material covered that day, which leads to teachers’ tension in class. This tension in class stems from:

- a) the lack of sufficient knowledge due to students’ absences, and
- b) the already mixed-ability classes.

Moreover, these teaching/learning hindrances occur in each society, no matter if institutions, Ministries of Education empower the effort to provide suitable tuition for each level of students, as well as appropriate infrastructure and appropriate English teaching/learning materials to use, (Balfanz &Byrnes, 2012; Malcolm et.al, 2003). Sadly, but true, as Balfanz &Byrnes (2012), Malcolm et.al, (2003) point out, not attending classes in public high schools is a widespread phenomenon and the students skip classes regardless of the course, regardless of the teacher, or quality of the class. However, the study does not consider those inevitable students’ absences, but nowadays it seems that students tend to skip classes without any specific reason. Therefore, the study attempts to examine the rate of students who skip English language classes, i.e. if students who generally skip other subjects tend to skip English classes too, and/or if they skip English classes ONLY.

Echoing the above-mentioned fact, students’ absenteeism/truancy should be seriously considered and challenged. This gave the researcher the idea to conduct a case study and investigate from students studying in different countries, about the reasons for skipping lessons, causes of students’ absenteeism in English language classes in public high schools. The following questions were raised:

1. What are the main factors that contribute to students’ absenteeism/truancy in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) in classes?
2. To what extent do students’ attitudes towards an English speaking society affect absenteeism in the English classes?

It is hoped that this study will be of great help to EFL teachers, students and institutions in their demanding teaching / learning tasks. It is a chance to share and discuss some of the EFL obstacles in order to improve EFL instructional approaches and to better integrate EFL teachers and English language students in a coherent practice of FL education. It includes global aspects of EFL which can be considered in local aspects, i.e. locally appropriately and applicable approaches. It may also help us comprehend reasons of skipping English language classes in high schools, as well as discuss how to overcome those problems whether dealing with teenagers, teachers,

families, institutions, or governments. Since the study deals with the international students i.e. students have to understand or can speak English to a certain extent, the study's findings may be considered useful in identifying global demotivating factors in institutional learning i.e. schools. It is hoped that the study findings will provide:

- a) important facts about high school students' absenteeism in English classes;
- b) ideas on interventions for educational institutions, teachers and parents to enhance English language learning and enhance high school students' retention in high schools; and
- c) provide information and suggestions to those who implement educational policies in order to minimize students' absences.

In addition, this paper will try to give some evidence of this phenomenon by representing international students' opinions and attitudes towards efl including teachers, institutions, students and the society.

Methodology

This study included one hundred and seven Higher Institution (HI) participants from different countries who voluntarily chose to answer the questionnaire. They were all current university students who had finished high school one, two or three years earlier. All students came from different countries where English language was considered as a second language or as a foreign language. The list of students who participated in the questionnaire and their country of origin are as follows:

Table 1: The list of students (participants) and their country

Residence	N	%
Kosova	52	48.6
Albania	7	6.5
Macedonia	7	6.5
Honduras	10	9.3
Belgium	12	11.2
Other	19	17.8

As the list shows, the participants were international students, therefore, the questionnaire was in English. The questionnaire included sixteen positive and/or negative statements. The students had to agree or disagree with the statements. All the data were organized, tabulated, presented, and commented upon.

Results

The statements and the students' responses of the survey are given in Tables 1.1 to Table1.16.

The results show that the participants disagreed of skipping English classes. However, skipping English classes while in high school was slightly evident in each country presented in the paper.

Table 1.1.* I sometimes skipped English language classes. Crosstabulation

Residence	I sometimes skipped English language classes				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	9	14	13	15	1
Albania	2	2	0	3	0
Macedonia	3	2	0	2	0
Honduras	0	3	2	5	0
Belgium	4	2	4	2	0
Other	5	4	3	7	0

As is shown in table 1.2., this item was contrary to the first item.

Table 1.2. * I never skipped English language classes.

Residence	I never skipped English language classes				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	8	15	9	11	9
Albania	1	1	2	1	2
Macedonia	0	1	1	2	3
Honduras	0	6	1	3	0
Belgium	3	0	3	5	1
Other	0	10	3	4	2

Crosstabulation results about skipping English classes because of not liking the teachers' teaching shows that a great number of all the participants disagreed with this item. Starting with Kosovar participants, most of the participants disagreed with this item. Twenty-four strongly disagreed, 16 disagreed, 5 agreed, one strongly agreed, while six Kosovar participants were neutral. Six Albanian participants disagreed (2 strongly disagreed and 4 disagreed), while one agreed that he/she skipped classes because he/she did not like his/her English teacher. One participant from Honduras, one Macedonia, and one from Belgium also reported that that they had skipped classes because they did not like their English teacher. However, six Macedonian participants responded that they disagreed with the item (3 strongly disagreed and three disagreed). Five Hondurans strongly disagreed, one disagreed, but, three were neutral. Followed by four neutral Belgians' responses. Two Belgians strongly disagreed and five disagreed that they skipped classes because they did not like their English teacher' teaching. All in all, the results show that English language teacher's teaching is wanted and liked. Based on the results, skipping classes because of the teacher is not an issue among high schools' students, although there were few dislikes about it.

Table 1.3. I skipped classes because I did not like my English language teacher's teaching

Residence	I skipped classes because I did not like my English language teacher's teaching				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	24	16	6	5	1
Albania	2	4	0	1	0
Macedonia	3	3	0	1	0
Honduras	5	1	3	1	0
Belgium	2	5	4	1	0
Other	8	5	2	4	0

When discussing about the participants' point of views about the teacher being good, most responses were positive, i.e. they did agree that their teacher taught them well. This item shows that high school students in general liked their teachers, i.e. the approaches and methods applied by the teachers were positively acquired.

Table 1.4.* My English teacher was good. She/he tried to teach us well. Crosstabulation

Residence	My English teacher was good. She/he tried to teach us well				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	2	1	10	17	22
Albania	0	0	2	4	1
Macedonia	2	1	1	2	1
Honduras	0	0	1	7	2
Belgium	0	0	3	5	4
Other	1	4	1	7	6

Regarding the book the high school students used, results in this cross tabulation table show that skipping classes was not because of the books. As is shown, the Belgians, Hondurans and Albanians neither strongly agreed, nor agreed that they did not like the books.

Table 1.5.* I skipped English classes because I did not like the book we used. Crosstabulation

Residence	I skipped English classes because I did not like the book we used				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	9	24	8	9	2
Albania	3	3	1	0	0
Macedonia	3	3	1	0	0
Honduras	3	5	2	0	0
Belgium	0	10	1	1	0
Other	5	5	1	7	1

When dealing with the item: "The books were really interesting", the participants' responses were unbiased. Twenty-one Kosovar participants were neutral about this item, but 21 agreed that the books were interesting. Only one Kosovar participant strongly disagreed and 7 disagreed. No Albanian participant nor Honduras one

disagreed with this item. However, there were 3 Albanian responses that showed doubts about the books being interesting. Three were neutral, 3 agreed and one Albanian high school's student strongly agreed. While 4 Hondurans were neutral, and six agreed. One Macedonian participant disagreed that the book was interesting, three were neutral and 3 agreed about the book (3 agreed, one strongly agreed. Seven Belgians reported that the book was interesting (six agreed and one strongly agreed), three were neutral and two Belgians strongly disagreed that the book was interesting.

Table 1.6.* The books were really interesting. Crosstabulation

Residence	The books were really interesting				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	1	7	21	21	2
Albania	0	0	3	3	1
Macedonia	0	1	3	2	1
Honduras	0	0	4	6	0
Belgium	2	0	3	6	1
Other	0	6	6	5	2

Regarding the photocopied books, the results show that 32 Kosovar participants agreed that they had used photocopied books in high schools. There were three Albanian participants who disagreed that they had used photocopied books, however, there were also three participants who agreed using copied books. Five Macedonian participants disagreed but two other Macedonian participants agreed about the usage of the copied books. The situation was the same in Honduras. Belgium was the only country that did not use the copied books, as shown by the crosstabulation. However, there were two neutral responses, but then 10 participants altogether disagreed that they had used copied books.

Table 1.8.* The books were photocopies. Crosstabulation

Residence	The books were photocopies				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	3	7	10	20	12
Albania	2	1	1	3	0
Macedonia	4	1	0	2	0
Honduras	1	1	2	4	2
Belgium	4	6	2	0	0
Other	2	11	4	2	0

Friends' attitude towards study time, i.e. bothering the student while learning, was another item that most of the participants disagreed. Thirty-six Kosovar participants disagreed that their friends bothered them while learning. Albanians' point of view about this item was divided. One Albanian was neutral about this item. Macedonian participants disagreed and three were neutral. Again, the participants from Honduras disagreed (2 strongly disagreed and three disagreed only), two were neutral but two

other participants agreed that their friends bothered them in English classes. Belgians disagreed being bothered while learning; but there were two Belgians who had neutral opinion about this item. As shown, Albanian students were more bothered by their friends while studying; whereas most of other participants' showed that they were not disturbed while learning English.

Table 1.9.* My friends annoyed me when we had English. They did not let me learn. Crosstabulation

Residence	My friends annoyed me when we had English. They did not let me learn				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	17	19	8	7	1
Albania	1	2	1	3	0
Macedonia	2	2	3	0	0
Honduras	2	3	2	2	1
Belgium	5	5	2	0	0
Other	4	9	4	2	0

Crosstabulation table bellow about “being cool”, i.e. have different interests, knowledge in various field, act differently, wear ‘cool clothes’, again as in the previous item, show disagreement. Kosovar, Albanians, Macedonians, and Belgian participants disagree that this social behavior of being cool affects them.

Table 1.10.* I skipped classes because I liked to feel that I am cool. Crosstabulation

Residence	I skipped classes because I liked to feel that I am cool				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	33	16	3	0	0
Albania	5	0	2	0	0
Macedonia	3	2	2	0	0
Honduras	4	2	2	0	2
Belgium	3	8	1	0	0
Other	6	8	3	2	0

Once again, the crosstabulation in Table 1.11 shows that skipping classes was not because of the friends. Particularly Albanian participants, Macedonian ones, and Belgians did disagree that the cause of skipping classes was because of the friends.

Table 1.11. My friends convinced me to skip classes.

Residence	My friends convinced me to skip classes				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	20	16	10	5	1
Albania	3	3	1	0	0
Macedonia	3	2	2	0	0
Honduras	3	3	1	3	0
Belgium	4	5	3	0	0
Other	6	7	3	3	0

Table. 12. My friends could not speak English.

Residence	My friends could not speak English				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	10	20	19	3	0
Albania	1	1	4	1	0
Macedonia	0	3	2	2	0
Honduras	1	6	2	1	0
Belgium	3	3	5	1	0
Other	1	9	4	4	1

The crosstabulation about liking English speaking countries show that the participants had no doubts: they all liked English speaking countries. Out of 52 Kosovars, only one disagreed. Five Kosovar participants were neutral, while 46 agreed: they did like English speaking countries (25 agreed and 21 strongly agreed).

Albanians and Macedonians agreed, as well. Five participants from each country agreed and two strongly agreed. When analyzing Honduras and Belgium, the responses were similarly scattered: when discussing the participants' responses who disagreed, one from each country disagrees, one was neutral. Fours Hondurans agreed and 4 strongly agreed, and in Belgian opinion: five agreed and other five Belgians strongly agreed that they liked English speaking countries. Again, the responses of this item ascertain that the students are keen of English language learning and English speaking countries.

Table 1.13.* I like English speaking countries. Crosstabulation

Residence	I like English speaking countries			
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	1	5	25	21
Albania	0	0	5	2
Macedonia	0	0	5	2
Honduras	1	1	4	4
Belgium	1	1	5	5
Other	0	1	13	5

Based on the crosstabulation results about the item: "I hate English learning", it seems that it opposes the previous item: "I like English speaking countries". Most Kosovar participants (48 participants out of 52) disagreed with the item. One had a neutral opinion, and two Kosovar participants hated English learning. Albanian participants, Macedonians, and Belgian ones showed no hatred in learning English and no doubt about this item. There were no neutral responses amongst these countries. Regarding Honduran participants, they disagreed with the item (eight strongly disagreed and four disagreed); however, there were two neutrals.

Table 1.14.* I hate English learning. Crosstabulation

Residence	I hate English learning				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	34	14	1	2	1
Albania	3	3	1	0	0
Macedonia	5	2	0	0	0
Honduras	5	2	2	1	0
Belgium	8	4	0	0	0
Other	9	7	2	1	0

Regarding the item "English is difficult to learn", the responses show that the participants did not consider English learning difficult. Thirteen Kosovar participants strongly disagreed that English learning was difficult, followed by 26 who disagreed. Although there were 10 Kosovar participants who were neutral and three agreed. Albanians had the similar attitude: two strongly disagreed, four disagreed and one was neutral. The same attitude had Macedonians and Hondurans. Two from each country strongly disagreed, four Macedonian participants and 6 Hondurans disagreed, and one from each country was neutral. Belgian responses were adjacent: two strongly disagreed, five disagreed, three were neutral and two agreed that learning English was difficult.

Table 1.15.* English is difficult to learn. Crosstabulation

Residence	English is difficult to learn				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	13	26	10	3	0
Albania	2	3	0	2	0
Macedonia	2	4	1	0	0
Honduras	2	6	1	0	1
Belgium	2	5	3	2	0
Other	3	8	2	5	1

The responses about learning English easily showed that the participants thought that learning English was easy. Only one Kosovar participant strongly disagreed that English learning was easy, followed by 4 who disagreed. Similar to the previous item 10 Kosovar participants were neutral. However, 37 Kosovar agreed that English learning is easy (26 agreed and 11 strongly agreed). Two Albanians were neutral, one disagreed, and four agreed that English was Easy to learn. Additionally, Macedonians had found English learning easy. None of them disagreed. They all claimed that English learning was easy. Only one Macedonian was neutral about it. The same opinion had Hondurans with 7 participants who agreed, but one strongly disagreed. Regarding Belgian responses, they were somehow equally scattered: 2 disagreed, three were neutral and four Belgians agreed that English learning was easy.

Table 1.16.* English is easy to learn. Crosstabulation

Residence	English is easy to learn				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Kosova	1	4	10	26	11
Albania	0	1	2	3	1
Macedonia	0	0	1	4	2
Honduras	1	0	2	7	0
Belgium	0	2	3	4	3
Other	0	6	3	8	2

There was a strong positive correlation ($r=.32$, $p<.05$) between skipping English language classes and not liking the teaching of the teacher. There was also a strong positive correlation between skipping classes and skipping classes because the student did not like the book ($r=.42$, $p<.05$). This positive correlation was also noticed between book's dislike and teacher's teaching dislike ($r=.48$, $p<.05$).

Table 2.1. Correlation between items.

Item	1	2	3	4	5
1. I sometimes skipped English language classes	-				
2. I never skipped English language classes	-.74**	-			
3. I skipped classes because I did not like my English language teacher's teaching	.32**	-.16	-		
4. My English teacher was good. She/he tried to teach us well	-.17	.09	-.47**	-	
5. I skipped English classes because I did not like the book we used	.42**	-.30**	.48**	-.33**	-

However, there was a strong negative correlation between skipping classes because they did not like the teacher and considering the teacher to be good ($r=-.47$, $p<.05$). This negative correlation was also noticed between never skipping classes and skipping classes because of the book ($r=-.30$, $p<.05$), and skipping classes because of not liking the book and teacher's teaching ($r=-.33$, $p<.05$). Logically, never skipping classes also correlated negatively with sometimes skipping classes ($r=-.74$, $p<.05$).

Table 2.2. Correlation

Item	1	2	3
1. The books were really interesting	-		
2. The books were published in a country where English is spoken as a first language	.37**	-	
3. The books were photocopies	.04	-.10	-

Another strong positive correlation ($r=.37$, $p<.05$) was noticed between the books published in a country where English is spoken as a first language and liking the books because they were interesting.

Table 2.3. Correlation

Item	1	2	3	4
1. My friends annoyed me when we had English. They did not let me learn	-			
2. I skipped classes because I liked to feel that I am cool	.25**	-		
3. My friends convinced me to skip classes	.42**	.49**	-	
4. My friends could not speak English	-.14	.18	.19	-

Likewise, there was a strong positive correlation between skipping classes because of feeling cool and skipping classes because of the students' friends who did not let the students learn ($r=.25$, $p<.05$), as well as between the students' friends who convinced them to skip classes and not letting them to learn ($r=.42$, $p<.05$). The correlation amongst skipping English language classes because of the friends, and liking to be cool, showed to be positive correlation ($r=.49$, $p<.05$).

Table 2.4 Correlation

Item	1	2	3	4
1. I like English speaking countries	-			
2. I hate English learning	-.43**	-		
3. English is difficult to learn	-.18	.32**	-	
4. English is easy to learn	.22*	-.39**	-.72**	-

On the other hand, strong negative correlations were noticed between liking English speaking countries and hating English language learning ($r=-.43$, $p<.05$), English being easy to learn and hating English learning ($r = -.39$, $p<.05$), as well as, English being easy to learn and English being difficult to learn ($r = -.72$, $p<.05$). Whereas there was a strong positive correlation between English is difficult to learn and hating English learning ($r = .32$, $p<.05$) and English is easy to learn and I like English speaking countries ($r=.22$, $p<.05$)

Table 3.1. Differences between counties regarding each item posed.**Results of ANOVA Test.**

			Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
I sometimes skipped English language classes	Between Groups		6.27	5	1.25	.91	.47
	Within Groups		137.93	101	1.36		
I never skipped English language classes	Between Groups		8.75	5	1.75	1.06	.38
	Within Groups		166.15	101	1.64		
I skipped classes because I did not like my English language teacher's teaching	Between Groups		2.16	5	.43	.37	.86

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
	Within Groups	117.83	101	1.16		
My English teacher was good. She/he tried to teach us well	Between Groups	10.91	5	2.18	1.98	.10
	Within Groups	111.32	101	1.10		
I skipped English classes because I did not like the book we used	Between Groups	10.25	5	2.05	1.86	.10
	Within Groups	110.93	101	1.09		
The books were really interesting	Between Groups	2.39	5	.47	.59	.70
	Within Groups	81.81	101	.81		
The books were published in a country where English is spoken as a first language	Between Groups	7.05	5	1.41	1.25	.28
	Within Groups	113.15	101	1.12		
The books were photocopies	Between Groups	53.78	5	10.75	8.75	.00
	Within Groups	124.22	101	1.23		
My friends annoyed me when we had English. They did not let me learn	Between Groups	8.06	5	1.61	1.45	.21
	Within Groups	111.99	101	1.10		
I skipped classes because I liked to feel that I am cool	Between Groups	11.74	5	2.34	3.28	.00
	Within Groups	72.27	101	.71		
My friends convinced me to skip classes	Between Groups	2.70	5	.54	.50	.77
	Within Groups	108.95	101	1.07		
My friends could not speak English	Between Groups	4.94	5	.98	1.19	.31
	Within Groups	83.41	101	.82		
I like English speaking countries	Between Groups	.34	5	.06	.13	.98

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
	Within Groups	52.81	101	.52		
I hate English learning	Between Groups	3.24	5	.64	.92	.47
	Within Groups	71.10	101	.70		
English is difficult to learn	Between Groups	6.00	5	1.20	1.26	.28
	Within Groups	96.05	101	.95		
English is easy to learn	Between Groups	5.27	5	1.05	1.13	.34
	Within Groups	93.92	101	.93		

Bonferroni was used to measure the differences between countries regarding each item posed. The results show no significant difference between countries and the participants' perceptions. There were no significant differences between countries regarding with the perceptions participants held over how easy English was to learn $F(5,101) = 1.13, p > .05$. Or differences between countries regarding the perceptions held about English being difficult to learn $F(5,101) = 1.26, p > .05$, students' friends who could not speak English $F(5,101) = 1.19, p > .05$, or the perceptions that participants had about skipping classes because of the friends who convinced them to skip classes. $F(5,101) = 0.50, p > .05$.

Likewise, there were no significant differences in the causes of absenteeism sourced by the perceptions the participants held over hating to learn English $F(5,101) = .92, p > .05$. Insignificant differences were also shown between countries when dealing with the items: I sometimes skipped English language classes, I never skipped English language classes and I skipped classes because I did not like my English language teacher's teaching", ($F(5,101) = 0.91, p > .05$, $F(5,101) = 1.06, p > .05$ and $F(5,101) = 0.37, p > .05$). The differences about students' perception over English teachers being good at teaching $F(5,101) = 1.98, p > .05$, were insignificant, followed by insignificant differences between countries when skipping English classes because of the books $F(5,101) = 1.86, p > .05$, or when dealing with interesting books used $F(5,101) = .59, p > .05$. In addition, there were no significant differences between countries interpreting the participants' views about the books published in a country where English is spoken as a first language $F(5,101) = 1.8256, p > .05$, and friends' annoyance when having English classes $F(5,101) = 1.45, p > .05$.

However, there were significant differences between countries on the perceptions regarding skipping classes because of attempting to feel cool $F(5,101) = 3.28, p = .00$.

According to the results, Kosovar participants reported that they used photocopies books the most ($M=3.59$, $SD=1.15$) followed by Honduras ($M=3.50$, $SD=1.26$). Of the participants, Belgians reported using photocopied books the least ($M=1.83$, $SD=.71$). There were significant differences between countries on books being photocopies $F(5,101)=8.75$, $p=.00$. A post-hoc test revealed that among participants the ones who skipped classes because they wanted to feel cool were the participants from Honduras ($M=2.40$, $SD=1.57$), while the participants that mostly disagreed with this item were Kosovars ($M=1.42$, $SD=.60$).

Discussion

As seen, the study tried to examine the impact of the educative factors, such as teachers, students' likes, students' attitudes towards the English language, books, and the impact of the society i.e. friends influence on students' absenteeism in high schools not in a single country only, but in international context.

If we look at the first statement "I sometimes skipped English language classes", and consider that the responses are from the students who are supposed to have some kind of English background learning, we might see that despite knowing the fact that students needed to have English language competence, they still managed to skip classes. Similarly, the other statement, "I never skipped English language classes," does not contradict with the previous one. In this statement, most participants had scattered responses by agreeing and disagreeing. This shows that most of high school students who took part in this questionnaire had experienced skipping English classes. For the sake of explanation, the study did not add a statement such as "I always skipped English language classes".

When discussing teenagers and their interest, the study is based on other linguists' points of views (Ellis, 1989; Dorney,1994; Harmer, 2001). Based on them, it suggests that English language and its influence is present at any country in different ways, whether directly or spontaneously in everyday situations: English/American music-which is vastly listened among teenagers, followed by movies, computer games, sport or planning to study abroad. As said by the upper named linguists (Ellis,1989; Dorney,1994; Harmer, 2001), movies, computer games, sport or planning to study abroad are all factors that contribute to English language learning attention. The students' responses about the statement: "My English teacher was good. She/he tried to teach us well", show that their English Language (EL) teachers taught them well. Students agreed that they were satisfied with their teachers' teaching. As these were international responses about teachers' teaching, the study suggests that English teaching is mostly conducted in a pleased learning environment. But the few responses from the next statement "My friends annoyed me when we had English. They did not let me learn", show classroom management problem, which is considered as teachers' responsibility. However, these are international students' responses and the results

would have been different if this problematic issue was concentrated in each country specifically. An alarming issue that teachers need to undertake and improve is the correlation between two items posed: “I skipped classes because I liked to feel that I am cool” and “My friends convinced me to skip classes”. The correlation of these two items shows social behavior, students’ background and should not be seen as teachers’ responsibility only, but as triangular or even four-factors educative issues: the teacher, the student, the parent and the institution. Precisely, Ellis (1994) considers age as a psycholinguistic aspect in EFL, and ‘feeling cool’ as a high school student is a matter of being fashionable, somehow different and attractive. The later statement might weigh more as an issue that links with teachers’ responsibility. Teacher can make the lesson dull or interesting, active or passive, noisy or quiet, wanted or unwanted. Namely, the teachers are responsible to initiate collaboration and can fully involve students to learning. This self-teacher responsibility to create a non-threatening teaching/learning environment encourages students to take risks, as well as challenging themselves to facilitate learning. It is important for teachers to be aware of their teaching abilities, their teaching lacks and seek adequate support if necessary. Coe, Aloisi, Higgins & Major (2014) claim that teachers should understand their students’ ways of thinking about the content and they should be able to evaluate the thinking behind students’ own methods, as well as identify students’ common misconceptions. Based on that, the teachers are responsible for classroom learning environment as they are responsible to “create a classroom that is constantly demanding more, but still recognizing students’ self-worth, and to make efficient use of lesson time, to coordinate classroom resources and space, and to manage students’ behavior with clear rules” as Coe et.al (2014, p.2) claim. Teachers should be experts in order to explore different and appropriate teaching methodologies that work best in class, show teaching professionalism with their clear instructions, and pay attention to students’ needs and students’ wishes. The teachers are considered as classroom facilitators, managers, classroom leaders and responsible people, guides and organizers who are able to create the conditions in which learning can take place; more likely fulfilled by implementing different activities and different sources.

Of course, the teachers and the teaching methods that they apply have a great impact on student learning. For example, the statement which students agreed with “My English teacher was good. She/he tried to teach us well”, is in line with Scrivener (2011) who considers teachers as explainers, involvers and enablers. It is also in line with Richards (2002), who claims that teachers are responsible for developing a teaching approach which allows their teaching autonomy; to be themselves and do what they feel is best. Teachers use different teaching skills which are based on the students’ needs. Teachers define the students’ needs, make a plan/decide how to teach them and start teaching by continuously analyzing the learning situation and the learning circumstances. Based on the students’ responses, the study findings are that teachers

who act as classroom managers and organizers play a crucial part within the educational system. There is a direct connection to the system, to the students and to the parents. That is why teachers should always be 'on standby' position, speak up with the right people and ask for advice and make consultations when needed. Additionally, Harmer (2001, p. 56), adds the metaphor about teachers: "they are actors because they are always on the stage". He also suggests different teachers' roles, such as controllers, organizers, assessors. As mentioned by Harmer (2001), teachers can act as organizers who follow a schema: engage-instruct(demonstrate)-initiate-organize feedback. Based on his suggestions, the study considers teachers' role to be crucial in global classroom (and out of classroom) aspect.

The students' responses show that students like the English people and the English language shown with the correlation of: English is easy to learn, and, I like English speaking countries ($r=.22$, $p<.05$). There is a tendency among these students to believe that the English language and the English speaking society are examples of individual attitudes and behaviors towards globalization. When discussing English speaking countries, students' (international) responses and taking into consideration that English in those countries could be seen as a foreign language or as a second language, the study suggests that students of those certain countries could have different attitudes towards the people who speak English, different attitudes towards the country where English is spoken, or students' personal attitudes towards general learning or personal attitudes towards language learning. In a nutshell, all these might be influenced by their personal, family or society background that might bring to different opinions about English. Harmer (2001, p.4) adds that "many people worry about what English means for cultures it comes into contact with, seeing it as a form of "cultural imperialism".

However, we cannot notice even a slight confusion when it is about loving the English language. The students agreed that they do like English speaking countries. As the upper mentioned named facts are based on the students' diverse countries' background, the study agrees with Ellis (1994, p. 200) who mentions that "learners' attitudes may predispose them to make efforts to learn the L2 or not to do so. In some cases, learners may be subject to conflicting attitudes. On the one hand they wish to learn L2 because it is seen as a way of assimilating into the majority culture, while on the other hand they wish to maintain their L1 as a way of affirming their own identity".

In the statement "I skipped classes because I did not like my English language teacher's teaching", the students disagreed. They did like their English teachers' teaching. However, there were few responses that agreed that they did not like the way the teachers taught. This issue might raise the question of teachers' training proficiency. Although there were only few students who agreed that their English teachers did not teach well, it seems as a threat to EFL teaching and it requires taking immediate steps towards EFL training programs. There are various factors for 'liking' or 'not liking' their teacher's teaching, as mentioned by Ellis (1994), Richards and

Rodgers (1986), Dorney (2004): Teaching skills, such as ability to create an enjoyable or dull learning environment, gestures, sound/voice projected, the balance between Student Talking Time (STT) and Teacher Talking Time (TTT), the knowledge when and how to praise and encourage students, as well as when and how to approach when they do something wrong. These are all factors that may contribute to 'liking' or 'not liking' their teachers' teaching. On the other hand, Dorney (1994) adds teacher's congruence - a factor of great importance while teaching; It includes various components that contribute to successful mission of teaching: the ability to have a unique teaching style, enthusiasm, confidence and positive attitudes towards the topic presented and towards the students. These skills and qualities go along with teacher's communicative competence as well as they will be more developed if fluency and accuracy are taken into consideration.

When discussing about English language coursebooks that these students used to have in high schools, whether English language course books published in their countries (meaning that these kinds of books were adopted based on the country's culture) or books published in a country where English is spoken as a first language, the study has a more general view about this issue: different countries and different grades. i.e. different ages; then it might suggest that the one student might have had different English language teachers in different grades, and those teachers used different teaching materials with different teaching styles.

If we analyze the statement "The books were photocopies", and the number of students who agreed, shows the lack of EFL classes in which innovations and interest lack. It is the 21st century and copied books should not be used in any way. Of course, teaching materials, books and technology are all teaching tools that contribute to effective and efficient English learning. As primary sources in EFL new books, colorful, physically attractive tools which will contribute to intellectually attractive learning activities are considered 'a must' in every class nowadays. Even so, teachers are also responsible to select the teaching material (and other sources) of age-appropriate level dedicated to the young. They should use supplementary materials to suit their students' needs and students' wishes, to be time managers and classroom managers in accordance with the curriculum. Of course, they can be modified and adopted based on students' interest. Richards and Rodgers (1986) point out that; books can sometimes replace the teacher and learning can take place independently. Still, educative materials, specifically books should be important factors in EFL. They offer various interactional patterns and they should be considered either as a major source of input or as a minor component of it. Therefore, the teaching material and books should be carefully selected for the purpose of applying locally appropriate teaching/learning approaches that would fit to globally appropriately-applicable learning. In addition, the results reveal the students' positive attitudes towards the books, as well as the strong positive correlation ($r=.37$, $p<.05$) between the books published in a country where

English is spoken as a first language and liking the books because they were interesting. As such, the issue about the learning materials is best described and justified by Richards and Rodgers (1986, p.25), who point out that “teaching materials have a deep impact in students learning. They must be carefully selected and introduced to the students”. Based on Richards and Rodgers (1986), books should aim to focus on interpretation, negotiation of meaning, and understanding, i.e. learning through books should include task and activities for communication purposes mainly.

They, Richards and Rodgers (1986), further continue their discussion about the correlation between self-students and the learning material, adding that learning materials are also a powerful learning tool for developing student’s individuality, i.e. self-confidence, student autonomy, discovery of his/her (student’s) learning style. The learning materials also provide opportunities for students to become aware of their own success, be able to rank their progress, and evaluate, i.e. self-evaluate their learning. Additionally, when discussing the teaching material, Harmer (2001, p.301) points out that “the ‘assessment’ of a coursebook is an out-of-class judgment as to how well a new book will perform in class. Coursebook evaluation, on the other hand, is a judgment on how well a book has performed in fact”. As this study discusses students’ opinions from different nationalities, it is obvious that different features about teaching/learning materials might have different impact on each student. Harmer (2001) considers price, availability, layout and design, instructions, methodology, syllabus type, activities, topics, cultural acceptability, usability and teachers’ guide as factors that might affect students’ motivation. As a result, students’ motivation would definitely contribute to use the teaching/learning material to learn the English language. Fortunately, the students’ responses show that the books’ dislike is not their major problem concerning absenteeism in English classes. Seventeen out of 107 participants disagreed that the books were interesting. This dislike should not be considered as not problematic and not a dangerous factor towards English learning. Why not try and reduce this negative attitude towards the book?

If we look at the first study questions about the main factors that contribute to students’ absenteeism in EFL, the students’ results show scattered responses. However, the issue about the teaching material, i.e. the photocopied books used is found to be one of the main causes of skipping classes, followed by students’ attitudes towards learning the English language, i.e. difficulties to learn it.

The teacher’s lack of English language teaching practice, classroom management, and students’ ‘buddies’ are not found to be the main problems and the causes of EFL absenteeism and its increase among public high schools all around the world.

When discussing classroom management and the teacher’s role in class, Harmer (2001) points out that teachers should act as controllers, organizers, assessors, prompters, participants, resource, tutors, and observers. Additionally, Dorney (1994) mentions three roles of the teacher that enhance learning: empathy, congruence, and

acceptance. Based on these facts, the study considers that these teaching/learning factors are all interrelated: the sense of collaboration between the teacher and the students and the sense of collaboration between students themselves. Of course, the sense of inclusion, the sense of uniqueness while teaching and learning, a respect for students (and teachers), students' way of learning, the awareness of rules of teaching/learning and respect for teaching and learning are elements that should maintain thorough the teaching and learning progress. Only then there is a chance for successful teaching and learning, and only then there is a chance for real learning to begin and spread. Richards and Rodgers (1986) see the teacher's role as catalyst, guide, model for learning, or consultant, which fully encompasses classroom management and the teacher's role. When discussing about friends' behavior, 'buddies' ignorance and learning difficulties as factors that contribute to skipping the English classes, this last reason: learning difficulties, need special attention indicating that students' critical thinking skills need to be trained.

However, the study can convey precise response when dealing with the second question about students' attitudes towards English speaking society and its effect on absenteeism in English classes: the students **do** like English speaking society. Most of the students responded that they do like English, despite the responses for skipping English classes. Ellis (1994) mentions that positive attitudes towards Second Language (L2) can help learning while negative attitudes can help to impede learning, but the fact of skipping English classes is clear in this study with clear statements about liking or not liking English course books, English language teachers, or English speaking countries. Absenteeism in English language classes has shown that it has nothing to do with students' attitudes towards English speaking society. They love English and they like their teachers.

Dealing with students' behavior and their own opinion about being different, feeling more fashionable and more different, seem to lean on aspects of psycholinguistics which were mentioned earlier in this study. The low percentage of responses for this statement, inform that students do not skip English classes for the sake of being 'cool'. Students' behavior of trying to look differently, trying to look more 'modern and cool', showing disrespect towards the English learning or even disrespect towards English language teachers are NOT issues that need to be addressed by this study. Of course, there are issues that need special attention in global context. The students' responses show some key issues, conflicts, barriers, students' interests in EFL and for that reason the study considers that this category of students challenges institutions and teachers to step up from the 'conventional teaching system' towards some conceptions of 'ideal EFL plan to change' and 'ideal EFL plan to do' in terms of globalization of the English teaching and learning.

Concerning the variety of the responses deriving from various countries, they can be subsumed in different categories: institutions' responsibility, teachers' responsibility,

books, students' attitude towards language learning, and students' attitude towards their friends. The first three categories should be clearly within the competence of the organization/institution as an umbrella term for each country. Top down approach in each country is a must; nevertheless, it should start with the control of the educational system, the enhancement and the review of the English learning in each country. Teachers' training programs, EL book reviews, classroom observation are all roles to be considered, and assistance from highly experienced teachers should be requested. The study considers that the choice of the proper teaching material can be under the teachers' responsibility. Since teachers' empathy is an important factor in teaching, teachers should know students' needs and what the students lack (which are different in different localities). The teachers are supposed to find the best teaching/learning material that fits their students' learning, based on the students' age, locality, attitudes, students' wishes and their needs. However, even then these teaching materials should be reviewed and discussed by experienced teachers. All in all, it is important to notice that institutions, teachers and students are part of this 'ideal, positive teaching system', but the implicit reference of the teacher is strongly driven. Teachers are considered as in-between of the EFL system and they are subjected to EFL and English Language Learning (ELL) changes in the future, precisely they are subjected to the 21st century's society and its 'globalization'.

Conclusion and recommendations

As known, teaching and learning of English differs according to each student which suggests that EFL also differs according to each country. Different teaching and learning methods are emphasized (and required) in different countries. The study does not want to decrease or increase the impact of one factor that contributes to absenteeism, but it recommends what to change and how to make those changes for more palatable English Language Teaching (ELT). It is noticeable that more absorbing, more challenging and more interesting teaching/learning materials, more enjoyable learning environment and enthusiastic teachers will certainly contribute to the effectiveness of the English learning.

As the findings of this study apply to only a limited number of ex-high school students, the results cannot be generalized to all world high schools. We should consider that the study was conducted with random HI students from random countries who agreed to take part in the questionnaire prepared in English language, i.e. HI students had 'some kind' of knowledge of English. In addition, each country has different educational policies and each country gives different priority to the English language learning. However, the findings may be considered appropriate to every country and every educational system, as it directly and/or indirectly reviews some of the main issues that deal with absenteeism as a phenomenon which may from time to time occur in every school and in every country.

In a nutshell, the teacher's role is considered to be the most important factor for students' absenteeism. As seen from the data analysis, students have responded and have shown some of the reasons of skipping English classes in high schools. Nevertheless, as the study was conducted with international students and the responses were scattered, we cannot firmly conclude which factor is the leading culprit of the phenomenon of absenteeism in high schools. Based on the students' responses, it can be concluded that the English language is generally a 'wanted' subject and students do not often skip this subject. Despite the fact that experienced FL teachers know how to be aware of their teaching and students' learning, they know how to be patient with the students, satisfied and to have continuous contact with learning, the study concludes that EFL and EL 'sharing' is trivial: Even highly experienced teachers need to share EFL difficulties and broad-mindedness in classes. EFL can be improved only by teaching and discussing EL issues. There is always room for improvement. Poor teaching is a result of inadequate teaching methods used in class, lack of motivation, lack of teacher's enthusiasm, lack of proper and authentic materials, negative attitudes towards learning or negative attitudes towards English speaking society (the latter one did not come into view in our study). However, the study supports the idea that if there are ruining teaching/learning factors, they need to be inevitably changed. Standard EFL aspects should be applied, seemingly those aspects that give greater student acceptance and credibility to foreign/English language learning.

The study recommends that the Ministries of Education in every country, the schools, and teachers need to create a non-threatening atmosphere in schools. It is their responsibility to deal with students' problems openly and to organize mandatory parent-student-teacher meetings. In this way they will be able to discuss together and try to find out the solution to the problem of absenteeism. Since high school students are still at a minor age, parents need to and MUST be fully engaged in the process of their child's academic development. The study recommends that schools should keep exclusive records on each absent student i.e. notice the reasons for not attending the classes and discuss with the specialists/psychologists and family members to overcome this obstacle. The students must have opportunities to express themselves in terms of positive life choices (including books) which could be conducted by non-protocol meetings between the students, school psychologists, teachers, and parents. This might be of a great help to overcome this barrier, which is also in line with Harmer (2001, p.127) about creating a code of conduct, who points out that "an important part of effective classroom management is for the students to 'know where they stand'. ...an effective way of establishing a code of conduct is to include the students' own opinion as in the code; these will be as responsible as anything a teacher might come up with".

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АБСЕНТЕЇЗМ СЕРЕД СТУДЕНТІВ ЗАКЛАДІВ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ НА ЗАНЯТТЯХ З АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

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Анотація. Це дослідження стосується прогулів на заняттях з англійської мови серед студентів вищої школи. Зважаючи на те, що освітня система приділяє цьому негативному явищу мало уваги, існуючі проблеми прогулів є більш дискусійними питаннями, ніж реальні дії щодо їх усунення. Це дослідження, проведене серед іноземних студентів закладів вищої освіти, має на меті з'ясувати фактори, які впливають на прогули серед них на уроках англійської мови; виявити ідеї щодо втручання вищими навчальними закладами, викладачами та батьками з метою покращення вивчення англійської мови та підвищення рівня відвідування занять з англійської мови студентами вищої школи; надати інформацію та пропозиції тим, хто здійснює освітню політику, щоб мінімізувати відсутність студентів на заняттях з англійської мови.

У цьому дослідженні було включено сто сім учасників закладів вищої освіти (ЗВО) з різних країн, які добровільно вирішили відповісти на анкету. Всі вони були нинішніми студентами університету, які закінчили середню школу на один, два-три роки раніше. Усі студенти приїхали з різних країн, де англійська мова розглядалася як друга мова або як іноземна. Оскільки, учасниками були міжнародні студенти, тому анкета опитувальника була англійською мовою і включала шістнадцять позитивних та / або негативних тверджень. Студенти повинні були погодитися або не погодитися з цими твердженнями. Усі дані були впорядковані, складені у таблиці, представлені та прокоментовані.

У результаті анкетування виявлено рівень впливу освітніх факторів, таких як викладачі, лайки студентів, ставлення студентів до англійської мови, книг та суспільства, друзів на прогули студентів у вищих школах. У дослідженні зазначено також роль ставлення вчителів, установ та товариств до англійської мови. Автор пропонує практичні наслідки для всіх зацікавлених сторін освітньої системи. Результати дослідження слугують системою для керівництва навчальними закладами, викладачами та учнями для подолання цієї навчальної перешкоди та мінімізації її негативного впливу.

Ключові слова: прогули; старша школа; вчителі; поведінка.