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THE IMPACT OF CREATIVE WRITING ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE (ENGLISH) PROFICIENCY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Writing in English as a foreign language is a skill which needs to be developed for full proficiency. In writing classes however, students feel anxious and show a negative attitute towards writing. Creative writing activities in foreign language classes might bring some solutions both to writing teachers' difficulties and to students who look down upon writing as a class activity. Creative writing does not require a model to dublicate the prescribed patterns. Creative writing helps students to involve personally and enjoy the writing process. While writing, students are not aware of the progress they make for full proficiency. The education system in Turkey requires the curriculum to be covered; learning is dictated and personal freedom is ignored. However, university level students need to build the capacity to comment on any kind of topic that they may come across during their lifetime. A system which encourages the students to do creative writing both in L1 and in L2 would allow them to realize their own linguistic skills. There is always a need for creative people who can improve themselves and make contributions to their environment. This paper aims to show whether creative writing based EFL classes at tertiary level would be effective in the improvement of writing skills of the students.

Keywords: EFL, ELT, L1, L2, FL, writing, creativity, creative writing

In every field, nowadays, there is a need for creative people who can improve themselves and make contributions to their environment (Cengizhan, 1997). However, in ESL/EFL writing, the creative aspect which contributes to the quality of writing and success are less focused (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008). In Turkish EFL teaching contexts, accuracy is emphasized more than fluency despite the suggested and pushed "communicative approach". Oral or written communication enables people to express their ideas and feelings. That is why all the language proficiency tests have oral and written expression sections. Developing written proficiency skills is not easy in EFL classes because of the traditional writing conventions to be covered in writing classes. Students easily develop negative attitudes towards writing in English. Creative writing could be a remedy.

Creative writing was an educational reform between 1880 and 1940 (Myers, 1993). Since schools fail to promote communication in the areas of oral and written expression, new responsibilities are felt and the educative value and hygienic worth of creative writing is discovered again (Witty, 1940). Creative writing was an attack on the formalism of current English studies and a desire to show the academic forms of English study in human experience (Mearns, 1923). The general idea of creative writing is producing narratives, stories, plays or poems, but how efficient it is if used in ELT classrooms is still under discussion.

Creative writing is a chance to free your imagination in which people get satisfaction. Through creative writing, students can use their linguistic capabilities and go deeper and further that they cannot do in oral expression. They express more personal thoughts and

mental images. Therefore, creative writing tasks are motivating both for L1 and L2 students (Harmer, 2004).

Descriptions of objects, smell or a sound, novels, stories, poems, plays, imaginative diaries, letters, dialogues, free writing from photographs, writing of pastiche, reviews of books, films, current events, controversial issues, writing scripts for stage or radio drama are the studies that can be used for creative writing (Durham, 1970). Creative activities with appropriate level and enough linguistic knowledge are useful to motivate L2 learners and to promote participation since the process approach is favoured.

In the mid 1980s, the process approach was put forward as a reaction to the product approach. This type of writing can be more effective for some learners, but it is not appropriate for examinations. In the tests, students write about the topic which teachers select. Also, there is a time limitation but under some conditions, human beings may or may not perform well. With the well designed tasks, drafting, feedback and informed choices, process writing supports students in their linguistic improvement (Jordan, 1997). Students can make their own decisions without a model text. However, this approach fails to confront the demands of the real academic world.

There are many writing forms, some are creative, some are not. However, *all writing is creative writing* because writing uses the materials of language, experiences, knowledge, textual sources, personal ideas and imaginings of the writer, bringing out something that did not exist before. All of the writings of students are important and any kind of writing is a creative act (McVey, 2008).

A small scale classroom research was conducted at the English Preparatory School of Maritime University with the students who study one year English programme. The aim was to find an answer to the question 'Can we improve our students' writing skills in English if we apply creative writing techniques as a classroom process?' 35 students in two classes were chosen as the subjects. 19 students were in the experimental group and 16 students were in the control group. They were aged between 18-21. The two groups were treated differently in their writing classes. For example, the control group was studying actual writing scheme while the experimental group was supposed to study both the regular curriculum and creative writing. Students had four fifty minutes writing lessons per week.

First, a criterion for creative writing was developed:

Table 1. *Creative Writing Criteria*

Introduction:	Effective introduction sentence
Content:	New and different (Meyer et al, 2006) Use of imagination
Words:	Adjectives/five sense words (Soytekin, 1998)

Then, a creative writing syllabus to be used with the regular writing syllabus was prepared.

Table 2. *Experimental Group - Creative Writing Studies*

TOPIC (BOOK) The Writing Syllabus:	**CREATIVE, CULTURAL and GLOBAL ISSUES**	**EXTRA TOPIC**	**ASSIGNMENTS**
Describing Appereances	Art / Painting	'The Portrait of Mona Lisa'	Famous Actor / Actress
Describing Places	Art / Painting	Van Gogh's Room	Pink Saloon in Dolmabahçe Palace
Describing Objects	History / Tradition	Turkish Fez	Free Writing
Organizing Information by Order of Importance	Global Issues Social Issues	Natural Resources (Article from reading course)	Important Things in Marriages
Expressing an Opinion	Art / History Social Issues	Renaissance Period	Friendship Websites
Comparing	Fiction / Poetry	Writing a Poem	Similarities of Poetry & Prose
Contrasting	Social / Global Issues Literature	Women in East / Women in West	Graded Readers (Plays, Fiction, Short Story)
Writing Summaries	Literature (Short Story)	Captain Murderer by Charles Dickens	Graded Readers
Cause	Social Issues	Poverty	Free Writing
Effect	Social / Global Issues	Earthquake	Divorce

At the beginning of the term, due to students' limited knowledge, a simple questionnaire was given to the students to understand their attitudes towards the writing course.

The control group studied the skill-based course book and was supposed to study 10 paragraph types in a term. Experimental group studied the course book with the same paragraph types and also wrote extra 10 paragraphs according to the creative writing syllabus and the feedback was given according to the criteria set before the study started. The procedure was as follows:

*Power Point Presentations***:** Periodically, three types of power point presentations were prepared, one projecting the good paragraphs and sentences of the students, the other, projecting the common errors of the papers and lastly, new structures were reflected on the screen to be shared and discussed as a whole class.

*Feedback on Paper***:** The correct parts of the students' papers were highlighted which was beneficial for them to see their abilities more than their failures.

*Peer feedback***:** Students commented on each other's work.

Students rewrote the second drafts according to the feedback, they put the final copies of the paragraphs into their portfolio. The teacher and the students decided on the papers that would be in the classbook. The purpose was to keep the records of a collection of the outstanding works of students in an organized way.

At the end of the term, an improved questionnaire was given to the experimental group of students to see if there is any change in their attitudes towards the writing course.

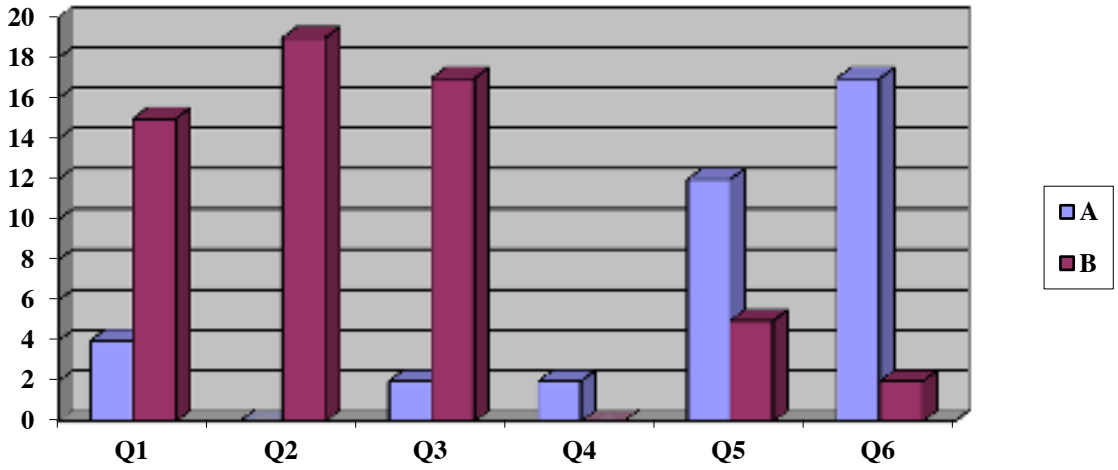
In a term, students were required to take two midterm exams. Students were asked to write a paragraph about the given topic in the exams. The papers were marked by two instructors according to the rubric set at the beginning of the year.

To gain a better understanding of the developmental creative writing techniques, three types of datas were analysed. The first one was the questionnaire to compare the pre and post perspective of students. The second element was the collecting of the exam results to see the success and the third one was the students' portfolios.

1. Attitude Questionnaire Analysis (pre)

The questionnaire had 6 questions and each question had two choices. The results were analyzed question by question.

Table 3. *Attitude Questionnaire Results*

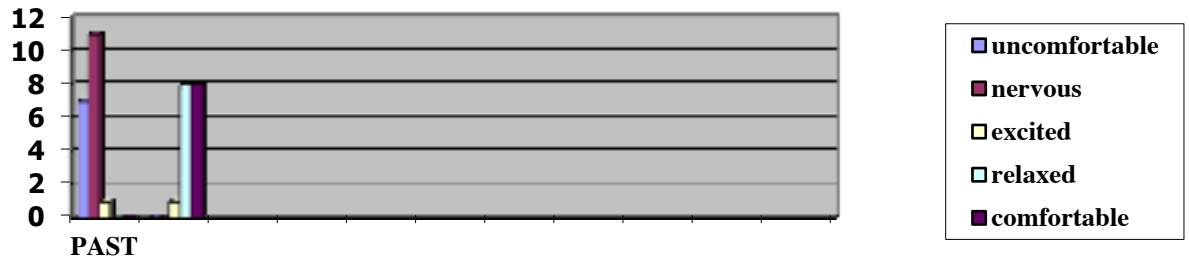


The answers of the questionnaire indicated that students' common attitudes were negative towards writing. As the first three questions prove, their writing experiences were limited. In the first question, 15 students out of 19 marked the same choice as b which shows their disinterest. The second question also revealed that all of the students do not write even as a hobby. 17 students out of 19, which was a considerable number, do not like writing. Only 2 of them are interested in writing as it was shown in question three. Apart from the previous questions, the third question had diversed answers which were numbered as question 4 and question 5. The students, who had positive response, were required to answer question 4. The rest of the students with negative approach, were required to answer question 5. According to their answers, out of 19 students, 2 students answered question 4 and 17 students answered question 5. For the last question, it is obvious that experimental group do not often write by themselves unless it was necessary.

At the end of the term, an improved questionnaire with 10 questions was given to students after the creative writing studies. The questions were designed to reveal students' opinions regarding their recent attitudes towards writing. The results were analyzed question by question. All the questions had categorical responses with 5 different degrees. Each question

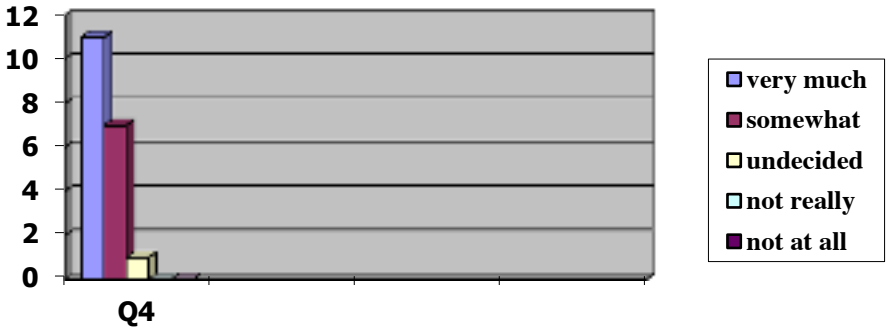
had different values. The given values for the question 1 were, uncomfortable (5), nervous (4), excited (3), relaxed (2), and comfortable (1). The tables given below show the analysis of each question:

Table 4. *The Analysis of the First Two Questions*



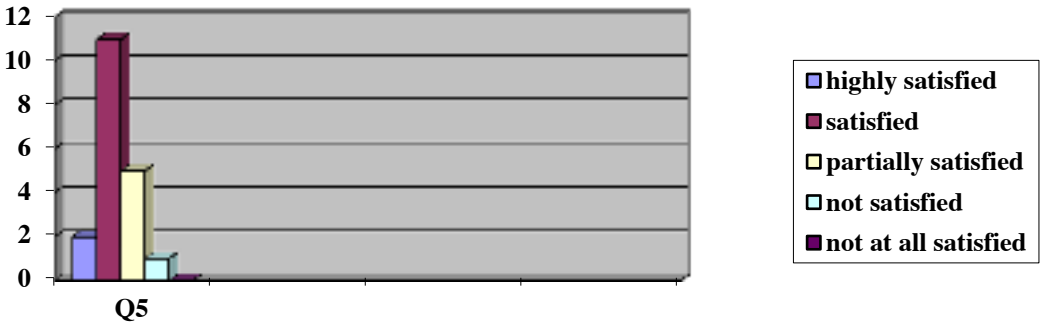
As it can be inferred from the chart, for the first question, which was about students' past writing attitudes, the most preferred answers were uncomfortable, nervous, and excited. The answers of students for the second question, which was about students's recent writing attitudes, the most preferred answers were comfortable, relaxed, and excited. When these two questions were compared, students' past and recent feelings were significantly different.

Table 5. *The Analysis of Question 4*



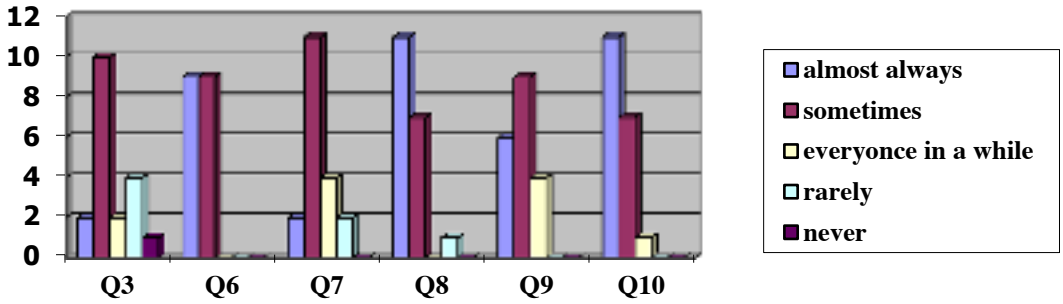
Question 4 indicates the satisfaction of the most students in terms of their language production.

Table 6. *The Analysis of Question 5*



Question 5 shows that students satisfied with the writing studies. For some of the students writing still is not their favourite subject. However, when we compare this result with the attitude of students at the beginning, it is not worse. Infact, it was realistic.

Table 7. *The Analysis of Questions 3-6-7-8-9-10*

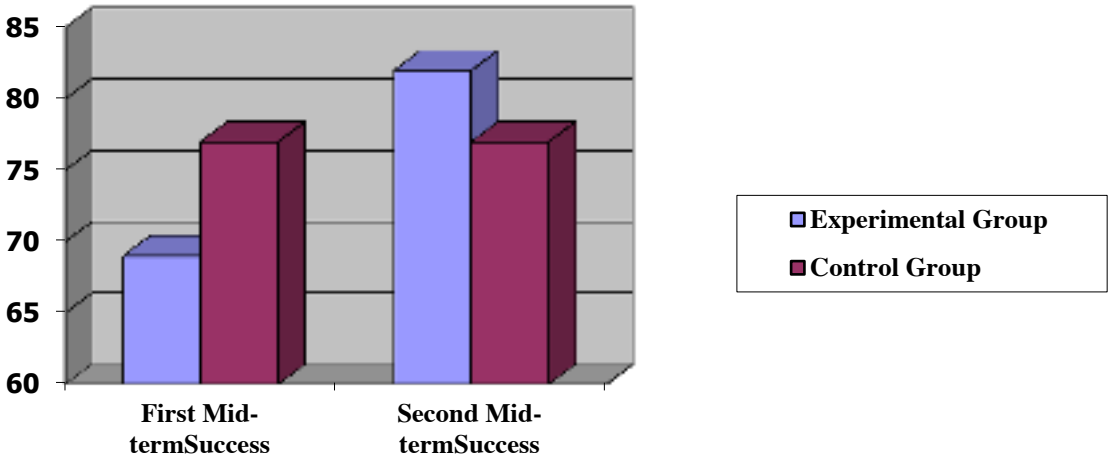


Third question, clarifies that students were not fond of the standard writing activities of the book. Questions number 6 and 10 reflected students' self awareness. They showed that students can organize and express their ideas. Regarding questions 7/8/9, creative writing affected speaking as well as grammar and reading. The avarages were close to 'almost always' which had 5 as the highest value.

2. Exam Results

The analysis was done by comparing the exam results of the Experimental and the Control groups. The findings are noteworthy from the table below. Although the Control group was better in the first exam, there was no change in the second exam. The results of both exams of the Control group were satisfactory but no development was observed. On the contrary, Experimental group was worse than the Control group in the first exam results. However, there was an important development in their second scores after creative writing studies. It was higher than the scores of the Control group. The exam results indicated a significant difference between the two groups in terms of writing skills and language development.

Table 8. *Overview of the Exams in terms of Percentages*



The total scores are out of 100.

A Paired sample t-test was used to calculate the growth of both the Experimental and the Control group and to compare each of the groups. The observation was done relatively. Experimental and the Control groups' exam scores were tested individually. The value that is significant for us is the difference between the scores of the Mid-term 1 and Mid-term 2. in this paired t-test with null hypothesis mean = 0, and alternative hypothesis mean < 0. Means

of Experimental and Control groups on different parts of the test are demonstrated in the tables below:

Table 9. *The Results of the Mid-term 1 and Midterm 2*

	Mean	**N**	**Std. Deviation**
The Experimental Group*	- 1,25789	19	12,59328
The Control Group**	- 75000	16	6,11555

*Experimental Group Midterm 1-2

** Control Group Midterm 1-2

T-test results indicate that experimental group (*M*= -1.25, *SD*= 12.59) got significantly higher scores in the second exam than the control group (*M*= -0.75, *SD*= 6.1). The avarages of both groups are different. To analyse whether it was a random or a real fact, see the following table.

Table 10. *Exam Avarages of Both Groups*

	T	**Sig.(2- tailed)**
The Experimental Group	– 4,354	000
The Control Group	– 491	613

The total marks of the experimental group (*M*=-1.25, *SD*=12.59) were significantly higher than the control group (*M*=-0.75, *SD*=6.1), *t*= – 4,354, *p*=.000.

According to the results, as hypothesized, the creative writing training had a positive effect on students' writing skills. There is a significant difference between the Experimental and the Control groups. The results reveal that the Experimental group benefited highly from the study.

In conclusion, the question 'Can we improve our students' writing skills in English if we apply creative writing techniques as a classroom process?' was answered positively. Further research is needed to prove the effectiveness of creative writing in EFL classes.

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THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH ON LEARNERS FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY LEVELS BY USING THE NEEDS ANALYSIS IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES CLASSES

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the Effects of Communicative Approach on learners foreign language proficiency levels by using the needs analysis in English for Specific Purposes in faculty first year classes. The population of the present study includes 160 students who study in the first year faculty English program of English Preparatory School of European University of Lefke. Subjects of the study were selected randomly. Demographic characteristics of the subjects are the students' field of study, age, gender, students' native language, foreign language level of the students, the frequency of students' use of English for work or studies and their knowledge about the field. Three different data collection method was used in this study. As a way of data collection that can be used in the study of needs analysis, questionnaires and interviews were used. For students questionnaire and for teachers interviews were used. For the second step of the study, Cambridge proficiency test which was developed by Cambridge University Press in accordance with the Council of Europe was applied as a pretest and posttest. The research data were analyzed by using the SPSS statistical package program. At the end of the study, the students reported a positive opinion on all aspects of the ESP program which was re-designed and applied differently. Students' proficiency level improved based on the approach and teaching program.

1. Introduction

In the age of knowledge, the importance of communication is increasing day by day in such a world which has become like a small village. It can be said that because communication gains so much attention, teaching techniques and objectives change accordingly. This change made educators do lessons based on communication. As a result, schools which adapt and renew themselves to this process can produce the appropriate outputs. The most learned and taught language in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is English as a foreign language. It is a foreign language in Turkey as well. Since students do not use this language in their daily lives, the purpose of language teaching can be "specific" not "general". In other words, it can be said that students learn the language for a particular purpose based on their needs. In Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus students study at least a foreign language from primary school level to higher education. However, it is observed that there is a lack of using the language for communicative purposes. In our country, it is believed that in foreign language teaching grammar based lessons are taught widespread and there is no emphasis on communication. Therefore, because foreign language is not taught as a language of science in higher education institutions, the biggest obstacle that the students face is the type of foreign language that they are trying to learn. Another remarkable point is about the definitions of the levels in foreign language education. Each level is defined clearly in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In addition to the levels,

language competence is also broken down into separate components. Since this study was on the basis of the criteria mentioned in the table below, it must be examined in the study carefully.

Table 1. *Language Levels in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001)*

A Basic User		**B Independent User**		**C Proficient User**	
A1 Beginner	A1 Beginner	B1 Threshold level	B2 Intermediate	C1 Effective Operant Proficiency	C2 Competent

Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is defined in different ways by different authors. For example, Demircan (1990, p.216) defines ESP as a specific verbal expression which depends on science, technology, profession, etc. of lexical, structural, and functional language of communication. English for Specific Purposes is a teaching program which is designed by taking into account the special needs of a particular group of students while designing the course content and the objectives (Richards & Schmidth, 2010, p.198). English for Specific Purposes is characterized by the general contents of the students' field of specialization. In ESP the contents of the activities adapt to the needs of the student. In the course design, teaching-learning activity focuses on the students mainly. In other words, ESP is applied through a student-centered approach. In this approach, students' needs - why they would like to learn English and what kind of English they will use are determined. This information is used as a guide while preparing a course content which is appropriate to the special interests and needs of the students.

Teachers or institutions can design the course materials based on the learners' aims of learning English. It is clear that ESP is an approach in English language teaching which is a way of learning specifically. Although the differences between general and special-purpose language lessons begin to develop and gain a new meaning, the special-purpose language teaching is not a new phenomenon emerged in recent years. Even in ancient times, people who worked especially in trade, used to have a little foreign language to use during the buying and selling of goods. Even today we come across with speaking guides written for this purpose. For example, the Daily Phrases Dictionary (2005) published by Alpha Publishing House serves this purpose. Teaching English for Specific Purposes take part in literature as a separate concept coincides with the years of the Second World War. American and British soldiers' necessity of learning a Far East language in the Second World War in the Pacific required for a specific area of language learning. These soldiers urgently needed Japanese for "listening" skills (Strevens, 1977). This led to lay the foundations of a special-purpose language teaching.

Students begin an ESP course with three expectations;

1. Cultural / Educational
2. Personal / Individual
3. Academic / Professional (Gatehouse, 2004).

With the first two, there is a close relationship with students' background knowledge, how he sees himself as a student, expectancy about what he will learn in an ESP course, and his hopefulness and pessimism about the ESP course. The last expectancy is related to the type of ESP. These series of expectations (either academic or professional) can be reported prior if a needs analysis is done. English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) that develop depending on students' motivation, position, and status which

cause them to learn English are kinds of English for Specific Purposes. Kennedy and Bolitho (1984) suggest more types of ESP according to the needs of scientists and technology experts. This type is known as English for Science and Technology. These are as follows:

1.1 English for Occupational Purposes-EOP

Professional English is for students who would like to learn English as part of their business or profession (Kennedy & Bolitho, 1984, p.4). Depending on the courses which are taught before, after, or during the training period, the content will be changed. The content of an English program which is designed for people who have both practical skills, theoretical knowledge, and secretarial information is different from the content of the program which is for secretaries who need to use English in his/her career.

1.2 English for Academic Purposes

Academic English is usually taught to the students who need English for their occupation in their own educational institutions. Language is taught in the period when the student specializes in a particular area (during training) or would like to specialize (training ahead) in the specific disciplines, depending on the level of further education. In an English course not only the language but also the learning skills such as listening lessons, note-taking, report writing, or reading textbooks will be the content of an English course.

In such a case, mostly the aims and methods of English language teaching do not match the requirements of the science and technology departments. While the department of English language teaching focuses on the spoken English and the structure of the language, English for science and technology require fast and efficient reading skills. However, in such cases, in terms of the provision of access to information in textbooks, periodicals and journals, reports, and abstracts, it is better to understand what the role of English is in its simplest form (Mackay & Mountford, 1978, p.7).

ESP that was defined as a special approach of English language teaching has its own unique characteristics. These features are related to the course design, implementation of ESP and the role of the teacher in ESP classes.

The main problems in the design of the ESP course are on the relationship between the activities and the language itself. Munby (1978) states that if the student learns the language to use effectively in real situations, sub skills are supposed to improve. Course designers need to have more information about how these skills are acquired. If a course designer prefers to ignore them, s/he will face with some serious consequences.

Mackay and Mountford (1978) proposed that there are four different effective factors in the course design: (1) sociological, (2) linguistic, (3) psychological, and (4) pedagogical.

1. Sociological factors

The sociological factors that are related to the student's character and the language learning needs of him/her are important information for both the ESP teacher and the course designer. In this regard, specific information about age, previous experience about the target language and the student's area of expertise, and his/her success in this field can be obtained by standard sampling techniques and a questionnaire which was designed carefully. Similarly, information about the needs of the students and the areas of language use should be obtained (Mackay & Mountford, 1978, pp.7-8).

2. *Linguistic factors*

This factor is related to the type of the descriptive characteristics which are relevant to the language that the people from different fields use it. The identification of the content of the

language which will be used for a special purpose depends on the definition of the characteristics of the language that should be used by the students. Such definitions cannot be done by bringing the selected reading passages together. However, these definitions can be used to focus on the materials' characteristic features such as identification, description, classfication, inference, and syntax of the communicative structures.

3. *Psychological factors*

According to the opinion of the students, in language learning communicative approach should be used. This approach highlights the importance of students' contribution to the organization and interpretation of the discourse along with problem solving. The teacher helps students to understand how scientific communication (and professional) handles the tasks with the use of what they already know about the organization of scientific discourse and how scientific processing occurs.

4. *Pedagogic factors*

We can design the educational process by getting clear information on which language skills need to be developed. Traditionally language skills are taught separately. However, this is not enough to identify the students' needs. Specific tasks which need specific skills should be listed. For example, make a summary of technical papers, listen to the radio broadcasts, take an active role in oral seminars, write a report based on the experimental procedures, to read instructional material in order to support the information learned in the language and so on. Having information about the needs of the students in their area of expertise and knowledge, enables the course designer to limit the use of language structures in the area of communicative language with its linguistic elements and restricts oral or written mode. Course materials which will be arranged according to the specific requirements will shape the teaching materials as educational.

While preparing course materials for ESP there are three factors that should be considered:

1- The content of the students' needs
2- Student centered learning and teaching
3- Material adaptation and development

1. *The content of students' needs*

To design and give an effective English lesson, the teacher and the course designer should explore applications of the course. For this reason, this case includes the information-gathering process based on the subsequent processes that are syllabus design, writing materials, classroom instruction and assessment procedures. As stated earlier, a student comes to an ESP class with at least three expectations: Cultural-educational, personal and private, and academic / professional.

Course designer or teacher must recognize these different expectations while defining the needs of the students. Basically there are two kinds of methods that vary from general to specific and theoretical to practical to collect the necessary information about the students: (1) a questionnaire filled in by the student or the teacher, or (2) a structured interview.

If a survey is to be used, a teacher or a course designer must decide on what sort of information he needs to collect based on what he wants to find out (Mackay & Mountford, 1978, p.21). In this line, we need to consider the questions that Hutchinson and Waters (2010) suggested:

• Why do the students have to learn?

• Who will be included in this process?

• Not only the students but also everyone who is interested will take place in this process: teachers, supporters, inspectors, and so on.

• Where does learning take place?

• What are the facilities of the place of the course?

• What are the restrictions?

• When will learning take place?

• How much time can be used during the learning process?

• How is this time arranged?

If a structured interview is going to be used, the structure and the purpose of it are done in a similar format with the questionnaire. The difference is that the questionnaire is not filled in by the person who provides the information. Instead the one who does the research asks the questions to the people directly by considering their needs. Compared to the survey, there are at least three advantages of a structured interview. Firstly, because the questions are asked by the one who asks the questions, there will be no unanswered questions unlike other studies. Secondly, the researcher can clarify the questions in case of misunderstandings. Thirdly, the researcher can address other areas of interest in the process of question and answer session while collecting information (Mackay & Mountford, 1978, p.22).

The above-mentioned theories revealed that we need to consider students' characteristics, the importance of learning English, and perspectives on teaching-learning in designing an English course. These factors can be explained by the students by means of research methods. As Widdowson (1990) stated "if we can determine why a group of students need to learn specific things in a language, the content can be designed used to meet their needs." Consequently, the principles of an ESP course will be carried out fully. In other words, "Tell me why you need to learn English and I will tell you what kind of English you need to learn" (Hutchinson & Waters, 2010).

2. *Student-Centered teaching and learning*

Concepts of student-centered teaching and learning are complementary to each other. 'Student-centered teaching' is a learning process which takes into account the students' interests, desires, skills and teaching experiences and aims to make them active in this process.

On the other hand 'student-centered learning' takes into account the individual characteristics of students who have scientific thinking skills, learnt how to learn, can reach the information and use it, have the ability to communicate, accepted universal values, can use technology effectively, are productive and self-realized at every stage of learning. It is also a restructuring way of ensuring student participation fully (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Nowadays, individual differences have been studied in the context of student-centered language teaching in foreign language acquisition (Benson & Goa, 2008). Individual differences are factors which affect language acquisition internally, biologically or psychologically. These qualities are divided into two and they are:

• Innate characteristics: gender, age, ability to learn a language, personality, and learning styles.

• Acquired characteristics: attitudes, motivation, beliefs and strategy use.

ESP is primarily concerned with learning. However, throughout its development, because of its emphasis on what people learn (language-based approach), it has shown little concern

to the question of how they learn it. Although this will be helpful to describe the objectives of the course, if the desired effect is to be obtained, it is better to consider the principles of learning ESP. For this reason, a learning-based approach is proposed for ESP. A learning-centered approach has its own specific techniques as follows:

• Techniques that take into account students' own needs, style, and goals.

• Some techniques that leave the control to the students (e.g. group work or strategy training).

• Curricula that define the objectives of the course in advance with students' opinions and thoughts.

• Techniques that reveal the creativity and innovation skills.

• The techniques that develop students' competence, self-esteem, and values (Brown, 1994).

Students have different needs and interests which have significant impacts on the effectiveness of their learning and motivation. In a learning-centered approach, methodology cannot be applied to the content or the teaching program. For this reason, the teaching program which affects the entire course and demonstrates the methodological ideas should be used more actively (Hutchinson & Water, 2010). To achieve this aim, throughout the teaching-learning process, teachers should put emphasis on "active learning" and "student talking time". As Silberman (1996) points out teachers should provide opportunities to the students to stimulate or practice what they have learned. These techniques are as follows:

• Team Building: Creates a collaborative work environment among students to make them more active in classes.

• Simultaneous evaluation: The aim of this evaluation is getting information about students' behavior, knowledge and experience.

• Participation in the learning process: This technique can encourage students to participate in the lesson at the beginning of the course.

• Class discussion: Teachers provide opportunities to the students to talk about and discuss the information that is not clear for them.

• Asking questions: Students would like teachers to give more understandable explanations.

• Co-operative learning: Tasks are distributed to the members of small groups.

• Independent learning: Learning activities are performed individually.

• Emotional Learning: Activities which help students to evaluate their values, feelings, and behaviors are important.

• Skills development: Teachers provide opportunities to the students to develop their skills.

3. *Materials adaptation and development*

Hutchinson and Waters (2010) suggested four models for materials adaptation and development in ESP. The collection of oral and written materials which may be used in lessons are called 'input'. Firstly, this raw material is evaluated in terms of its content and examined in order to find out how it can be used for communicative purposes. This process is called 'content concentration'. Secondly, the materials chosen to be used are studied from a linguistic viewpoint. The evaluation of whether they are suitable for the students' language

level or not is called 'concentration on language'. The relevancy of teaching materials is evaluated in such a way that they allow students to fulfill a communicative task for the last time in terms of their content and language. These materials become communicative teaching tools that can be used in classes. This activity is arranged in a way that students practice the foreign language purposefully.

Students' language requirements vary according to their field of study. Needs analysis allow us to identify the needs of a specific language. What can be done for students from various occupational fields who would like to learn the language for different purposes? The Council of Europe developed new applications and concepts to solve this problem. Students were "average Europeans" who had different purposes for learning a language and their ages, interests, occupations, ethnic origins and socio-economic status's varied from each other. To prepare an appropriate program for all these students, a flexible framework was drawn. For this purpose, two solutions were developed: unit / credit application and the concept of a common framework (Johnson, 2003).

Council of Europe determined common interests for all students. For different professions there are common "core" functions. These are not associated with the fields of individuals. They are general functions of social life such as greetings, introducing yourself, inviting, requesting information, and so on. In the system of Council of Europe, there is a unit/credit system that includes common units to reflect each level that students may choose based on their specific objectives (Johnson, 2003).

One of the curricula that is recommended to be used in English for Specific Purposes is consensus. This curriculum that requires the help of a linguist require students to agree on the content of what they are going to learn (Demircan, 1990).

In such curricula that require both the linguist and the student active, the teacher is only a part in all of the available resources provided to them. In this type of curriculum which claims the linguists to compile the resources, the teacher is only an example of the target language. The linguist-teacher-student trio was used by the U.S. Army during World War II, and later it formed the foundation of the Audio-Lingual Method. Linguists lead students on their demands of the learning content and are supposed to do face to face interviews (Yalden, 1991). In the curriculum of consensus students are expected to practice the language at high level (Yalden, 1991).

Not only using the language correctly but also gaining the ability to use it for specific communicative purposes is important. The ability to communicate is the essence of these principles for languages (Bagaric, 2007). For this reason, in this research communicative approach was applied. During 1970s, the communicative approach period begins. In the history of foreign language teaching in the 1970s, communicative approach completes the entire area with sociology, psychology, linguistics, and pragmatics.

The principle which says language is a means of communication is the starting point of the communicative approach. The primary function of a language is both interaction and communication. Language consists of functional and communicative elements as well as grammatical elements (Demirel, 2003, p.42). In communicative language teaching, the teacher and student roles are different from the traditional ones. Student-centered teaching takes the place of teacher-centered teaching in this approach. There are two fundamental roles of the teacher: the first role is making the various activities and texts easier in the communication process for all participants. The second one is acting as an independent participant in groups in the teaching-learning process. The teacher is tolerant to the errors, but

whenever an error occurs the teacher corrects it by saying the correct version (Demirel, 2003, p.43).

The Study

In this study, pre-test and post-test were used in control groups. Experimental designs aim to explore cause and effect relationships between variables. The main reason for using this method is determining the effectiveness of any 'thing' (a new method of learning or a new program, etc.) (Büyüköztürk, 2007). In this study, before starting the process, control and experimental groups were formed; English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was taught in the experimental groups and the control group had general English courses.

Experimental designs aim to determine the cause-and-effect relationships directly under the control of the researcher. It also focuses on the observation of the desired data (Karasar, 2006). The data to be gathered is newly created in these studies. They are not formed for another reason.

Data Collection

Three different data collection methods were used in this study. In the first step of data collection, questionnaires and interviews were used in the needs analysis process. Questionnaires were applied to the students, interviews were done with the faculty members.

One of the most important reasons for starting the study with a needs analysis is that the most important component of preparing a syllabus is determining the needs of the learners as shown in the previous sections. Curriculum is not only a document. Arrangement of the components of what we plan to teach in a certain way is the point. A curriculum designer may face with serious problems in this regard: the target students (in this study, students in the department of Architecture and Health Management) learn the target language with limitations depending on the level of the whole.

The target student group that was researched in this study are the students who studied English within the 2011-2012 academic year in the departments of Health Management and Architecture at European University of Lefke. These students register according to the laws and regulations of the Republic of Turkey Higher Education Council (YÖK) and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus Higher Education, Equivalency and Accreditation Agency (YÖDAK). Subjects of the study are a mixed group of boys and girls mostly at the age of 17-25 from Turkey, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Nigeria and Bangladesh. According to the principles of needs analysis the first group which we need to describe their needs and learning objectives are the students (Demircan, 1990, p.264). Because of this reason, to determine the students' needs a needs analysis is primarily prepared and performed.

For the second step of the study pre-test and post-test were developed by adapting Cambridge Proficiency Test which was developed by Cambridge University Press in accordance with the criteria of Council of Europe. Cambridge Proficiency Exam consists of 5 sections; reading, writing, use of English, listening and speaking. Each section carries 20%. Pre-test – post-test were applied at the beginning and at the end of the semester. The results were calculated bearing in mind the scores of the groups and gender variables.

Analysis of the Data

Students responded to the needs analysis questionnaire starting from the first option (a) as encoded 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and they were transferred to the software package program "Statistical Package for Social Science -'' Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS 13) for their frequency (f) and percentage (%) distributions. They were calculated and interpreted in

statistical data tables. The sample of the study was divided into two groups as experimental and control groups. Students from the departments of Health Management and Architecture form the experimental group and Pre-school Teaching and Guidance and Psychological Counseling form the control group. The control group has been chosen randomly because in these groups English for Specific Purposes is not taught. In these departments students are taught general English. Before starting the study 'Cambridge Proficiency Exam' was given as a pre-test. Cambridge Proficiency Test which was developed by Cambridge University Press and was prepared in accordance with the criteria of Council of Europe was applied to each of the four groups at the beginning of the semester and the test results were evaluated through Microsoft Excel and Statistical package program SPSS for Windows 13 to obtain the success level. For data analysis arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and frequency of 't-test' were applied because associated t-test can be used for two things that are associated with each other in experimental studies and surveys. Pattern of related measures are: a) repeated measurements of the same subjects, or b) when paired samples are measured. In order to improve the level of foreign language learners' proficiency level implementing an English for Specific Purposes curriculum can be given as an example to these research types.

The first step of the research was applying a needs analysis which was based on Hutchinson and Waters' (2010) criteria. It aims to find out the answers of the questions why, how, what, who, where and when in the light of the learning needs of the students. In the criteria there are 15 items to be answered about the views on the content and the language program. Some of the questions focus on whom, where, how and when to use English.

Findings

In this section, the data that were collected from students through surveys and interviews will be analyzed and the pre-test/post-test results will be shown in the tables.

Table 2. *Demographic Characteristics of Students*

Students Areas of Expertise	**n**	**%**
Architecture	40	25
Health Management	40	25
Pre School Teaching	40	25
Psychological Counseling and Guidance	40	25
Age	**N**	**%**
17-19	79	49.4
20-22	46	28.7
23-25	25	15.6
26 and above	10	6.3
Gender	**F**	**%**
Female	79	49.4
Male	81	50.6
Mother Tongue of Learners	**f**	**%**
Turkish	155	96.9
English	5	3.1
Students' language level	**n**	**%**
Elementary	20	12.5
Pre-intermediate	28	17.5
Intermediate	63	39.4

Upper Intermediate	33	20.6
Advanced	16	10
Frequency of use of English for work or work of students	**n**	**%**
Yes, a lot	36	22.5
Sometimes	78	48.7
Not a lot	32	20
No	14	8.8
Field Knowledge	**f**	**%**
A lot	40	25.0
Basic	3	1.9
Not a lot	117	73.1

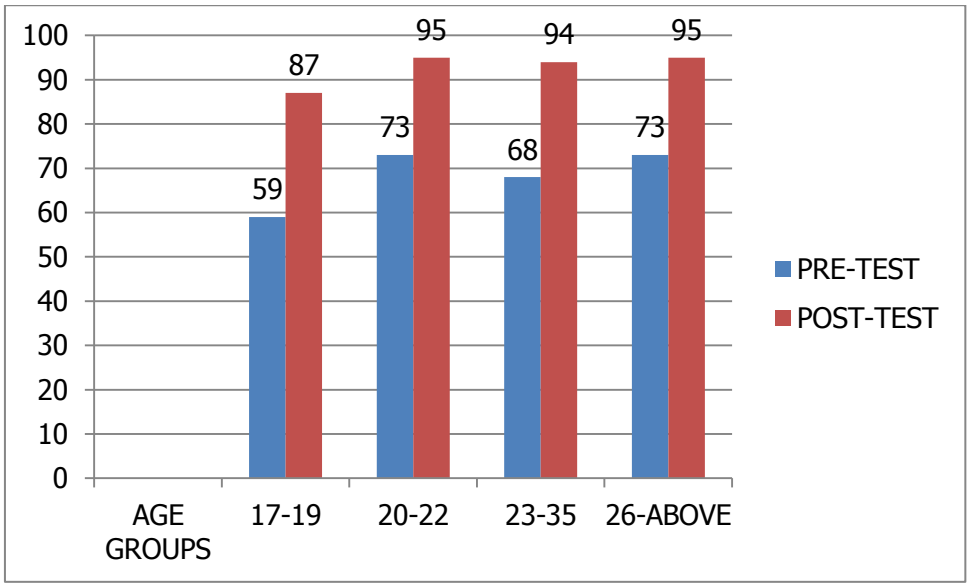
49.4% (n=79), 6.3 % (n=10), 28.7% (n=46), 15.6 % (n=25) of the participants were aged between 20-22, 17-19, 23-25, 26 and above, respectively, as shown in Table 2, 46.9 % (n=75), 26.2 % (n=42), 14.4 % (n=23) and 12.5 % (n=20) of the students study in the fields of Architecture, Health Management, Pre-school Teaching and Guidance and Psychological Counseling. The students' foreign language level vary from beginner to advanced level. 12.5 % (n=20), 17.5 % (n=28), 39.4 % (n=63), 20,6 % (n=33) and 10.0 % (n=16) of the students are at the beginner , pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced level, respectively. As shown in Table 2, 22.5 % (n=36), 48.7 (n=78), 20.0 % (n=32) and 8.8 % (n=14) of the students ranged their use of frequency as "yes, very much", "sometimes", "not much", and "no", respectively.

Getting into the habit of using the target language in the classroom or outside it is a very difficult and time consuming process. Gaining this habit which is often a necessity in the classroom atmosphere affects students' achievement and motivation especially in foreign language learning in the classroom. As can be seen in Table 2, 96.9% of the students' mother tongue is Turkish. Therefore this may reduce the amount of the usage of the target language in the classroom.

73.1% of the students think that they do not have the skills and knowledge about their field of study and the profession. Based on these results, it is assumed that the students did not have English lessons prior to their degree level in their secondary schools.

Doing a pre-test and a post-test was the second step of the study. During the analysis process, variance analysis which is suitable for repeated measures of the data for two or more groups was used and the lowest significance level was accepted as $\alpha = .05$ (Kirk, 1982 cit. Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Table 3. *Total Scores of the Students According to Their Age Groups*

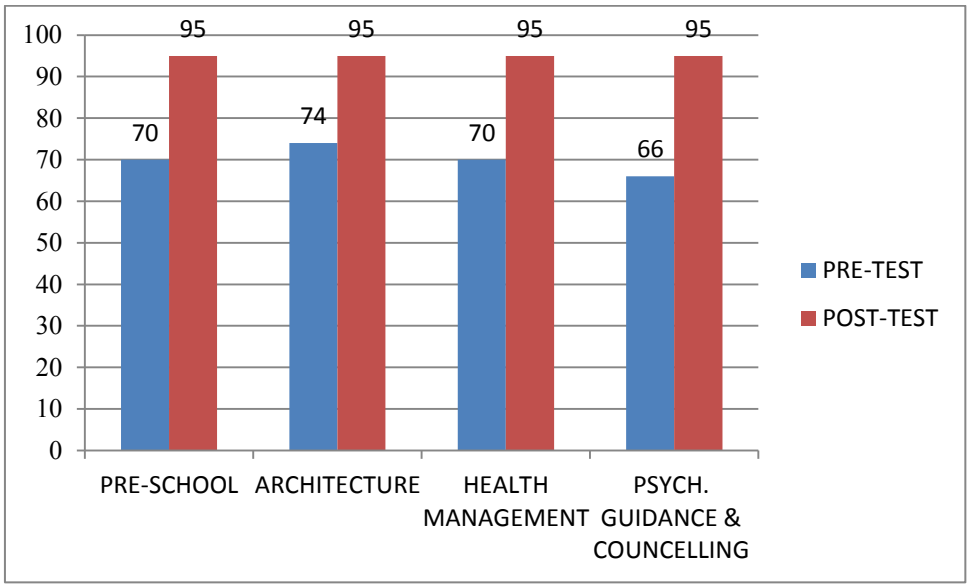


As can be seen in Table 3 pre-test and post-test scores of students between the ages of 17-19 and 26 years and above ($p = 0.001$, $p < 0.01$) are meaningfully lower than the students who are 20-22 ($p: 0.001$; $p > 0.01$). Total pre-test scores of the students in other age groups show a statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$) (Table 3).

In this study, students who are 20-22 and 26 years and above got high mean scores from "Cambridge Proficiency Exam" that was associated with their levels of English language (Table 3).

The difference between the pre-test scores of the students from Guidance and Psychological Counseling and Architecture departments was significant ($p > 0.01$) (Table 4)

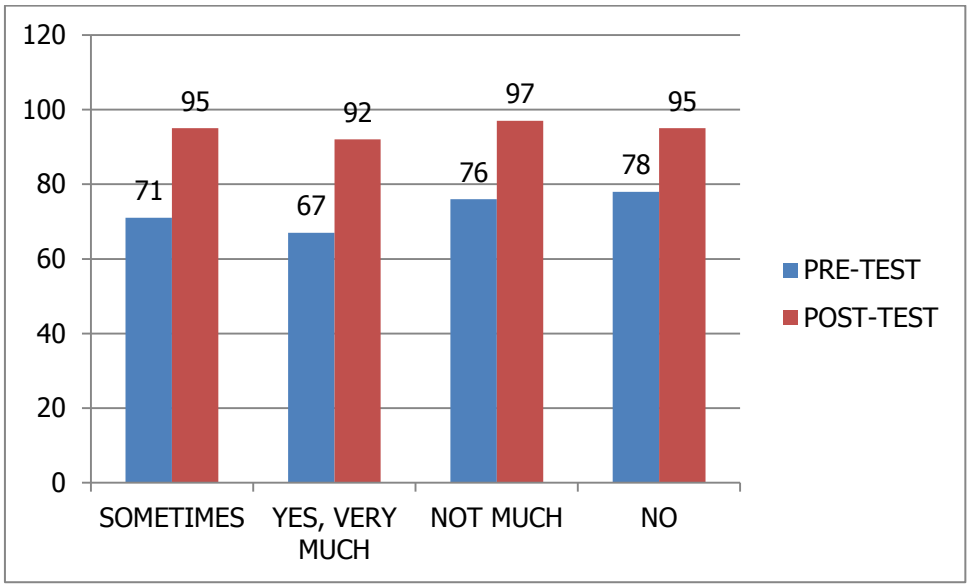
Table 4. *Pre-test – Post-test Scores of the Students According to Their Fields of Study*



No significant differences were found in total pre-test scores of the students who use English very often are lower than the students who do not use it ($p = 0.002$, $p < 0.01$). Total pre-test scores of the students who use English sometimes are lower than the students who do not use it a lot ($p: 0.050$, $p < 0.05$), and a significant difference was found. Total post-test

scores of the students who use English very often are lower than the students who use English sometimes and the difference was significant (p: 0.010, p <0.05) (Table 5).

Table 5. *Pre-test - Post-test Scores of the Students' English Language According to the Frequency of Usage*



It is taken into consideration that students from the department of Health Management receive higher scores than the students of Architecture due to the course materials which are colorful and based on the communicative activities. They also fulfill the needs of the learners.

Table 6. *Pre-test - Post-test Scores of the Experimental and the Control Group Paired Sampled t-test, p<0.01*

General Features of the Program	**Ort ± SD**	**t- Test**	**p**
Ready to use material Pre-test score Post test score	16.13±4.01 21.74±1.63	17.776	0.001**
Use of materials prepared by the researcher Pre-test score Post test score	23.40±4.49 30.50±3.18	21.157	0.001**
Teaching of English for Specific Purposes Pre-test score Post test score	10.61±2.78 14.49±1.20	17.188	0.001**
Basic English Language Teaching Pre-test score Post test score	8.56±1.91 9.34±1.31	5.135	0.001**
The use of the Communicative Approach in Teaching Pre-test score Post test score	3.40±1.97 6.98±1.34	20.636	0.001**
Use of the Traditional Approach in Teaching Pre-test score Post test score	9.75±2.48 12.06±1.26	10.861	0.001**

The pre-test total scores of the Health Management students is higher than the students of the department of Architecture that had prepared materials compiled by the researcher and the pre-test scores of the students of the department of Health Management which is one of the control groups are also statistically significant (p> 0.05).

According to the average total scores of the pre-test scores of the students of Health Management and Architecture (71.87± 10.31), the increase (30.908) in the average total score of the post-test (95.05±6.32) were statistically significant (p<0.01).

Table 7. *Comparison of the Pre-test Mean Scores of Control and Experimental Groups*

GROUP	N	x	Ss	Significance
Experimental Group	80	65.62	7.77	t= -.973 p>0.05
Control Group	80	66.71	6.28	

When students' groups were compared with their pre-test scores, the mean score of the students in the experimental group was 65.62± 7.77 while the average score of students in the control group was 66.71±6.28 as shown in table 7 and this difference was not statistically significant (t = - .973, p> 0.05).

This result indicates that the teaching method (English for Specific Purposes) is not an effective factor on the foreign language level of the students in the experimental group (Architecture and Health Administration). This proves the first hypothesis of the study (Hypothesis 1: English for Specific Purposes- ESP students' mean scores were higher than the scores of the general English students.) It is found that in foreign language teaching, having English for Specific Purposes lessons do not have any effects on improving students' language levels.

Table 8. *Within-Group Comparison of Experimental and Control Group Students' Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores*

		Pre-test			Post-test		
Group	n	x	Ss	n	x	Ss	Significance
Experimental Group	80	65.91	7.46	80	77.02	6.83	t=-11.873<0.001
Control Group	80	66.42	6.68	80	65.98	8.06	t=.440>0.05

Within the group comparison pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups were shown in Table 8. Pre-test scores of the students in the experimental group is 65.91 ± 7.46 while the average post-test scores is 77.02 ± 6.83. The difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test was statistically significant (t = - 11 873, p <0.001) in the experimental group while it is not significant in the control group (t = .440, p> 0.05).

It is thought that using the communicative approach in teaching English for Specific Purposes in the experimental group resulted in improving students' language level. With this way of teaching, specific information that enables communicative structures to be used easily was provided to the students as well as making them concentrate on specific speaking structures.

Littlewood (2009) emphasized the importance of social interaction activities in the development of students' communicative skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Communicative structures which are mentioned above can be found in this kind of content. The findings which are about how to use the language are similar in both studies. In this case, it might be said that using social interaction activities in ESP lessons may develop students' communication skills. The difference between the pre-test – post-test mean scores of the

control group was not found statistically significant due to the fact that the curriculum of this group did not include any English for Specific Purposes courses.

Table 9. *Comparison of the Post-test Mean Scores of Experimental and Control Groups*

Group	n	x	Ss	Significance
Experimental Group	80	77.02	6.8	t=9.338 p<0.001
Control Group	80	65.98	38.06	

Post-test mean score of the experimental group is 77.02 ± 6.83, while it is 65.98 ± 8.06 in the control group. The difference between the post-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups was statistically at an advanced level. It was found statistically significant in favor of the experimental group (t = 9338 p <0.001) (Table 9). It is thought that the teaching style (using communicative approach in English for Specific Purposes) led to this result in the experimental group. With this result the second hypothesis has been confirmed (Hypothesis II: Students' level of English can be improved by using communicative approach in teaching English for Specific Purposes).

The difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the students of the experimental group was significantly higher (p <0.001) due to the fact that in order to improve communicative skills in foreign language teaching ESP lessons may be effective. However, it was found that pre-test and post-test scores of the students in the control group did not differ (P> 0.05) (Table 9).

Table 10. *Independent Samples T-Test Results According to the Gender Variable*

Group	n	x	Ss	sd	t	p
Male	43	22.36	3.999			
Posttest				28	.681	.502
Female	37	23.60	.894			

As shown in Table 10, there are no significant differences between students considering their gender (boys and girls) in the control group.

Table 11. *Independent Samples T-Test Results of the Students in the Experimental Group According to the Gender Variable*

Group	n	x	Ss	Sd	T	p
Male	58	25.71	2.710			
Posttest				28	.824	-413
Female	22	25.00	1.683			

When the post-test scores were analyzed there was not a significant difference in the experimental group according to the gender variable.

The difference between the average scores of male and female students (X difference = 0.71) is very low and the score does not indicate a significant difference.

Conclusion

Preparing a curriculum based on the findings of needs analysis in an English for Specific Purposes course may be useful in many aspects for both teachers and students and it may lead to restructuring, assessing the traditional methods, and reviewing the curriculum, assessment and evaluation activities.

Within the scope of this research, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages which was examined by many language teachers, researchers, testing officers and program development specialists was used in determining students' language levels. It was also useful at both institutional and individual level. It also lit the way for determining students' language proficiency level through communicative approach in ESP. The following results were found in the present study:

1. It was seen that applying communicative approach in ESP lessons caused students to become more successful at proficiency level (See Table 4).

2. It was found that the pre-test and post-test mean scores of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students (experimental group) were statistically significant at the advanced level (See Table 4).

3. When pre-test scores of the students in the control and experimental groups were compared, it was found that doing English for Specific Purposes lessons in foreign language teaching have no effect on improving students' language levels (See Table 5).

4. The scores of the students in the experimental group were not changed by gender (See Table 9).

The results obtained from this research may provide an important contribution to the courses offered in English in the faculties of universities. For the student-centered educational environment, especially in the design of a curriculum, it may offer both the teacher and the students a lot. Teachers or program designers should give particular importance to students' needs to make them gain the targeted skills in a short time.

One of the results of the study was the positive effect of using the communicative approach on their level of language proficiency. As can be seen from the findings of the study, students become successful in the teaching environment in which they are located in the center. Therefore, this causes a positive effect on achievement as was expected before.

As a result, when an ESP course is compared with the traditional methods, it can be said that a program which is designed in accordance with the needs analysis and the assessment and evaluation of student-centered methods makes the course more effective and enriched due to its effect on achieving the targets.

Suggestions

This section includes the suggestions about a language program which should be prepared based on the results of the needs analysis in English for Specific Purposes classes. This study may also be useful while designing a syllabus. Accordingly, recommendations for the in-class applications can be designed through the use of needs analysis.

1. According to the results of the needs analysis, when a designed program was applied, bear in mind the objectives of the program. Students should be actively involved in the process continuously to fulfill the requirements of the program.

2. The teacher must find students' learning styles through questionnaires and tests and while designing a curriculum, methods and approaches should be determined accordingly. For example, for visual learners word cards can be prepared, word cards or posters can be hung up on the walls.

3. As part of the student-centered approach students do not only learn in the class. The learning process itself continues outside the classroom too. Therefore, the teacher should inform the students about the resources or give them homework or assignments.

Therefore, teachers should inform students about the resources or encourage them to use the real materials used in the target language through giving homework. Students can benefit from newspapers / magazines, read books, reset the input devices of his/her mobile phone or computer, or use the calendar in the target language, and so on.

4. According to the results of the study, to ensure students to be able to communicate in a foreign language, learning strategies of the learners should be identified and the course should be designed accordingly.

5. When the necessary conditions are provided at the undergraduate level, having English for Specific Purposes lessons will be useful for both academicians and students. Time and resources should not be ignored by the academicians and ESP classes should be formed according to the results of the placement tests. (This is especially useful to minimize the number of introverted students. In this way students will see that they are capable of achieving many things.)

As a result, it can be said that needs analysis and student centered teaching are very important in foreign language learning and teaching. At the very beginning of the program, students' choices and interests should be determined and the ESP curriculum should be designed accordingly.

Students should be encouraged for lifelong learning and should be aware of the importance of communication in foreign language. Learning a foreign language is not only knowing the rules of it, instead it is being able to communicate and interact with it throughout his life in an active way.

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COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN ELT CLASSES: THE ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS TOWARDS COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN ELT CLASSES

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Abstract

In teaching and learning environments, many methods, techniques and/or approaches are used. Among these one of them is cooperative learning. It is defined as working in the soul of a team and in the team, the members help, motivate and trust each other. This study aimed at investigating the University prep school ELT students' attitudes towards cooperative learning. A questionnaire was given to 166 (F=100, M=66) university students whose ages were between 18-20 who were all studying at prep school and of different faculties. A questionnaire inquiring on the students' attitudes on cooperative learning was administered. The collected data was analyzed by using descriptive analysis method. Results showed that 66,9% of the students are at the side of cooperative learning in ELT classes whereas 33,1% of them believed that if they work alone they would have better results and they thought working alone was more enjoyable. A focus group was organized and the students mentioned both negative and positive sides of cooperative work. Furthermore, the findings reported that there was difference in gender in the attitudes towards cooperative learning for the good of females.

Keywords: cooperative learning, ELT classes, gender, individual learning.

1. Introduction

Over the last thirty years, a more practical and communicative approach has been used in the teaching of language that focuses on the learners' use of language. Learners have become the center of teaching and learning (Johnson and Johnson, 2012). Cooperative learning emphasizes providing students with opportunities to learn by themselves and from their peers.

In the process of learning, students can interact with each other in three basic ways. Individual learning towards the target without paying attention to others' work is a way. In this way, the student's success does not affect other students' success, such as their pass or failure. Competition is another way to see who the best one is and it is the way which is mostly used (Johnson and Johnson, 2012). It may sometimes cause jealousy or hatred among students as there is a winner and a loser. Cooperative learning is the way which the learners have a common aim. In order to reach this aim their working in small groups and knowing that they will share the reward together. It is under certain conditions that cooperative learning is expected to be more productive than competitive and individual learning (Slavin, 1996).

1.1. Cooperative Learning

Various definitions and research have been done on cooperative learning. According to Felder and Brent (2012), cooperative learning is a process that increases the learning and satisfaction rate which is a result of working on high performance team. Cooperative learning environments encourage students help each other, lead collaborations in groups, and awaken common goals by working on the task that they have been given (Huang, Hsiao, Chang and Hu, 2012). Riley and Anderson (2006) define cooperative learning as pedagogical method that learners learn on their own through explaining the subject matter to others and learning from others. According to Yi and LuXi (2012) cooperative learning is students' working and studying together in a group to carry out tasks and accomplish expected goals. They added that it is not just working together so it needs accurate preparation, planning and guidance by the teacher. For Wichadee and Orawiwatnakul (2012), cooperative learning is a teaching strategy, with students of different levels of ability in small groups who use various learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Felder and Brent (2012) assert that cooperative learning is by its nature an active method. Cooperation provides benefits for weak students who don't perform well individually. While strong students explain the material for weaker students, they have the chance of filling in their gaps also. While working individually, students may sometimes delay completing the task but as they are responsible for the group members they are motivated to do the work on time.

1.1.1. Basic principles of cooperative learning

Johnson and Johnson (2012) state that, the most successful cooperative learning strategies share five essential factors: positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual accountability (personal responsibility), social skills and group processing. Positive interdependence is defined by as the dual responsibility that the students are demanded in cooperative learning situations learn the assigned material and ensure that every member of the group learns it (Sharan, 1990). Individual accountability focuses on the individual group member's performance, which means each student individually responsible for his or her own and other group member's learning and every member is in charge of the achievement of the group's goal (Johnson and Johnson, 2012; Stenlev, 2003). Social skills are another essential factor in cooperative learning because in order to achieve group goals, group members need to develop not only target language but also social skills. Small group discussions provide higher levels of peer to peer interaction, and more student participation (Bliss and Lawrence, 2009). The purpose of group processing is to improve the effectiveness of the group work by analyzing the collaborative information of group members' performances in order to fulfill the final outcome (Johnson and Johnson, 2012).

1.1.2. Cooperative learning in foreign language teaching classes

In recent years, cooperative learning has been applied to foreign language teaching in the classroom. Cooperative learning and the English as a second or foreign language in classroom is a well integration (Kagan, 2001). There is a growing research based on the influence and effectiveness of cooperative learning in foreign language teaching in the classroom. According to Crandall (1999), cooperative language learning has the positive factors on language learning, increasing motivation, reducing anxiety, stimulating the motivation, promoting self-esteem, as well as supporting different learning styles. The development of cooperative learning techniques in English as Second Language classrooms seems as an important element in successful classroom management (Bassano and Christison, 1988).

The cooperative learning strategy promotes students' active learning by creating simulated real-life language environment. With the implementation of cooperative learning in the foreign language teaching, students are provided with more opportunities to participate, experience, interact and cooperate in foreign language learning. In the cooperative group, students work together, interacting face to face, with the identical goal of learning, as well as assisting each other (Borich, 2007). Since language teachers should create active learning atmosphere for students to learn by themselves, with its many advantages, cooperative learning might be an appropriate way of achieving that goal.

Suwantaratbip and Wichadee (2010) examined the effectiveness of cooperative learning in reducing foreign language learning anxiety and to investigate its effect on language proficiency scores of 40 university students. The pre- and post- test scores from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986), the questionnaire and the proficiency tests of the group were calculated for descriptive statistics and compared using a paired sample t-test measure. It was found that the students' foreign language learning anxiety was significantly decreased after learning through cooperative learning approach. The students also grew favor toward cooperative learning as a whole.

Ning (2011) conducted an experimental research focusing on the adaptation of cooperative learning (CL) methods into tertiary ELT in China. It was aimed at offering students more opportunities for language production and thus enhancing their fluency and effectiveness in communication. The test results showed students' English competence in skills and vocabulary in cooperative learning classes was superior to whole-class instruction, particularly in speaking, listening, and reading.

Wichadee and Orawiwatnakul (2012) led a research in which a variety of learning activities were presented, offering new ideas to apply in EFL classes. In cooperative language learning environments, group instruction which was under the learner-centered approach where the groups were formed in such a way that each member could perform his or her task to achieve the goal. They claimed that previous studies indicated that the effect of cooperative language learning was not only improved learners' language skills, but also created a supportive learning environment. In their study, they put forward that in spite of positive outcomes of cooperative learning approach, some awareness regarding learning process management should be raised in order to avoid the problems that might occur during practice.

1.1.3. Cooperative learning and gender

According to Jordan, Walker, and Hartling (2004) although men's self-concepts are based more on separation and autonomy, women are more rooted in connections and relatedness. Men like being in competitive environments more as they perform better and tend to focus on achievement. On the other hand, women avoid being in such environments because they cannot achieve better results. This is probably because they tended to focus more on interpersonal aspects of competition (Inglehart, Brown and Vida, 1994).

Rodger, Murray and Cummings (2007) asserted that 'If women have more positive attitudes than men toward cooperation and social interdependence, then it follows that learning methods that allow for the development of trusting and interdependent relationships among students and between students and teachers should be more effective for women than for men. Thus where interdependence, cooperative attitudes, and desire for affiliation exist, competitive teaching methods may not create the most effective learning environments for women'. Research done in supporting this view has shown that women are superior in

affiliation, cooperative attitude, and interdependence (Fultz and Herzog, 1991; Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

In their research Ellison and Boykin (1994) found that university women gained more success when cooperative learning was followed more than individualistic learning. They also asserted that cooperative learning created more positive attitudes toward the learning experience and more perceived ability.

Fultz and Herzog (1991) reported that women were more oriented to connection with others and nurturance which was closely related to gender difference in cooperative learning. In other words, women were higher than men in affiliation, whereas men were higher than women in working independently and focused to goal achievement.

Springer, Stanne, Donovan (1999), found no significant difference in cooperative and collaborative forms of small-group learning on student achievement between predominantly female groups and heterogeneous or mixed-gender groups.

Klein and Pridemore (1993) investigated affiliation in cooperative versus competitive teaching effects on academic achievement, time on task, and satisfaction in a university whose 85% of the students were women. It was found out that participants who worked cooperatively spent more time on the practice exercises than people who worked individually, whereas the high-affiliation group who worked cooperatively gained high success in the application section of the test. Students worked alone were not as successful as the ones who worked cooperatively. The mean of affiliation score for the mainly female students was higher than the norm.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

The students who attend to a foundation university in Ankara participated in this study. Voluntary 166 (*M=66, F=100*) university prep school students were obtained with convenience sampling.

2.2. Means of Data Collection

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. A questionnaire which was developed by the researchers was administered in order to collect quantitative data. The statements were prepared to learn about the attitudes of students about cooperative learning and individual learning in ELT classes. The statements were formed basing on literature about cooperative learning. The students were asked to tick the column whether 'I agree' or 'I disagree'. In the questionnaire, among 9 statements, 7 of them (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9) are about the benefits of cooperative work. 2 of the items (4, 8) are about individual learning. There were also general information questions about the student's gender and the faculty he/she attends. The questionnaires were delivered in the prep classes at the beginning of the lesson. The teachers explained the students why the questionnaire was given and asked them to tick the statement which appealed to them.

For collecting qualitative research data, a focus group interview was organized and volunteer 8 male, 8 female students were interviewed about cooperative learning in ELT classes by the researchers.

2.3 Procedure and Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed by using SPSS 20.0 and descriptive analysis was conducted. The frequency and percentage distribution were given. Chi-square test was used for dependence of variables. 0,05 was used for the significance level and $p<0,05$ showed the

dependence between groups and p>0,05 showed there was no dependence between the groups.

3. Findings

Table 1 showed the distribution of the attitudes of the students towards cooperative learning and individual learning.

92,2 % of the students said that cooperative learning environments develop positive relationship among friends in class. While working in groups the students meet each other and rely on each other. They improve their communication skills. They are aware of individual differences so they accept this and they support each other. They find constructive solutions to problems. Through developing good relationships and supporting each other, cooperative learning also leads to increase school success, improve higher order thinking skills, develop self-esteem, grow a positive attitude towards school and courses and gain social skills (Cohen, 1994; Felder and Brent, 2012; Slavin, 1996; Wang, 2012).

88,6 % of the students reported that while studying in cooperation students guide each other. In cooperative learning classes students can construct their own multiple learning environments. They realize that there are individual differences. They have the chance of completing their lack, revising what they know, and learning while teaching to others. By discussing with group members, solving problems, suggesting possible solutions, and finding wrongs they can develop their higher order thinking skills (Borich, 2007; Gillies, 2007; Havard, Du and Xu, 2008; Riley and Anderson, 2006). Piaget (1970) claimed that the most effective interactions are between peers as they are on equal basis and challenge each other's thinking skills.

83,1 % of the students stated that cooperation improves trust on each other. This is an indication of harmony in a class as the students rely on each other and realize that moving together in the right path brings success to all of them. When the group members perceive this, a positive interdependence will occur (Johnson and Johnson, 2012). In order to complete a task the student should realize that he has to combine his work with the group mates'. The student will make use of his mates' studies and vice versa. They will work in small groups to maximize the learning by sharing their resources to provide mutual support and encouragement and to celebrate their joint success (Felder and Brent; 2012; Gunter, Estes, Schwab, 1995). Once positive interdependence is understood by the students, it establishes that each group member's efforts are required and indispensable for group success and each member has a unique contribution to make to the joint effort as he has his own resources, role and task responsibilities. Positive interdependence results in face to face promoting interaction. Promoting interaction leads to positive inter relationships, psychological adjustment and social competence (Felder and Brent, 2012).

79,5 % of the students indicated that they respect to each other's thoughts while studying in cooperation. In cooperative learning classes, during the process of learning, forming groups, participation in the group, putting forward the point of view, having different roles, doing discussions, sharing the reward make the learners gain social skills. They make use of the diversions in heterogeneous classes and learn to be tolerant. As a result, they multiply their feeling of respect towards themselves and the others (Slavin, 1996). Students learn how to cooperate (Bliss and Lawrence, 2009; Wichadee and Orawiwatnakul, 2012).

84,9 % of the students put forward the motivation of cooperative work and 75,3 % of students reported that while studying in cooperation friends help each other. According to Sharan and Sharan (1990) cooperative learning encourages students to work in the soul of a team. The team members help each other, accelerate motivation and trust each other's

success (Hornby, 2009). They are responsible for each other and they have to know what each member of the group is doing (Gillies, 2007; Wang, 2012). The group is united around a common goal. They realize that they will win or lose together. Whenever they achieve they know that all group members receive the same reward. Each group member has a portion of resources, information or materials which have to be combined for the group to reach its goals. Having and sharing the feeling of achievement, the encouraging class atmosphere accelerates the motivation of the students and makes them have positive attitude towards school, learning and the class (Borich, 2007; Felder and Brent; 2012).

61,4% of the students said that cooperative learning environments develops individual responsibility. Although the students work as a group, the student has his own responsibility when his individual success is assessed. The result not only affects the student but the group also. The student should know that without doing anything individually, he and the group cannot achieve any goal. The group's one of the main aims is to strengthen each member (Gillies, 2007). Cooperative learning empowers individual responsibility (Cruickshank, Bainer and Metcalf, 1999; Felder and Brent, 2012; Gillies, 2007; Yi and LuXi, 2012). In an effectively organized cooperative learning class, students need to learn the assigned material and ensure that all members of the group learn the assigned material. These two are the students' main responsibilities. The students know that they won't be successful unless the members of the group are successful (Slavin, 1996).

34,9% of the students identified that studying on their own is more enjoyable than working in groups. A research which was conducted by Somapee (2002) indicated students' positive opinions towards cooperative learning. An idea which is supported by experts is that students working in small cooperative teams can understand the presented material by the teacher better than students working on their own. Cooperative learning has crucial social outcomes such as positive inter group relations, ability of working in collaboration and self- esteem development (Cohen, 1994; Slavin, 1996).

31,3% of them stated that they get better results when they study on their own. According to Dunn, Beaudry and Klavas (1989), students learn more when they study in their preferred setting and manner. A preferred particular style may not always guarantee that it is the most effective. Sometimes students prefer the easy or the comfortable way. Some may choose a way because he has no other alternatives. They may benefit from developing new and more effective ways to learn (Weinstein and McCombs cited in Woolfolk, Winne and Perry, 2011). On the contrary, numerous research studies advocate that cooperative learning leads to higher academic success than individual or competitive approaches (Hornby, 2009; Johnson, Johnson and Stanne, 2012). Several researches done in the field of ELT show that learning English reading through cooperative learning have higher achievement scores than other approaches (Seetape, 2003; Tang, 2000; Wichadee, 2005).

There was a significant difference between male and female students in cooperative learning and individual learning. It was found that male students preferred studying individually more than female students. 36,1% of the students were at the side of individual work. Dunn et al. (1989) claimed that students should use their own way- preferred setting and manner-in studying. These students might choose individual study as it was easier or more comfortable. Sometimes there might not be any other alternative of study but most studies said that working in cooperative teams made the students understand the presented material by the teacher better than working alone (Hornby, 2009).According to Jordan, Walker and Hartling (2004) men were more autonomous than women. They were goal oriented which made them to be in competitive environments because they were more successful there. These would be reasons why male students do not particularly want to be in

cooperative environments. The interview results also indicated that because of different learning styles, some students might not want to study in a group as they asserted the difference in learning styles would harm the productivity of the student, fluency of learning procedure and motivation.

3.1. Interview with Students

16 students were selected randomly and the researchers conducted an interview with these students. The students put forward their opinions about why they prefer working in cooperation or not in ELT classes. While interviewing a recording machine was used and then it was transcribed by the researchers. The researcher started with saying 'What do you think about using cooperative approach in ELT classes, such as, forming pairs or groups while studying on tasks?'.

Most students stated the benefits of cooperative work, its gains and its joy. For them they had the opportunity of social interaction, improving their knowledge, putting better works forward. They thought it improves motivation, creativity and productivity as different points of views were blended. So they asserted as follows;

'Cooperative work lessens the cognitive load of a person. Two heads are better than one.'

'Besides, studying cooperatively in classes, teachers had better give project works making us working in groups. In this way, valuable, interesting, apart from usual things could be created'.

'Cooperative work lets us produce more by using less time.'

'Especially, on the first days of school, I had the chance of meeting my friends while working in groups or pairs'.

Besides positive sides of cooperative work mentioned above, students talked about the negative sides with emphasis on the organization of the groups and the attitudes of the group members while studying on a task. The worries were about students whom they didn't want to work with. Because they might be people who wouldn't like to work in cooperation or doesn't want to take responsibility and do nothing or prefer chatting. For them, this was de-motivating sometimes, so they mentioned their worries as follows;

'The productivity of work will change according to the group members as it really depends on the passion and contribution of the other members of the group'.

'Making the task distribution equally is the most important thing as everyone in the group doesn't want to take the responsibility properly'.

'If the group is not organized well, it will become infertile. I mean, some students are not at the side of sharing his/her opinion then nothing created in that group.'

'Being in the right group is important. Students who like chatting while working together may sometimes bring down the enthusiastic ones.'

'Some circumstances, such as an unfavorable person in the group would be demotivating.'

'A person can be more motivated without having pressure of others on him. When a problem arises when working in cooperation, it will affect both the achievement and the relationship among classmates. I believe in individual work'.

Some students thought that they shouldn't be forced to work in cooperation as it may sometimes be discouraging when it limits personal development and skills development. For them cooperative work would limit creativity and productivity. They said;

'Studying in cooperation most of the time may give harm to the creativity of a student and may sometimes lead to laziness'.

'It would lead worse results if you are forcing the person to do a thing that he doesn't want to. This is discouraging.'

'In my opinion, this approach is a waste of time. For the sake of person's own development, individual work is more important and effective'.

'Working in groups may sometimes be less productive because people have different learning styles. It is not right to force students to work in cooperation. If it is compulsory, the common points of students should be taken into consideration'.

'Cooperative work creates positive and consistent relations among classmates, motivational and supportive but it has a negative side which is not sharing in common. In spite of its positive sides, I prefer studying individually'.

Few students complained about the physical conditions such as small classes, improper desks and loud noise while studying. They said as follows;

'Studying around a round table would be more productive as it widens the interaction of the students in the group and it would be more comfortable. Our desks are not suitable for cooperative work.

'Group work creates a noisy and dispute atmosphere. I am at the side of individual work, with silence and serene mind'.

Although the results of the questionnaire showed that students were strongly at the side of cooperative learning, they asserted more about the negative sides of that approach in the interview. Despite the fact that they talked about the benefits of working in cooperation and its gains, mostly male students talked about the negative sides of cooperative work.

3. Conclusion

In this study, almost every student put forward that through communication, they became aware of individual differences. They realized that there was not only one way in the process of solution to a problem. This led them trusting each other in the group as most of them were at the same side of this idea. As a result of this they understood that moving together would bring success to all of them. On the way to the solution they discussed in groups, suggested ideas, found what was wrong and at the end they developed their higher order thinking skills. Most think that they learned the way of cooperation through showing respect to each other's thoughts while studying on the common task. They indicated that this was also a way of learning to be tolerant. By this way, they grew the feeling of respect towards both themselves and the others.

The students emphasized the role of motivation and supporting peers were ways of being successful. Students knew that when the group had a common task to achieve, the reward was also common. Because of this, the members encouraged each other to reach the goal and this naturally motivated the group members. As another result of motivation it could be said that students grew positive attitude towards school, learning and the class. It was obvious that male students preferred studying individually more than female students. In learning everyone should use the way they feel better. As men were more autonomous and goal oriented than women they might not want to be in cooperative environments. It was also asserted in the interview that males stressed on different learning styles. The results showed that most students prefer studying in cooperative learning environments rather than working

individually in case doing the distribution of task carefully, arranging the groups sensibly to avoid giving harm to creativity, sociability and motivation of the students.

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Appendix

Table 1. *The attitudes of students towards cooperative learning and individual learning*.

I like cooperative learning because…….		Gender						Statistical Analysis	
		Female		Male		Total			
		N	%	N	%	n	%	Chi-square	P
Cooperative learning environments develop positive relationships in class	Agree	98	98,0	55	83,3	153	92,2	9,9	0,002*
	Disagree	2	2,0	11	16,7	13	7,8		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
Cooperative learning environments provide respect to each other's ideas	Agree	88	88,0	44	66,7	132	79,5	9,8	0,002*
	Disagree	12	12,0	22	33,3	34	20,5		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
while studying in cooperation students guide each other	Agree	91	91,0	56	84,8	147	88,6	0,94	0,332
	Disagree	9	9,0	10	15,2	19	11,4		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
Individual studying is more enjoyable than working in groups	Agree	24	24,0	28	42,4	52	31,3	5,44	0,021**
	Disagree	76	76,0	38	57,6	114	68,7		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
while studying in cooperation students help each other	Agree	82	82,0	43	65,2	125	75,3	5,19	0,023*
	Disagree	18	18,0	23	34,8	41	24,7		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
Cooperative learning environments develop trust towards classmates	Agree	93	93,0	45	68,2	138	83,1	15,7	0,0001*
	Disagree	7	7,0	21	31,8	28	16,9		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
Cooperative learning environments develop individual learning	Agree	68	68,0	34	51,5	102	61,4	4,56	0,033*
	Disagree	32	32,0	32	48,5	64	38,6		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
Individual study offers better results	Agree	28	28,0	30	45,5	58	34,9	4,58	0,032**
	Disagree	72	72,0	36	54,5	108	65,1		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
Cooperative studying motivates the group members.	Agree	88	88,0	53	80,3	141	84,9	1,29	0,256
	Disagree	12	12,0	13	19,7	25	15,1		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		

Table 2. *The distribution of attitudes towards cooperative learning and individual learning according to gender of the students*

I like cooperative learning because…….		Gender						Statistical Analysis	
		Female		Male		Total			
		N	%	n	%	n	%	Chi-square	P
Cooperative learning environments develop positive relationships in class	Agree	98	98,0	55	83,3	153	92,2	9,9	0,002*
	Disagree	2	2,0	11	16,7	13	7,8		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
Cooperative learning environments provide respect to each other's ideas	Agree	88	88,0	44	66,7	132	79,5	9,8	0,002*
	Disagree	12	12,0	22	33,3	34	20,5		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
while studying in cooperation students guide each other	Agree	91	91,0	56	84,8	147	88,6	0,94	0,332
	Disagree	9	9,0	10	15,2	19	11,4		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
Individual studying is more enjoyable than working in groups	Agree	24	24,0	28	42,4	52	31,3	5,44	0,021**
	Disagree	76	76,0	38	57,6	114	68,7		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
while studying in cooperation students help each other	Agree	82	82,0	43	65,2	125	75,3	5,19	0,023*
	Disagree	18	18,0	23	34,8	41	24,7		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
Cooperative learning environments develop trust towards classmates	Agree	93	93,0	45	68,2	138	83,1	15,7	0,0001*
	Disagree	7	7,0	21	31,8	28	16,9		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
Cooperative learning environments develop individual learning	Agree	68	68,0	34	51,5	102	61,4	4,56	0,033*
	Disagree	32	32,0	32	48,5	64	38,6		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
Individual study offers better results	Agree	28	28,0	30	45,5	58	34,9	4,58	0,032**
	Disagree	72	72,0	36	54,5	108	65,1		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		
Cooperative studying motivates the group members.	Agree	88	88,0	53	80,3	141	84,9	1,29	0,256
	Disagree	12	12,0	13	19,7	25	15,1		
	Total	100	100,0	66	100,0	166	100,0		

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ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SIXTH GRADE TURKISH COURSE: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

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ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SIXTH GRADE TURKISH COURSE: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between academic self-concept (ASC) and first term marks of sixth grade students from their Turkish course. 74 students from two state primary schools in Turkey participated in this self-report survey study. ASC was assessed through a Turkish version of Myself-As-a-Learner Scale (MALS) (Burden, 2012) while achievement was measured by composite course mark at the end of Term I. Data analysis showed that female and male participants had varying levels of ACS, with girls reporting more positive academic self concept. It was also found that Turkish marks correlated significantly with ASC. The relationship was still significant when gender was controlled, implying the gender variable did not have any moderating effect. This study concludes that understanding ASC can provide useful information to teachers of Turkish and other fields alike both at the level of prediction and intervention.

Keywords: academic self-concept, gender, course achievement

1. Introduction

Self-concept is broadly defined as how one perceives herself. This concept has recently gained due recognition in educational psychology (Burden, 2012) and has been investigated by a growing number of scholars in the field (see for example Huang 2011; Marsh & Martin, 2011 for a wealth of publications in this field). It is often argued that the way(s) human beings evaluate themselves in relation to their past experience and social context is likely to influence their feelings (Harter, 1986; Marsh, 1993) such as efficacy, locus of control, and optimism (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992) as well as how they set their goals for future, and thus their motivation (Williams & Burden, 1997).

Self-concept cannot be described as one single construct as it encompasses a number of different dimensions in which people may have varying levels of personal evaluation (Marsh, 1993). A holistic measurement of such a multifaceted construct, then, can often be difficult. Clearly, a person's perception, for example, of her athletic abilities can be different from how she sees herself as a student and yet her perception of herself as a social person can be totally different, pointing to a multidimensional nature of the phenomenon (Heaton & Duerfeldt, 1973). Due to such complexity of the construct, it may be difficult and less revealing to measure the impact of a holistic overarching self-concept on human academic behaviour. In fact, Huang (2011a) found that an overall self concept can explain less variation in learner performance than its sub-domains. Therefore, measurement of its sub-domains such as academic, social, and physical self-concepts (Burden, 2012) can be more informative.

Of different sub-domains of self-concept, academic self-concept (ACS) has been reported to be a significant factor on academic achievement (Burden, 2005). ACS is often defined as one's personal evaluation and feelings about her own academic strengths and achievement. It is often construed as having its roots in an interpretation of one's past learning experience (Burden, 1998; Marsh, 1993; Marsh & Martin, 2011). However, just as it is based on our past experience, it is also likely to influence our future performance as it has been shown to be linked to both future academic performance as well as self-efficacy, a sense of competence and confidence about future academic performance (Ferla, Valcke & Chai, 2009).

ACS and achievement are also often described to have a reciprocal relationship, influencing one another (Marsh & Craven, 2006) in that they mutually reinforce each other and their relationship results in improvement in both constructs (Marsh & Martin, 2011). However, improvement in one but not in the other may yield only short-term temporary changes. To emphasize this, Marsh and Craven (ibid: 159) state "If practitioners enhance self-concepts without improving performance, then the gains in self-concept are likely to be short-lived. If practitioners improve performance without also fostering participants' self-beliefs in their capabilities, then the performance gains are also unlikely to be long-lasting."

A multitude of papers have so far been published on ACS in different educational contexts with regard to its interaction with academic achievement, often reporting different levels and strengths of positive interactions and sometimes presenting diverse methodological structures. To synthesize such diversity and wealth of research studies, *meta-analysis* can be a useful tool which may help researchers as well as readers to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon addressed in different contexts and research papers (Glass, McGaw & Smith, 1981). Marsh and Martin (2011) point out that the ability of meta-analyses is to assess the generalizability of research findings in various research papers, which is not always possible in individual studies. Meta-analyses of research findings on ASC often reveal that ASC and academic achievement are closely related to each other. Valentine and DuBois (2005) and Huang (2011a), for example, identified robust interaction between the two concepts across research studies they included in their meta-analyses.

Studies in Turkey on ASC, too, report positive relationships between ASC and academic achievement (Arseven, 1979; Yavuzer, 1989: cited in Kenç and Oktay, 2002; Doğusal-Tezel, 1987) although these relationships can be limited, explaining a small amount of variation (Kenç and Oktay, ibid). Doğan-Başokçu and Doğan (2005) in their attempt to validate an ASC scale developed by Kuzgun (1994, 1996) found that academic self-concept can predict students' academic performance, combination of different subscales of their instrument explaining 10% of variation.

Studies investigating ASC in relation to language development are scarce. In native language development, ASC has been shown to be related to the development of Flemish (De Fraine, Van Damme & Onghena, 2007) and Chinese (Marsh, Hau & Kong, 2002). In the Turkish context, Doğan-Başokçu and Doğan (2005) found positive correlations between ASC and scores in Turkish component of a centrally administered test (Student Selection and Placement Examination for Secondary Education) given at the end of Grade 8 for placement purposes. A combination of components numerical ability, verbal ability and hand-eye coordination explained an 8% of variation in participants' scores in the Turkish components of the exam. Interestingly, the numerical ability component was the best predictor of the test performance in Turkish. More recently, Erten and Burden (in preparation) found that ASC and student attribution can be powerful predictors of performance in achievement tests in English classes, ASC alone explaining 6% of unique variation in students' scores.

To summarize, we know that ASC is a significant factor in student achievement. However, its relation to language development remains to be explored. With limited studies available, it is often difficult to make safe conclusions. Therefore, studies in this area are likely to contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, this study aims to explore possible effects of ASC and student achievement in Turkish classes.

2. Study

2.1. Aims of the Study

This study was primarily concerned with investigating the relationship between ASC and academic achievements of 6th grade students in their Turkish course. To do this, answers to the following research questions were sought.

1. How do 6th grade students perceive themselves as learners?
2. Is there a relationship between students' ASC scores and their Turkish marks?

2.2. Setting and Participants

The study is part of a larger scale study and is based on preliminary analysis of some data collected. The data used for analysis for this study was collected in 2011 from 74 6th grade students at two state primary schools in two cities in Turkey. Both schools were located in the city centre (Manisa = 30; and Mersin = 44). Of these students 43 were female while 31 were male. Students at the time of data collection were in their 6th grade with a mean age of 12.20 (SD = 0,596).

2.3 Instruments

Turkish course mark: The instrument used in this study collected demographic and background information concerning participants' achievement in Turkish classes. Students were asked to give their Turkish mark at the end of the first term. Participants were not assessed on the same tests but they were following the prescribed syllabus as teachers of Turkish at state schools are required to follow the same syllabus prescribed by the Ministry of Education, often using the same course book distributed by the Ministry.

At the time of data collection, students were required to take a centrally administered annual exam at the end of each year, score of which contributed to a composite score at the end of year eight that was used for the placement of primary school graduates in different types of high schools. Teachers of Turkish are, then, expected by the system and parents to focus on the same content in their efforts to prepare their students for such a competitive exam. Further, a t-test analysis of the two groups of students on their 1st term Turkish mark did not reveal a significant difference ($t = ,741$, $df = 72$, $p < .461$). Therefore, it is not unsafe to assume a fairly homogenous sample in terms of course content and achievement.

Academic self-concept (ASC). ASC was measured by a Turkish version of Myself-As-a-Learner Scale (MALS) (Erten, Burden & Bayraktar-Erten, in preparation). MALS purports to measure how students perceive themselves as learners on a one-dimensional factorial construct. The scale employs a 5-point Likert scale where the minimum possible score is 20 while the maximum possible is 100. The scale items instruct participants to describe themselves by reporting their agreement level with statements like *I am good at discussing things; Learning is easy; I like using my brain*.

The instrument was so far employed by several other researchers and has been reported to correlate with achievement as well as interact with interventions in experimental design (e.g. Burke & Williams, 2008; Armstrong & Humphrey, 2009; Dewey & Bento, 2009; Erten & Burden, in preparation). Burden (1998; 2012) reports that original MALS achieves high

internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .84) and test-retest reliability (r = .96). The Turkish translation used in this study was also found to have high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .83) with a high split half correlation of r^2 = .666 (p < .000) (Erten et.al., ibid.).

2.4 Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

The composite instruments were posted to previously contacted schools where it was administered by cooperating school teachers in their regular class hours. The instruments were posted back to the researchers upon completion. The return rate was a satisfactory 65%.

This study mainly employed MALS scores and students' 1st term Turkish marks as main variables. SPSS 19 was used to analyze the emergent data. Descriptive statistics were calculated to initially depict characteristics of the participants. As the data exhibited a normal distribution, Pearson correlation coefficients and partial correlations were used to explore the relationship between ASC, Turkish mark as well as school and gender as a controlling factor.

3. Findings and Discussion

This study primarily aimed to investigate the relationship between ASC and achievement in Turkish course as measured by a composite mark at the end of the first term. This study particularly sought to describe

a) students' profile of ASC and achievement in Turkish course, and

b) potential interaction between Turkish course achievement and ASC,

3.1 Achievement in Turkish Course

Descriptive statistics revealed a fairly high mean of end of the term achievement in the Turkish course. Students appeared to have a mean score of 81.78 (SD = 11.819). Both schools had fairly similar means for the Turkish course. Students from Mersin seemed to report slightly better Turkish marks (n = 43, $\bar{X}$ = 82.65, SD = 11.017) than did their peers from Manisa (n = 31, $\bar{X}$ = 80.58, SD = 12.419), with a minimal mean difference of 2.071 and not achieving any statistical significance (t = ,741, df = 72, p< .461). Further, gender factor did not seem to influence participants' Turkish marks, although female students had a fairly higher mean mark although the mean difference between the two groups did not qualify to be significant (t = 1.411, df = 72, p<.0.163). These figures can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *T-test: school and gender effect on Turkish marks*

Group	n	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t	df	Significance
Mersin	31	82.65	11.017	2.071	.741	72	p <.461
Manisa	43	80.58	12.419				
Female	43	83.42	11.149	3.902	1.411	72	p <.163
Male	31	79.52	12.519				

3.2. ASC Scores

Descriptive analysis of ASC scores revealed that participants in this study had a mean score of 78.32 (SD = 11.227). Both schools reported fairly high ASC scores. Mersin group reported higher ASC score (n = 31, mean = 80.32, SD= 9.782) than Manisa group (n = 43,

mean = 76.88, SD = 12.069). However, the difference was not statistically significant (t = 1.306, df = 72, p<.196).

The other control variable which was gender, however, seemed to influence ASC scores. Female students appeared to have higher ASC scores (n = 43, mean = 80.30, SD = 9.583) than their male peers (n = 31, mean = 75.58, SD = 12.836) although the difference was not big enough to qualify as significant (t = 1.813, df = 72, p<.074). These figures are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. *T-test: school and gender effect on ASC scores*

Group	n	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t	df	Significance
Mersin	31	80.32	9.782	3.44	1.306	72	p <.196
Manisa	43	76.88	12.06				
Female	43	80.30	9.583	4.7	1.813	72	p <.074
Male	31	75.58	12.836				

As gender appeared to be a potential factor influencing ASC scores, its influence was further explored through a non-parametric frequency analysis. To do this, an initial K-means cluster analysis of participants on their ASC scores was undertaken, which created three distinct ASC groups. These were labelled as students with low (n = 9, mean = 60.11, SD = 8.084), medium (n=31, mean = 72.74, SD = 3.838), or high (n = 34, mean = 88.23, SD = 5.354) ASC scores, which were later used to employ a Chi square analysis where ASC group frequencies and gender were cross-tabulated. The Chi square analysis pointed to a significant difference between male and female students (x^2 = 7.073, df = 2, p<.029), with higher percentages of male students exhibiting high (22.58% vs. 4.65%) and low (45.16% vs. 39.53%) ASC scores than their female peers. Interestingly, a much larger proportion of female participants reported a moderately medium level of ASC (55.81% vs. 32.26%). Such varying distribution of participants according to their schools to different ASC groups was not apparent (x^2 = 4.012, df = 2, p<.135). Gender differences can be found in Table 3 below.

Table 3. *Chi square: gender versus asc levels*

	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	TOTAL
FEMALE	17	24	2	43
%	39.53	55.81	4.65	100
MALE	14	10	7	31
%	45.16	32.26	22.58	100

(x^2 = 7.073, df = 2, p<.029)

Difference between female and male participants observed in this particular study presents a curious case. Although female students reported a slightly better overall ASC as reflected by their mean scores than male students, proportions of male participants, as a result of K-means cluster analysis, who were classified as both those having high ASC and those having

low ASC were larger than female participants while the reverse was true for the moderate group. This was possibly due to a higher standard deviation (9.58 vs. 12.83) found in the mean scores of male students reflecting a more varied perception of their academic strengths. Such a finding gives support to what Pehlivan and Köseoğlu (2010) found with a group of Science High School students although it contradicts with an observation that male students report better ASC scores (Kenç & Oktay, 2002). Further, Doğusal-Tezel (1987) and Burden (2012) report insignificant differences between the two groups. Clearly, gender issue in ASC may be context and domain bound. For example, Huang (2011b), in his meta-analysis of a related concept self-efficacy on an international scale, found that female students had better self-efficacy on language arts than males while males were better on mathematic self-efficacy. It is certainly possible that members of different gender groups may have differing perceptions of themselves in different possible sub-domains of ACS. Further research can be informative to clarify this issue.

3.3. *ASC and Achievement in Turkish Course*

To explore the possible relationship between participants' ASC and their achievement in Turkish course, a Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was used. This analysis indicated a strong correlation between the two constructs ($n = 74$, $r = .416$, $p<.001$), ASC explaining almost one fifth of variation in Turkish course marks at the end of the first term ($r^2 = .173$). As the gender appeared to be a significant factor on ASC scores, a further partial correlation analysis, where gender was controlled to see whether it is a factor on the interaction between ASC and course achievement, revealed that the interaction between ASC and achievement in Turkish course was still intact ($r = .396$, $df = 71$, $p <.001$), still explaining a significant amount of variation ($r^2 = .156$). The minimal decrease in the correlation coefficient indicated that gender did not interfere with the relationship between these two constructs to a great extent, indicating that the relationship between ASC and achievement in this particular study was independent and genuine.

High correlation coefficient observed between ASC and achievement in Turkish course was in keeping with reports on the relationship between ASC and other fields of study both in Turkey and abroad. This study especially gave support to studies that looked into interaction between AC and first language development such as Flemish (De Fraine, Van Damme & Onghena, 2007), Chinese (Marsh, Hau & Kong, 2002), and Turkish (Doğan-Başokçu & Doğan, 2005). Positive relationship observed in this study was congruent with studies into other fields of study in Turkey (Arseven, 1979; Doğusal-Tezel, 1987; Yavuzer, 1989; Kenç & Oktay, 2002) as well as meta-analyses of international studies (Valentine & DuBois, 2005; Huang, 2011a).

Marsh and Martin (2011) maintain that ASC and achievement is often in a reciprocal relationship. It is quite possible that both constructs can be in strong interaction in this study too. It is also likely that students had positive ASC because they earned successful scores in their Turkish exams or just the other way around. Data at hand in this study, unfortunately, does not allow for further elaboration of the direction of interaction identified here. However, it is not unsafe to assume a reciprocal relationship as suggested by Marsh and Craven (2006).

4. Conclusion

Small scale in nature, this study explored the relationship between two constructs: a widely recognized ASC and achievement in Turkish course. In the light of above findings and discussion, it is safe to conclude that ASC can explain performance in academic achievement irrespective of individual differences such as gender. Therefore, a closer look into interface between the two constructs is warranted.

It can be argued that, as Marsh and Craven (2006) quite rightly put, classroom practice needs to aim at improvement both in academic performance and academic self-concept as the lack of one may only lead to short-lived results. Such an argument has clear implications for classroom teachers. This study is limited in its size and scope, further studies into paths of interaction and development in both can provide important information on how to better help our students improve their perception of themselves as well as their academic performance. Classroom research can yield extremely important information.

ASC is a sub-domain of general construct of self-concept. Yet, it also encompasses one's perception of herself in different fields of study. Clearly, learners may have varying perception of themselves in foreign language(s), mathematics, fine-arts, physics as well as social sciences including Turkish (Mercer, 2011). More field-specific measures of self-concept has also been reported to be better predictors of achievement (Huang, 2011a) as well as individual differences such as gender (Huang, 2011b). Specialist instruments, then, can be more revealing in attempts to understand the role of academic self-concept (or field-specific academic self-concept) in course achievement in relation to other moderating factors. There is certainly room for further research.

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ATTITUDES OF U.S. FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS TOWARD TEACHING CULTURE

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ATTITUDES OF U.S. FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS TOWARD TEACHING CULTURE

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Abstract

The *National Standards for Foreign Language Teaching* delineate broad goal areas for foreign language teaching in the U.S. with the overarching goal of "educating students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad" (NSFLL, 1996). These five goal areas *Communication, Culture, Connections, Communities and Comparisons*, frame national language curricula. However even with such a stated focus on preparing students to function in a multicultural, multilingual world, previous research has shown that *language teaching* often is solely prioritized in foreign language classrooms in the United States. This study examines whether or not contemporary foreign language teachers from across the U.S. still engage in the common practice of teaching about culture at the surface level or whether or not they lead students to a deeper understanding of how cultural products, practices, and perspectives are related.

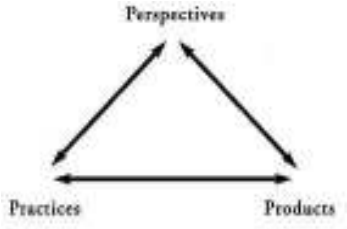
Keywords: culture, classroom, K-12 learners, National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, perspectives

As high school students enter foreign language classes in the United States they are often optimistic about learning about the cultures of the languages they will be studying. Parents, teachers and administrators believe that foreign language classes provide an environment in which students learn to eventually interact in international settings in their future careers. Within the language teaching profession itself, the teaching of culture has been elevated to a central role within the curriculum and seeks not only to expose students to the target cultures they are studying, but also to help them develop intercultural skills to function within any culture in which they find themselves (Phillips, 2003).

The *National Standards for Foreign Language Learning* have a stated focus of preparing students who are "culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad" (NSFLL, 1996). Within the five goal areas identified in the National Standards, *Communication, Culture, Connections, Communities, and Comparisons,* not only is there a goal dedicated to culture, but at least one sub-standard under each of the other goal areas deals with culture. According to Phillips (2003), the broad goal of teaching culture is to have students "gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures" (p.164). The standards that fall under the culture goal specify that students should demonstrate awareness of *a)* the relationship between practices and perspectives, and *b)* the relationship between the products and perspectives of target cultures (Phillips, 2003). Thus, the goal related to teaching culture in K-12 settings is to have students know how to understand how a given group's world view is related to the tools they use and the things they do.

Practices are defined as, "patterns of behavior accepted by a society" (NSFLL, 1996) and refer basically to behavioral norms in a given culture. Products are tangible items used by a culture or non-tangible concepts or ways of doing things (NSFLL, 1996). The standards establish a link between products, practices and perspectives, or underlying belief systems of a culture. This relationship is often represented in the triangle diagram of products, practices and perspectives. Such a framework scaffolds teachers' abilities to understand that "culture" is a multifaceted concept in which these components are all related (Cutshall, 2012).

Figure 1. *Visual representation of the relationship between cultural practices, products and perspectives*



(NSFLL, 1996)

The assumption that the teaching of language is inseparable from the teaching of culture has been present in language teaching literature for decades since Brooks (1964) and Seeyle (1894). Despite the fact that this focus on culture has long been present, and has been incorporated into the standards since 1996, foreign language courses that put a primary emphasis on language remain prevalent (Damen, 2003). When "culture" is incorporated into foreign language classrooms it is often still addressed at the surface level and only cultural products are presented ...and even the presentation of these artifacts occurs as a supplement to the language curriculum (Castro, 2004; Cutshall, 2012; Crawford & McLaren, 2003; Kramsch, 2005). An urgent need for American students to understand worldviews currently exists (Kramsch, 2005) and foreign language curricula must focus on more than just linguistic elements. Language teachers today must change the notion that teaching a new language or culture is simply helping students translate their reality into a simple word in a new language (Durocher, 2007; Lange, 1998; Jordan & Walton, 1987) and find ways to facilitate student ability to develop the tools to analyze and understand new cultures.

Marginalization of Culture in the Curriculum

Explanations for why culture maintains a marginalized position within many language curricula have been identified in the literature. First of all despite the fact that teachers may be aware that there is more to "teaching" culture than presenting facts, when they obtain an instructional position they may resort to teaching foreign languages in the same way they were taught (Castro, 2004; Sercu & del Carmen Méndez Garcia, 2004). Next, teachers may assume that students will become culturally competent as an incidental result of learning a language (Schultz, 2006). Another explanation for the lack of emphasis on teaching about culture is that foreign language teachers themselves have limited to no experience abroad (Cutshall, 2012; Shrum & Glisan, 2010; Kramsch, 2005). Teachers also stray from meeting objectives related to culture because the relationship between language and culture is unclear for learners (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Finally, although the standards emphasize an integrated approach, textbooks continue to present culture in small sidebar notes which simply result in reinforcing stereotypes

(Cutshall, 2012). "Lack of stated goals and outcomes, absence of curricular organization, deficient or non-existent assessment tools, and unfocused learning strategies are some of the major reasons why culture learning has not been successfully included in language instruction" (Lange, 2003, p. 274)

Process vs. Information Acquisition Approaches to Teaching Culture

Within the foreign language classroom the traditional approach to teaching culture has been the dissemination of factual information about target cultures (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Historically, instead of addressing the complexities of culture and its relationship to all aspects of everyday life and language, second language textbooks have presented "cultural tidbits" emphasizing similarities or differences between the background of the learners and the target populations (Damen, 2003). In an attempt to encourage learners to accept their cultural counterparts, second language textbooks often homogenized cultures presenting, "pictures of happy, well-scrubbed, blue-jeaned folk drinking Coca-Cola in scenes that might be found in Dallas, Madrid or Paris" (Damen, 2003, p.75). Culture's relative importance to the linguistic aspects of language curriculum is evident in the positioning of cultural information in contained "boxes at the end of the lesson" (Damen, p.74). This approach can be problematic when students actually try to deal with individuals from any given cultural or subcultural background who differ from the homogenized version presented in textbooks in a myriad of complex ways.

In contrast to this traditional "information acquisition" approach in which teachers relay cultural facts and demographic information to learners, the *perspectives, practices, products* paradigm presented within the National Standards is a "constructivist approach to learning about culture in which learners construct their views of culture through social interaction and interpersonal communication" (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p.156).

Language educators have called for a process based approach to teaching culture that recognizes that it is impossible to relay all possible information about any cultural group because of subcultural and individual complexities (Smith, Paige & Steglitz, 2003). Unlike traditional approaches that seem to generalize across cultures, a process based approach recognizes vast disparities in perceptions, value systems and worldviews and assumes that different groups creatively meet their needs in distinct ways. In order for language learners to understand cultural differences, they must understand their own cultures and then interpret the behaviors of others "from the perspective of the culture being studied" (Smith, Paige & Steglitz, 2003, p.112).

Fundamental learning processes incorporated into a model of language teaching in which culture is the core of the curriculum would include the following three aspects: "the learners' exploration of their own culture; 2) the discovery of the relationship between language and culture, and 3) the learning of the heuristics for analyzing and comparing cultures (Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein & Colby, 2003).

M. Bennet (1986) proposes "Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). According to this model "intercultural competence is…. the ability to recognize oneself operating in cultural context, the identification and appreciation of cultural differences, and the development of general strategies for adapting to cultural difference" (Bennett, Bennett & Allen, 2003, p.246). Such a model does not prepare students to interact in a single target culture, but provides instruction so that students can develop the means to understand any given differing cultural contexts in which they need to function. According to this model, individual learners can progress from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelevant stage as they learn about others. While in the

ethnocentric stage, in which people "people unconsciously experience their own cultures as central to reality" there are three phases: denial, defense, and minimization (Benet, 1986). In the state of *denial* individuals live in culturally isolated groups and do not consider that there could be other ways of meeting needs that differ from their own. At the *defense* stage there is understanding that cultural differences exist however these differences may be perceived as threatening. During the *minimization* phase of ethnocentrism, people assume that all humans are similar however these comparisons are made based on their own cultural perspectives.

As an individual moves toward an ethnorelevant stage, or stage in which "people consciously recognize that all behavior exists in cultural context, including their own," they recognize the restriction their own perspective places on their experience and seek out cultural difference as a way of enriching their own reality and as a means to understand others" (Bennet, 2003, p.243). Benet defines three phases of ethnorelevance which include: acceptance, adaptation and integration. In the acceptance phase, individuals are able to accept that different cultural contexts can lead to different behaviors. During *adaptation* people are able to consciously differentiate behavior in order to participate more fully in a second culture. As part of the *integration* phase a person begins to consider the ability to understand events or practices within their cultural context as part of their own personal identity, which becomes less fixed and more fluid.

A process based approach to teaching culture would provide students with the tools to move to an ethnorelevant stage of cultural understanding. The DMIS process based model presents culture "not as the acquisition of content or a body of knowledge, but rather the ability to shift cultural perspective' (p.252). The goal for teaching culture within such a model would include helping students develop the ability to understand their own cultures so they can become beings who understand those they come in contact with from a variety of cultures. This model deems the understanding of cultural differences as imperative "for the development of cultural awareness" (Bennet, p.253).

Purpose

This study examines contemporary K-12 U.S. foreign language teacher attitudes about teaching culture by addressing the following two questions:

1. Do teachers think it is more important to teach universal aspects of culture or to teach students how different belief systems result in different cultural practices and products?
2. Do teachers think it is as important to teach culture as it is to teach language?

These questions are designed to examine current perceptions of actual teachers in U.S. foreign language classrooms in an attempt to understand their alignment with the ACTFL's National Standards for Foreign Language Learning.

Methods

In order to answer questions about teacher attitude toward teaching culture a survey instrument was designed that consisted of two parts (Appendix A). The first section was a series of likert scale items in which participants were asked to rate how strongly they agreed with a series of twenty statements about language teaching. A five point scale was used with *Strongly Disagree* being the lowest possible rating and *Strongly Agree* as the highest. These statements were designed to gauge teacher's opinions on different aspects of or approaches to teaching culture.

In addition to the likert items, participants were asked to rank 16 learning objectives according to their perceived order of importance. Objectives ranged from teaching about grammatical structures, presenting cultural artifacts, and facilitating student understanding of the relationship between cultural practices, products and belief systems.

US K-12 Foreign Language Teachers were identified through school district websites from different regions throughout the United States. Selected teachers were emailed an invitation to participate and 113 participants responded to the online survey. This sample exceeded the required sample needed for power of a moderate effect.

Likert type items were placed into subscales for comparison. To explore possible differences that may exist between the survey subscales, t-tests were performed to analyze if specific differences occurred across participants' ratings with respect to the five survey subscales. Analyses found that ratings were significantly different across subsets of survey scales.

Likert data items were grouped into categories for a means analysis which revealed that as a group, these practicing teachers agreed more strongly with the statements prioritizing teaching the similarity of cultures (m= 4.98) than with the statements related to prioritize teaching about cultural differences that are based on belief systems (m=4.73). In reference to the goal area of "teaching culture" practicing teachers rated the objective of linking products, practices and perspectives lower (m = 4.72) than statements about presenting artifacts alone. When asked to rate both statements about language teaching and the teaching of culture, teachers agreed more strongly with statements asserting that their primary objective was to teach students linguistic components of a language (m=4.36) than to statements about the priority of teaching about language and how it is linked to culture (m=4.21).

S1: Similarity of Cultures mean = 4.98	S2: Difference of Cultures mean= 4.73
Students should compare other cultures to examine how they are similar.	Students should understand that other cultures have different beliefs.
Students should understand that people from different cultures are inherently alike.	
Students should compare other cultures with their own.	Students should understand different belief systems guide ways of thinking.
S3: Linking Practices and Products to Perspectives Mean = 4.72	S4: Practices and Products Mean = 4.73
Students should understand how cultural products and artifacts are related to a belief system.	It is important to share cultural artifacts with students such as food, clothing, and holidays.
Students should understand why culture clashes occur.	Students need to understand basic demographics about the country they are studying.
	Students should know about the architecture and buildings of the target culture.
S5: Culture in Language Study mean = 4.21	S6: Language as Grammar mean = 4.36
Culture should be a major part of the foreign language curriculum.	My primary responsibility is to teach students to use language in grammatically correct ways.
Students should recognize that cultural beliefs are obvious in language use.	

The second section of the survey asked participants to rank a series of learning objectives. Instructions for this section specified that teachers were to "number the following learning objectives in the order in which you would consider these skills most important to teach with #1 as the *most important* item and #16 being the *least important* item.

To analyze the section ranking objectives, mean scores were calculated for each individual objective. Then objectives were grouped into related subgroups and an average was calculated for each group. Group means fell into the following order from most important to least important objectives to meet in the foreign language classroom: *1)* Objectives related to Language (m=5.96), *2)* Objectives related to Comparing cultures similarities (m=7.46) *3)* Objectives related to understanding cultural differences (8.29), *4)* "traditional" approaches toward teaching culture (9.56) and *5)* objectives related to understanding underlying belief systems of other cultures and how they are related to practices and products (9.59).

RESULTS OF RANKING LEARNING OBJECTIVES	Individual rank	**Subgroup Rank**
1. Language for Language		**5.96**
Be able to interact with members of the target culture to accomplish specific tasks	5.61	
Use language in a grammatically correct way	6.3	
2. Compare		**7.46**
Compare other cultures with their own to see how the cultures are similar	5.13	
State ways in which people from all over the world are inherently alike.	8.13	
Identify instances in which their counterparts all over the world do the same types of things	9.13	
3. Contrast		**8.29**
Contrast other cultures with their own to see how they differ	6.04	
Articulate how other cultures and subcultures have very different beliefs that they do	8.96	
Analyze the reason culture clashes occur in a given situation	9.89	
4. Traditional		**9.56**
Identify representative architecture and/or famous buildings from the countries they will be studying	11.56	
Provide basic demographic information about countries where their target language is spoken.	10.22	
Identify traditional cultural artifacts such as clothing, food and holidays.	8.49	
Demonstrate interest in learning about other cultures by participating in periodic culture day activities.	8	
5. Belief Systems		**9.59**
Demonstrate understanding of instances in which peoples' belief systems	9.74	

guide their actions and ways of thinking.

Explain how a particular product or artifact is related to the belief systems of a group of people	11.16
Give examples of instances in which a given culture's beliefs are reflected in the language that they use.	7.87

Discussion

Analysis of both types of items reveals a similar trend in teacher perceptions. First, teacher participants rated language teaching as the most important objective in their actual classrooms within the survey items. Within the likert scale items teachers on average agreed more strongly that it was important to teach "language", i.e. grammar teaching, than to teach about culture or the relationship between language and culture. This is consistent with research findings that suggest foreign language teachers continue to "focus on the explanation and practice of targeted language forms and the treatment of culture…. tasks as "throw in activities" (Warford & White, 2012, p.400).

Secondly, on both types of items teachers prioritized the teaching of cultural similarities over the teaching of cultural differences. This finding suggests that teachers may be promoting the homogenization of cultures as they attempt to "foster empathy" for members of the target culture (Damen, 2003, p.75).

On both sets of measures, teachers more strongly agreed that it was important to teach about cultural practices and products than to teach students to link cultural products and practices to the underlying belief systems to which they are connected. For likert scale items, teachers prioritized items such as sharing artifacts such as food, clothing and holidays, demographic information, and architecture. As they ranked learning objectives, those related to traditional methods for teaching culture were ranked higher than those related to teaching students to analyze how belief systems are related to cultures, those deemed important by the national standard. This supports Warford & White's (2012) claim that "mainstream language instruction… continues to be custodially concerned with the four F's treatment of culture learning" defined by Kramsch (1991) as "food, folklore, festivals and facts" (p.412).

Data acquired through these interviews suggests that the attempt of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996) to elevate the teaching of culture into a position in which it is an integrated part of the foreign language classroom may not have occurred. Although according to Phillips (2003), the redesigned National Standards seek to "refocus teachers' attention upon culture as the core so it may become the central outcome of students learning, long espoused but seldom achieved" (p.163). As long as teachers continue to prioritize linguistic objectives and a traditional information acquisition approach over a process based approach that teaches students to facilitate understanding of why particular groups adapt the behavioral patterns they do, it will be impossible for K-12 students to meet this objective.

Future research should seek to understand the impact that teacher or preparation programs have on teacher understanding of the relationship between practices, products and perspectives. Phillips (2003) also tells us that university foreign language programs have historically included a history/civilization course as part of the major as a response to the need for teaching about the target culture. Many ACTFL/NCATE certified programs use assessments from this course as evidence of meeting ACTFL standards related to the teaching of culture. However, these courses have been "geared to coverage of history and fine arts as a background necessary for courses in

literature" and not focused on teaching the process of developing cross cultural understanding (Phillips, 2003, p.162) collected from the curuse this data to design an additional study that investigates how experiences abroad influences the way teachers integrate teaching about culture in their foreign language classes.

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APPENDIX A
"Teacher Attitudes toward Teaching Culture" Survey

Teaching Culture

Page 2

Please read the statements on this page and indicate how much you agree or disagree by choosing one of the five choices.

The following is a key for your reponses:
1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

I want my students to learn that people from all over the world are all inherently alike.

. 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response	○	○	○	○	○

I think it is important to share traditional cultural artifacts with students such as clothing, foods, and holidays.

. 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response	○	○	○	○	○

I plan to teach students about representative architecture and/or famous buildings from the countries they will be studying.

. 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response	○	○	○	○	○

My primary responsibility is to teach students to use language in grammatically correct ways.

. 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response	○	○	○	○	○

I will try to teach my students that their counterparts all over the world do the same types of things they do.

. 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response	○	○	○	○	○

Students need to know how to use language to get things done in different contexts where the target language is spoken.

. 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response	○	○	○	○	○

. My students should be able to explain how a particular product or artifact is related to the belief systems of a group of people.
1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response					

. My students should be able to analyze the reasons that cause culture clashes to occur in a given situation.
1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response					

0. My students should be able to recognize a given culture's beliefs that are obvious in the language that they use.
1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response					

1. Students should have opportunities to interact with members of the target culture over the course of the language class.
1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response					

2. My students should be aware that other cultures and subcultures have very different beliefs than they do.
1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response					

3. My students should compare other cultures with their own to see how the cultures differ.
1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response					

4. Culture should be a major integrated part of my foreign language curriculum.
1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response					

5. I think it is great to have a culture day once per week or once per month.
1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response					

My students should compare other cultures with their own to see how the cultures are similar.

6. 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response					

Students should know basic demographic information about countries where the target language is spoken.

7. 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response					

My students should understand that belief systems guide personal actions and ways of thinking.

8. 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response					

My students need to understand their own cultures.

9. 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Response					

Teaching Culture

Page 3

Number the following learning objectives in the order in which you would consider these skills most

0. important to teach with **#1** being the *MOST IMPORTANT ITEM* and **#16** being the *LEAST IMPORTANT* item.
Students will be able to:

Rank the items below, using numeric values starting with 1.

state ways in which people from all over the world are all inherently alike.

identify instances in which their counterparts all over the world do the same types of things they do.

identify traditional cultural artifacts with students such as clothing, foods, and holidays.

identify representative architecture and/or famous buildings from the countries they will be studying.

explain how a particular product or artifact is related to the belief systems of a group of

people.	
articulate how other cultures and subcultures have very different beliefs than they do.	
demonstrate understanding of instances in which people's belief systems guide their actions and their ways of thinking.	
give examples of instances in which a given culture's beliefs are reflected in the language that they use.	
articulate an understanding of their own cultural practices, products and perspectives.	
compare other cultures with their own to see how the cultures are similar.	
contrast other cultures with their own to see how the cultures differ.	
analyze the reason culture clashes occur in a given situation.	
use language in a grammatically correct way.	
provide basic demographic information about countries where their target language is spoken.	
demonstrate interest in learning about other cultures by participating in periodic "culture day" activities.	
interact will be able to interact with members of the target culture to accomplish specific tasks.	

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ONLINE INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR DEEP LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

This article focuses on the creation of instructional materials that serve as a personal environment for learning a less-commonly-taught language. The study aims to raise awareness of ways in which digital personal learning environments can be used in tandem with more formal learning strategies. The study explores self-regulated language learning within personal environments created for intermediate and advanced Turkish. We reviewed the conceptual background for the approach as well as the project-based learning strategies scaffolded in the online thematic materials. Through a 3-year longitudinal inquiry and semi-structured interviews with eight instructors who implemented the approach in four universities, the authors analyze the impact of personalized learning in developing deeper levels of language apprenticeship. The instructors we interviewed report increased growth in proficiency and accuracy in linguistic and cultural learning, as experienced in their courses through their formative and summative assessments, as well as the realization of most pedagogical goals related to language acquisition in a rich format. In light of the needs for teacher education adapted to new technologies, the paper highlights the difficulties of pedagogy for autonomy.

*Keywords***:** Personal learning environments; self-regulated learning; second/foreign language learning; less-commonly-taught language; deep learning; postsecondary education.

1. Introduction

Ubiquitous technology offers new approaches to computer-assisted learning. It is now possible to go beyond the boundaries of the classroom thanks to personal learning environments (PLEs) that students can use anywhere (Attwell, 2007). By integrating lifelong learning with technologies, PLEs support self-determined and self-regulated learning, allowing a student to draw connections from resources that he or she selects and organizes. The student can also engage in personalized collaborations with other students. Thus, PLEs can be understood as complex knowledge systems helping students organize their learning freely and thus take ownership of it. "This includes providing support for learners to set their own learning goals, manage their learning, managing both content and process, communicate with others in the process of learning, and thereby achieve learning goals" (Van Harmelen, 2006, p. 3).

PLEs can support deep, project-based learning (Beckett & Miller, 2006). In order to create inquiry-based projects for language and culture learning, our research team gathered numerous instructional materials, including links to various technologies and resources, to

create a "deep approach to Turkish teaching and learning" (DATTL) website that served as a cross-university online instructional textbook. The technologies we used to support DATTL (e.g., streaming videos, PowerPoints) are integrated into thematic modules for self-directed learning on the part of the language student. These modules are nested in multiple layered connections in the online materials our research team created.

Our research study examined if and how such technologies and open resources can support self-directed learning in less-commonly-taught languages, such as Turkish. PLEs are available for Turkish language learning in various colleges in the United States (Tochon, Argit-Ökten, Karaman, & Druc, 2009–2012). To investigate *teacher perceptions* related to students' use of authentic Internet-based PLEs in Turkish language and culture courses, we interviewed college instructors who tried the new approach with their students in intermediate and advanced level courses in Turkish. In addition to the interviews, we collected data from a forum website to which instructors were invited to contribute. Additional sources of data included classroom observations and Skype conversations with the instructors. We analyzed these data to determine if the e-learning environment changed instructors' perceptions about language learning.

2. Theoretical background

This section examines the concept of PLEs, existing materials for Turkish instruction through a PLE, and how PLEs can make a positive difference in instruction. We analyze the role of PLEs for deep language learning and their embedment into broader, significant expression and interactional projects. Crucial to the use of PLEs, then, is to examine issues related to self-regulated learning and autonomy in teacher education.

2.1 Deep, Self-Regulated Learning

The question at the heart of our study is whether new technologies can be organized to support deep learning in one of the less-commonly-taught languages. Educational technologies can offer procedures and guidance to help people develop instructional materials (Reigeluth, 1999). Yet, there is an ongoing debate as to whether technologies lead to shallow learning (Carr, 2011) or deep education (Tochon, 2010a). Many studies in higher education tried to define deep learning (e.g. Marton and Säljö, 1976; Entwistle, 2000). For example, Ramsden's (1992) study contrasted surface learning, which focuses on forms and signs, with deep learning, which focuses on meaning. Surface learning involves the memorization of unrelated parts without reflection; it is external and fragmented, as it is mainly concerned with assessment. Conversely, deep learning links new knowledge to prior knowledge across fields; it is internal, holistic, and most often self-regulated.

Deep learning requires a personalized environment (Tochon, 2010b), and Van Lier (2010) drew attention to the interdependence of agency, autonomy and identity, which are essential to human learning. Agency is understood as the capacity for self-determination and decision-making, and the ability to take responsibility for actions. If we can organize online open resources by themes that can be freely selected and thus support agency, there is an opportunity that such organizational environments will help scaffold deeper learning on the basis of shared intrinsic motivation. A body of studies in applied linguistics seems to concur with this hypothesis by focusing on how languages are learned when autonomy is provided to the learner. The instructional trend, formerly oriented towards teachers, is now more and more directed towards how learners can determine their own learning environments in a way that is in large part self-determined (Syed Khuzzan, Goulding, and Underwood, 2008).

A PLE is a set of instruments loosely joined in ways that work for the individual, as it can be adapted to each person. Schaffert and Hilzensauer (2008) identified the most important aspects of PLEs:

- Learners are active, self-directed creators of content;
- Learners have ownership of their data and are socially engaged;
- Content is personalized with the support and data of community members;
- Learning resources are authentic and almost infinite, like an open "bazaar";
- Self-organized learning has priority in contrast to the culture of most educational institutions; and,
- The use of software tools is social and aggregates multiple sources.

Studies indicate that these features of PLEs can be highly motivating. Yet, today's teachers and students might be unused to an environment where interaction is critical. Building and using a PLE is a challenging task which requires specific teacher and pedagogical support" (Valtonen et al., 2012, p. 732). In such a learning environment as the PLEs, both teacher and student must learn to scaffold learning with a new approach.

Within the concept of PLE, learning is framed as ongoing and autonomous Valtonen integrate formal and informal learning using online resources and social media to support student self-regulated learning. A PLE acknowledges the role of the human in organizing his or her own learning and curriculum, is compatible with deep learning, and allows learning on demand (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). Through PLEs, learning takes place in various contexts and situations and is not provided by a single instructor, resource, or provider. Informal, self-determined learning becomes of utmost importance in the approach: "it is not just the appeal of communication which is drawing young people to these technologies. It is the ability to create, to share ideas, to join groups, to publish—to create their own identities which constitute the power and the attraction of the Internet for young people" (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012, p. 4).

2.2 Self-Regulated Learning and Autonomy in Teacher Education

Jiménez Raya, Lamb, and Viera (2007, p. 1) define both teacher and learner autonomy as the "competence to develop as a self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in (and beyond) educational environments, within a vision of education as (inter) personal empowerment and social transformation." To stimulate a pedagogical orientation that supports autonomy, we created the DATTL website with plenty of resources for students to create their PLEs on the basis of the thematic modules we provided. The way language programs shape the lives of instructors and the life of language learners is puzzling when considered from the perspective of the need for more autonomy to increase learners' motivation and program effectiveness. Instructors may have to re-examine their preconceptions about self-regulated learning and accept the challenge of opening new and unconventional routes to learning. The need for autonomy in pedagogy embarks language instructors on a journey of self-discovery and innovation to promote learners' reflectivity and self-regulation (Jimenez Raya, 2011).

Karaman, Ökten, and Tochon (2012) analyzed whether such a new approach might first require teachers' open-mindedness to student autonomy and willingness to relinquish some control. Teachers' resistance to change in teaching foreign languages is not uncommon. Indeed, the many critiques from the teachers in our study focused on how components of the proposed framework might fail compared to traditional practices.

Deep learning encourages local and open pedagogies that radically differ from traditionally structured approaches that offer generic solutions and, as such, it calls for a thorough reflection on the part of teachers. There clearly is a tension between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy, which had previously been highlighted by Little (2007) and Jimenez Raya, Lamb, and Vieira (2007). While teachers giving up some of their autonomy might go against the educative grain and lose some motivation, deep learning is only possible with some form of autonomy for the teacher educator, the teacher, and the learner (Tochon, 2013). The concept of teacher effectiveness must be reviewed in the light of this need for autonomy at all levels.

2.3 Integrating the PLE Concept

To encourage deep learning, the curriculum designer should create complex, open, flexible, and holistic approaches to the subject matter, along with integrative overviews focusing on large, important issues. It is necessary to identify the threshold concepts with examples and clarify the learning strategies through templates. In addition, it is important that the curriculum designer analyze the congruence between these principles for deep learning and the way teaching and learning is actually organized to see if the environments proposed might interfere with students' access to a deeper understanding (Entwistle, 2008, p. 23). Thus, there should be a congruence between deep learning as a target and the learning environments created; this includes the instructional resources and course materials, a link that this paper explores through the language teachers' perceptions.

In his review of state-of-the-art materials for language learning and teaching, Tomlinson (2012) examined the role of new technology and its radical development. There is a risk that technology can drive pedagogy, rather than the opposite (Mukundan, 2008; Tochon & Black, 2007). Furthermore, there is a great need for authentic and humanizing materials in the language arena. "Commercially published course books [are] insufficiently humanistic" (Tomlinson, p. 163); "as revealed in the research literature, whether Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) materials facilitate learning depends on how the technology is implemented" (p. 165). CALL can free instructors and learners from the constraints of the textbook (Maley, 2011). In this respect, instructional materials to scaffold open projects could address this issue. A brief review of online materials available for Turkish suggests that to date the resources to create autonomous PLEs have not been developed. The importance of PLEs, technology resources, and a more humane way of conceiving and using technological applications—coupled with an emphasis on pedagogy for autonomy—may lead to drastic revisions of the programs of foreign language departments. The role of language supervisors may have to change.

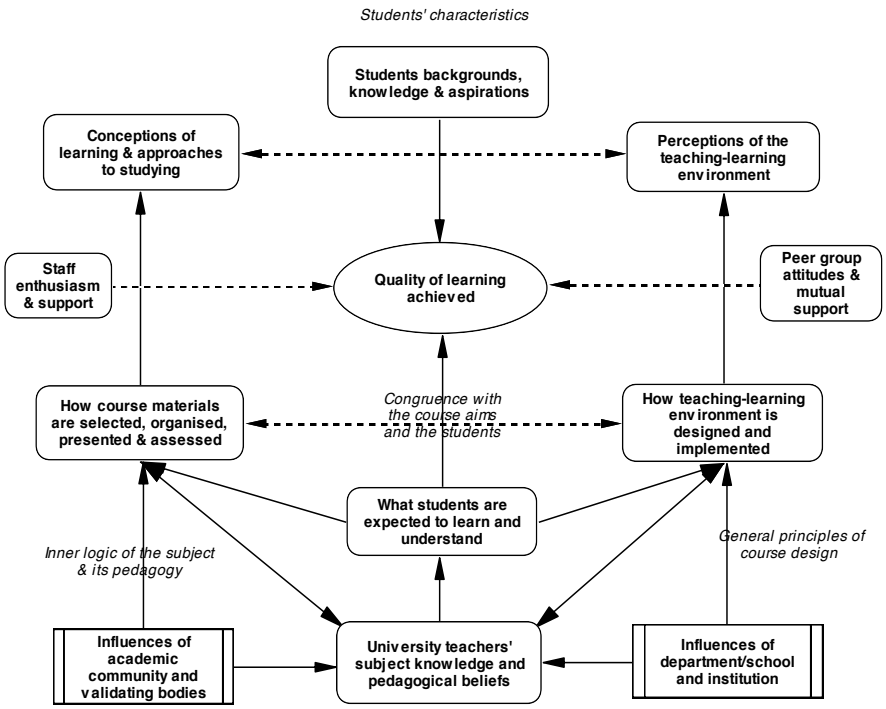
Our hypothesis that PLEs can enhance deep learning is supported by evidence (Tochon, Ökten, Karaman, and Druc, 2012). While it does not illustrate the role autonomy plays in increasing the effectiveness of the learning dynamics, Figure 1 (Entwistle, 2008) presents the conditions for deep learning to occur: It depends upon the learner's and the teacher's characteristics, yet the quality and depth of learning is determined by the congruence among the course aims and the students' aspirations, the peer group and mutual support, and the approach to studying for which the selection, organization, presentation, and assessment of the course materials are crucial.

We worked to create the conditions for such a congruence by gathering the resources detailed below that constitute the DATTL website. Because the resources and environment can be adapted to the learner's needs, instruction is provided in a different mode. "Designing a PLE demands both Information and Communication Technology skills and an awareness of one's own learning methods" (Valtonen et al., 2012, p. 732). Teachers often ask their

students to do a web quest, which requires adapting the linguistic environment and possibly interacting with native speakers on social networks; but teachers need to be trained for that purpose (Karaman, Ökten, and Tochon, 2012). Projects also need to be well scaffolded with open guidelines that can be shared (Brito & Baía, 2007). "A PLE can be entirely controlled or adapted by a student according to his or her formal and informal learning needs, however not all students possess the knowledge management and the self-regulatory skills to effectively use social media in order to customize a PLE to provide the learning experience they desire" (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012, p. 7). Therefore, one role of the instructor is to propose strategies of interaction between peers or among students that help assimilate the principles that underlie the use of the various authentic resources and instruments proposed. However, teachers must know the resources well, and have a clear overview of the modules available to help students scaffold their PLEs.

The purpose of the online materials was to provide an environment to help students create their projects and reach a deeper level of learning that Tochon (2010) named "deep apprenticeship." Apprenticeship is understood here as the creation of entirely new knowledge not produced by the teacher.

Figure 1. *Characteristics of teachers and teaching learning environment*



Note: From Entwistle 2008, p. 25, reproduced with authorization of the author

PLEs stimulate autonomous apprenticeship for learners (Godwin-Jones, 2011). They can offer authentic, collaborative challenges over which learners have control and create environments of meaningful second language use. Students then have choice, decision-making authority, and voice. However, such quality learning environments exist for very few languages.

Among the many conceptions of learning, deep learning emphasizes action, quality, relevance, and purposefulness rather than rote learning. Learning a new language is understood as a process of cultural accommodation and abstraction, which connects to a

variety of subtle meanings and situational elements that need to be related to catch the whole. Such an intrinsically motivating and active learning environment supports deep reinterpretations of reality as being partly shaped by cultural complexes present in the e-learning environment. When projects target interpersonal and social situations in the other language, situated modeling, scaffolding, collaboration, and coaching stimulate various forms of socialization that enhance knowledge, skills, and experiences (Collins, Duguid, & Brown, 1989; Ding, 2008); it becomes a form of apprenticeship. For many instructors, organizing autonomous apprenticeship around PLEs represents a paradigmatic shift. Contacts with colleagues are crucial to resolve issues that may emerge. In-service instructors are encouraged to share experiences in the form of video study groups (Tochon, 1999; 2007).

To sum up, the context of the study is circumscribed by the organization of blended language courses supported by new online resources that provide opportunities for higher education students to create their own projects in thematically-oriented PLEs. The online DATTL instructional materials are complex and flexible enough that students can build their PLEs to create their own projects as individuals, among peers or as a team. During the first lessons of the semester, students are shown how to use the instructional materials creatively and make it their own. They can pick the thematic template of an online PDF file with the associated video movies, multimedia and PowerPoints, explore the proposed digital texts and Internet links and adapt the template and online contacts to a specific project of their own.

3. Research Methods

The research questions that oriented our study are as follows:

1. What are the conditions needed for self-determined language learning to occur, raising awareness of ways in which digital personal learning environments can be used in tandem with more formal learning strategies? How can such technologies and open resources can support self-directed learning in less-commonly-taught languages?

2. What are the language teachers' perceptions of the integration of authentic Internet-based PLEs and the impact of personalized learning in developing deeper levels of language apprenticeship?

3. What difference does the integration of such e-learning environments make for the course instructor in terms of usefulness and best practice? Can new technologies be organized to support deep learning in one of the less-commonly-taught languages?

4. What are the issues raised in practice by the attempt at developing pedagogy for autonomy, and what are teacher perceptions related to students' use of authentic Internet-based PLEs in Turkish language and culture courses?

5. Did such e-learning environment change the instructors' perceptions about language learning, and how did teachers develop professionally in their use of such environments?

6. What are the needed reforms of teacher education considering this experience?

3.1 Context of the Study: Turkish Learning Technologies

Since 2002, the United States Department of State has invited graduate-level assistants to teach Turkish at the college level through Fulbright programs. These programs have not, however, invested in the development of technology-enhanced curricula or instructional materials. Nonetheless, a number of online resources are available for Turkish language instructors. They vary from university language programs to programs created by Turkish

individuals or businesses. For example, the Turkish Tutor, developed by the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for Near Eastern Studies, uses a television show called *Bizimkiler* to teach Turkish. Exercises offered by the University of Minnesota[1] provide vocabulary. The University of Arizona Critical Languages Program offers a Beginning Turkish CD-ROM (Türel, 2002), but it is in need of technological updates. Moreover, the material, while excellent, cannot easily be used for project-based learning (Boss & Krauss, 2007); it focuses on listening comprehension. A Turkish instructional DVD-ROM created at Texas Tech University focuses on multiple choice and drills. IPods and videos are often used in Turkish classes to watch and listen to authentic materials, with vocabulary translations (Belanger, 2005); such work is typically not integrated into a coherent instructional program. Rosetta Stone, Transparent Language, and Linguata—and even Oxford University's Turkish Studies[2] and part of the current UCLA Business Online Language and Culture Application materials[3]—rarely present vocabulary in context or are, in the main, limited to listening comprehension. Such approaches may serve the needs of beginners. Learning Turkish Online by the University of Oregon Yamada Language Center is well organized, offers effective assessment tools, and provides instruction for beginners. Nonetheless, the learning approach is more passive than interactive. The strengths of the Turkish Certificate Program, a distance education environment developed at Anadolu University in Turkey (Pilanci, Bozkurt, Zenci, Soker, and Girisen, 2010), lie in its use of synchronous interaction and the opportunity it provides for feedback via webcam, microphone, or whiteboards (Girisen et al., 2010). Efforts directed towards developing these and other online materials for Turkish are continuing, yet funding in these areas is particularly scarce.

3.2 Context of Study: Online Resources Created and Way of Using Them

As demonstrated in section 3.1, existing online resources for Turkish language instruction, while providing some interactive exercises and limited authentic linguistic contexts, often lack the kind of fully interactive approach that facilitates mediation of learners' language construction. Thus, the field is open to innovation, and online PLEs could address the current needs in teaching and learning Turkish. Our study addressed these needs with the purpose of supporting the creation and research of PLEs for self-regulated projects at the intermediate and advanced levels. The resources we gathered can strengthen, expand, and improve language instructional programs where Turkish is taught as a world language by providing online materials with which learners can create their own PLEs. These resources include:

- *An open choice of digital movies*. Videos with Turkish or English subtitles for various types of autonomous work. A total of 135 interviews were videotaped around Turkey in which people of all ages and professions narrate aspects of their biographies. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey provided a large number of films to use to contextualize language learning.

- *A thematic list of PDFs with cards for self-determined learning and templates supporting the creation of autonomous educative projects*. PDF modules describe pedagogical uses of video for each thematic unit, aligned with the American Association of Teachers of Turkic Languages' language learning framework. Possible projects are scaffolded for students to choose and develop topics of their

[1] http://www.carla.umn.edu/lctl/materials/turkish/tvtp.html

[2] http://turkishonline.orient.ox.ac.uk/about/

[3] http://bolca.international.ucla.edu/Browser.aspx

own interest. The templates serve as models for any other themes or topic-oriented projects.

- *Digital texts supporting reading, writing, and oral exchange*. We proposed texts and writing practices that fit within the thematic units and accompany the video movies.

- *Scaffolds and advanced organizers*. Preparatory materials such as glossary, grammar scaffolds, partial transcriptions, summaries accompany videos, readings, writing practice, and projects.

- *Smooth integration of new technologies*. We provided online support for projects associated with the thematic units, with courseware links, online practices, annotated videos and streaming video clips, with optional connections to interactive sites such as the online language community "Livemocha," blogs, and course websites.

These interconnected resources constitute the online materials DATTL, which offers multiple and multilayered ways of indexing learning information:

a) a site map with an ordered list of content titles on which the student can click for quick access;

b) thematic lists of modules for intermediate and advanced levels;

c) list of grammar storytelling videos connected to modules;

d) list of materials (videos, films, annotated multimedia, PDF module templates, PowerPoints, grammar videos) for each thematic module; and,

e) Internet links within PDF modules, lists and structures of possible projects, and lists of relevant Internet sites, applications, and appendices for further exploration.

The research team proposed a list of thematic modules. Suggested guidelines and templates for projects are associated with each of these modules, in addition to resources for individual or paired students or teams to create language and culture projects, films, annotated interview videos on the themes being explored, or PowerPoints. We also provided recommended web links for furthering new projects.

The innovative aspects of this self-regulated learning package are: (1) the use of online thematic templates as a basis for autonomous project development, (2) its compatibility with formal education contexts, and (3) the link between reflective and collaborative curriculum design for learner autonomy and the use of multimedia technology, online environments, and modular resources thematically dispatched in an open environment.

Learners are invited to pick a theme and the corresponding module, or they may decide to choose a theme not on the list we provided, and instead create their project on the basis of the examples provided in the templates to obtain a balanced language activity in which all skills are developed. They first must create or adapt a rubric specifying the tasks involved in the project for each task domain or skill. This will serve as an instructional agreement used for self-, peer-, and instructor evaluation. After doing so, they can work as they please, using their own creativity.

3.3 Context of the Study: Participating Turkish Instructors

We provided the language instructors participating in this study with onsite training varying between 1 full day and 2 weeks, depending on their availability. In addition, we

provided Skype support and a forum website on which we posted regular information in response to questions raised by instructors. Instructors then worked with 6–12 students, depending on the program. The online material had been accessible for 2 years and thus the instructors had had the time to explore the modules created by our design research team with various groups of students, and could ask the researchers questions whenever needed, whether by Skype, the forum, a Facebook group, or telephone. On-campus visits by the principal investigator were organized as well.

Basically the instructors tried to find a midway path: between the guidelines that were provided on ways to scaffold self-regulated projects with their students and the constraints of their programs enforced by college language supervisors, such as imposed drills every other week, intermediate examinations, a grammar schedule, and use of imposed final examinations. They were rather successful at that and could maintain two seemingly contradictory requirements by devoting 1 or 2 hours a week for the program requirements and the rest to the Deep Approach with its open projects. This means that some instructors were led to use the new materials in a traditional, controlled fashion for part of their schedule to meet the demands of their program supervisors. In one case, the researchers negotiated the process with the language program supervisor, who admitted she believed strongly in the Deep Approach for well-trained teachers but did not trust the specific instructor to be able to maintain program effectiveness with an open and student-determined approach. The challenge was for the instructor to become a facilitator rather than a purveyor of knowledge. The turn toward favoring deep learning was not an easy one for language instructors who sometimes felt compelled to teach grammar rather than helping students express themselves in an online environment.

3.4 Study Description

As part of a large study involving psychometric measures of deep learning and intercultural learning, as well as oral proficiency growth, we analyzed the instructional experiences of instructors of intermediate or advanced Turkish at four universities in the United States (N=8) for 2 or 3 years, depending on the instructors. Three participants volunteered to continue to communicate with the team of developers after the completion of the experimental design. The participants for the present longitudinal study were six female and two male Turkish instructors experimenting with the new approach. The instructors were all native speakers. Most participants had minimal teacher training but were motivated to do professional development workshops. Ongoing evaluation involved exploratory practice (Allwright, 2005). The instructors described their experiences with the Deep Approach, the PLEs and online resources, and conducted ongoing qualitative evaluations.

3.5 Data Collection and Interview Protocol

Data collection was ongoing and quasi-ethnographic (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The researchers had regular contacts with the instructors over the course of 2 or 3 years. At each site, instructors who used the new online materials and PLEs produced a brief report evaluating their experiences and were interviewed four to six times by Skype or face to face for 30-60 minutes each time. Summary reports were produced. Participants were interviewed on specific technology issues; other interviews dealt with various related concerns. There were also follow up interviews, and, in some cases, classroom observations over the course of one semester. The interviews focused on professional background, descriptions of teachers' and learners' needs and interests, experiences of instructors while employing the learning modules, and teachers' views on the shifts in classroom practices, such as those related to course materials, the online environment, and skills learning. In addition, there was correspondence by email. We also visited and invited those instructors that expressed the

greatest interest in the project. Some presented their experiences in a symposium and colloquium that we organized. We focused on questions such as:

1. What in your experience distinguishes the Deep Approach technology materials from other multimedia and video materials you have experience with? Did the Deep Approach stimulate self-directed learning?

2. Did you notice particular instances when some of your students learned Turkish better thanks to the DATTL website or particular technology materials within the website?

3. What technologies seemed most useful to learners of Turkish? Did these help personalize learning? Can you give an example or report an anecdote?

4. How did your students use the online materials, and in what way did it help them create their PLE for learning Turkish? Do you have specific examples or events to report on this aspect?

3.6 Data Analysis

A conceptual analysis is first employed on the key elements of these interviews, in the form of a map established through constant comparisons. Then, the procedures of grounded theory are applied (Glaser & Strauss, 1967): these key elements "are taken as, or analyzed as, potential indicators of phenomena, which are thereby given conceptual labels". Then categories "are generated through the same analytic process of making comparisons to highlight similarities and differences that is used to produce lower level concepts" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 7). We also used a form of narrative synthesis for one longitudinal case, the narrative helping link the dots of teacher development over the years of our study. The excerpts from the interviews have been edited by the research team to create finished products that are syntactically correct and not like spoken responses to interviews. The data were used to explore our research questions and evaluate the impacts and usefulness of the new learning environment and approach on language learning as perceived by the teacher.

4. Qualitative results

This section reviews the answers to the technology questions in our survey of instructors using the new online materials. The following themes were extracted from data:

- stages of teacher development in the growth toward pedagogy for autonomy;
- language improvement thanks to learner autonomy;
- usefulness of PLEs in dealing with complex learning and letting students set their own pace and bar; and,
- depth and agency in language and culture learning (as perceived by teachers).

Resources for instructors of Turkish are scarce. Most teachers were happy to learn that our team would research-design new materials for them. At first, they were interested in the resources, not the study or the approach, which they found too theoretical. What follows are excerpts from interviews with and reports from the instructors. The first excerpt refers to the general context of use of resource modules associated with thematic multimedia and various suggested digital resources that help the student or the team of students in organizing their own PLE. It indicates how much difficulty instructors may have in adopting a logic in which students are self-regulated.

> Given the fact that Turkish—as a less-commonly-taught-language—lacks the wealth of resources that many other languages enjoy, in many cases currently

> available Turkish teaching sources tend to fall behind the contemporary methods of language teaching that are available for more commonly taught languages. Despite that, over the course of my teaching experience, there have been many instances when I have incorporated multimedia materials from university-based resources in the United States. These resources I explored served as supplemental materials to my regular lesson plans, which included a variety of authentic and non-authentic elements. In contrast to these sources of instructional materials, the Deep Approach modules provided a framework that could be employed to minimize the long hours spent trying to compose relevant content.… Aside from my willingness to use the modules … getting familiar with the philosophy behind the modules was crucial to making better use of the modules in class. It was not until then that I thought I could have my students be the "policy makers" of their own learning without feeling that my authority was being threatened.… It turns out that what Deep Approach modules had to offer was not about simulating power struggles in class. Instead, they were about a paradigm shift, which was helping [me and my students] become effective and proficient agents of the language.

4.1. Stages of Teacher Development in the Growth toward Pedagogy for Autonomy

The excerpt above describes an evolution in the instructors thinking through three stages. The development stages of teachers are based on our findings:

Stage 1: The instructors tend to only perceive that they are offered a mine of thematic resources to support their teaching; however, the research team bothers them with a new theoretical approach that they do not feel immediately relevant, as they believe it is possible to simply use the instructional material as they normally would and not listen to the theory. While the teachers in our study evaluated the new environment positively, we noted that such innovation seemed to infringe on conventional teacher routines and programmatic regulations.

Stage 2: They start noticing how much interest the online material stimulates among many students who continue using it at home for autonomous projects. Instructors start thinking there might be some basis for the advice provided towards deep learning, and pay more attention to the theoretical information. Yet, curriculum autonomy for the learner is in many contexts quite inconceivable, and instructors are themselves in a field of constraints and evaluations. Thus a sense of crisis emerges from this new understanding: how far will they dare to go in the approach?

Stage 3: From a stage where the instructor is using the modules to a stage where the learners choose the modules in which they want to work, there is a gap that comes from a sense of empowerment among instructors who had enough in-depth, reflective teacher education to feel that they can be allowed to emancipate themselves from some of the institutional constraints. This empowerment comes at the time they understand that the theory is about their own life as a professional as well as the lives of their students: the transdisciplinary perspective takes over the disciplinary narrowness and they start reflecting on their role as social agents.

4.1.1. Narrative analysis of one case

Here is the story of Seval, Turkish instructor in one of the study sites. Seval's case is special because she is an instructor we had the opportunity to follow for 3 years. Seval was new to Turkish teaching and had taught another language in the past. She was provided a Teacher Assistantship while starting her Master's degree. While she was discursively prone to a communicative approach, her pedagogical practice was highly directive during her first

year of teaching at the intermediate level. She liked having a wealth of resources available on the Internet and liked using videos on YouTube, but she was clearly the curriculum builder and her students were given a framed and directed autonomy to act her way when doing tasks and activities she chose for them. While some of her classroom practices supported some form of self-regulation and peer work, in the main, self-determination was not an option. This illustrates a clear Stage 1 in which Internet resources were selected by the teacher and used in a traditional way; teaching was teacher-centered.

Seval took a professional development workshop and, during her second year of teaching, she started providing more freedom to students to create their own projects and choose among a variety of resources for homework. She was still under the close supervision of her language coordinator who would impose regular drills and determine the contents of intermediate and final examinations, but she had been able to negotiate some freedom for herself, which could be passed on to some degree of freedom for her students. She now more than before understood there was much sense in the theoretical framework for deep language learning, but she was undecided as to how she could direct group autonomy and keep control of progress, pacing, and contents. She met the Stage 2 crisis, during which there was much frustration perceiving her own lack of autonomy to innovate the way she liked and posit her students, even for temporary experiences, as curriculum builders. Negotiation of the research team with the coordinator, at some point, led to some understanding that the rigidity of coordination was related to a lack of trust in the ability of the young teacher to handle her students' autonomy with efficacy. Having students autonomously develop personalized approaches as homework was perceived as appropriate, but the online resources were not considered a choice that could replace classroom attendance according to departmental rules, as some grammar points might not be developed, and they needed to be practiced in ordered sequence by the whole class.

During the summer Seval was able to review the online modules and related materials. She read more about the theory underlying the Deep Approach. She felt she could be freer in future from the constraints imposed by the program and her language coordinator. Her student evaluations had been very good, so she gained some confidence that she could emancipate herself from the imposed program as long as students had excellent results and increased their proficiency level. She might even be able to renegotiate the intersession examination in terms of a project evaluation rubric or alternative form of assessment. Thus the third year started with a more relaxed feeling, moving toward a post-communicative framework in which getting in touch with life and the world at large appeared more important than the sequential application of the program. Seval asked students to choose a module of their own and create a project, devoting 2 hours per week to deeper learning, which illustrates that she had moved to Stage 3.

More excerpts from our study serve as examples of professional development stages in the Deep Approach. The first excerpt demonstrates a Stage 1 reflection:

> The materials provided for each module were thematic. They let the instructor prepare for the class with less effort since everything that should be done in the class was planned beforehand.

In this Stage 2 excerpt, the instructor is ready to allow learners to explore the culture independently:

> First of all, Deep Approach technology materials are based on Turkish culture. It gives learners the background knowledge of the topic and linguistic content of the text. Vocabulary is also taught within context. Preparing other multimedia and video

> materials for teaching a specific subject is quite time-consuming for many teachers. However, the Deep Approach [website] offers PowerPoints, projects and some other movie clips that make learners more aware of the target culture. As a teacher, I attach great importance on listening materials and I want my students to be exposed to the language as much as possible. A wide exposure to language is the best way of ensuring that students will learn it eventually. By the help of Deep Approach materials, learners have a chance to learn through practical applications of what they have learned.

The following excerpt suggests an advanced Stage 2, in which the instructor acknowledges the need for the students to feel personally in charge of their learning:

> What my students and I most liked about the Deep Approach modules was the variety of multimedia resources. Not only were there interviews with native speakers, clips from Turkish advertisements, TV shows, or popular movies, [but] there were also more technical tools, such as grammar storytelling videos, simulated conversations and improvisations. As seen from the students in class, the profile of today's language learner has been changed. With their strong interest in social media and technological tools, it is clear that anything that lacks a personal dimension and a captivating stimulation would not be enough to strike students' interest. Therefore, having a variety of multimedia options for my students was very helpful in raising their curiosity.… In addition to the variety of multimedia resources in the DATTL modules, my students received the sense of authenticity in the videos very well. In this regard, what differentiates the Deep Approach multimedia and video materials from others is that the information is authentic. Most of the information retrieved from native speakers is not from prepared and rehearsed texts; instead, they are natural and impromptu in the manner of everyday conversation. It was the structure that kept the data organized when using the modules, yet it was the casual feeling that the videos had which kept my students' attention alive. Additionally, this casual feeling suggested a sense of expecting the unexpected, as the interviewee profile ranged from children to older people, from people of rural to urban parts of Turkey, and from restaurant waiters to university students.

As we have seen in Seval's case, the same instructor may experience different stages over time. The following vignette signals a well-established Stage 3 instructor:

> Having a clearly organized set of materials in each module … made it easier for students to perform effective self-study methods on their own.… [T]he coherence in modules resulted in personalized learning, which in turn unveiled the fluid nature of mastering a second language. I believe that if I were to use the same modules with the same techniques with different groups of students with varying ages and levels of proficiency, each group would have a unique experience.… My students and I had an exceptionally good experience with the modules. There is no doubt that the modules were a boost to my Turkish classes throughout the time I used them. It is evident in the projects produced by my students that the modules provided us with new ideas as well as a convenient hub for materials. Since it has many different themes and modules with several videos, DATTL gives a lot of choices to the students.

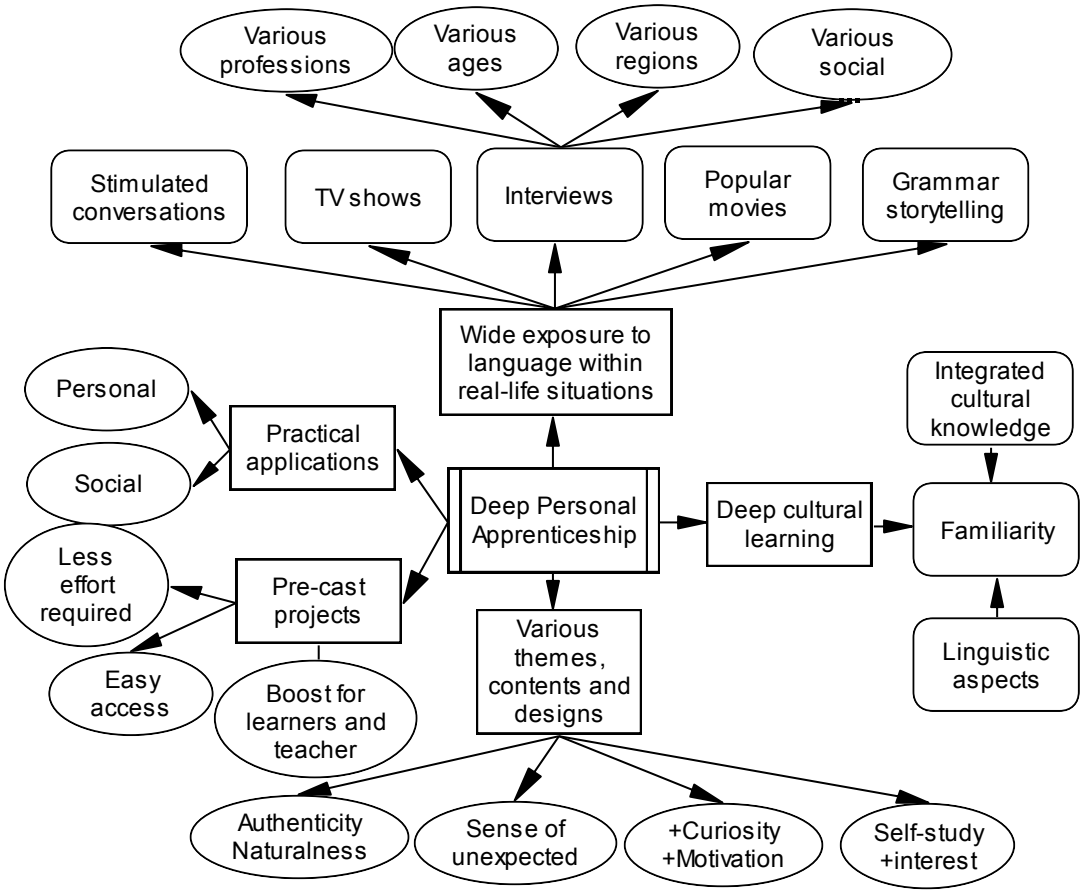
Higher education instructors usually receive no initial teacher education but sometimes a brief 2-day microteaching workshop before the semester starts, and possibly a one- or two-credits sharing of experience with some teaching methods. The preferred Teaching Assistants among language coordinators are often certified K–12 teachers who just entered graduate studies, as they already have education training and classroom experience. Those will very

rarely be Turkish teachers. For all others, who represent the large majority of the instructors teaching languages in U.S. universities, some form of training is necessary. This training is often provided in the form of annual workshops given by organizations such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages or STARTALK, and the teacher who attends must bear the cost. That shows exceptional motivation on the part of teachers who attend professional development.

Figure 2 presents a conceptual analysis of the reasons for the efficacy of the proposed online environments. The panorama of resources learners invested in their projects explains how their experience deepened into a form of immersive apprenticeship. Thus the online resources, according to all the instructors, effectively stimulated a deeper and more personal apprenticeship.

A common theme that emerged in the responses of instructors regarding the quality of learning experiences with the use of the new learning environment related to the variety of content and design. All instructors considered the availability of diverse online materials as a key factor sustaining student interest. Furthermore, as the teachers noted, the embedment of real life situations illustrated in TV shows, interviews in rural and urban settings, life stories, and documentaries facilitated the students' reflection on Turkish culture. Several participants discussed how easy access to the modules online contributed to a better instructional experience. Because resources were presented within a clearly organized learning procedure, the teachers were able to devote more time to observing, tracking, and facilitating student interaction rather than spending most of their time on lesson planning and assessment. According to the instructors, students were able to employ effective self-study processes after their classes.

Figure 2. *Deep personal apprenticeship*



4.2. Language Improvement Thanks to Learner Autonomy

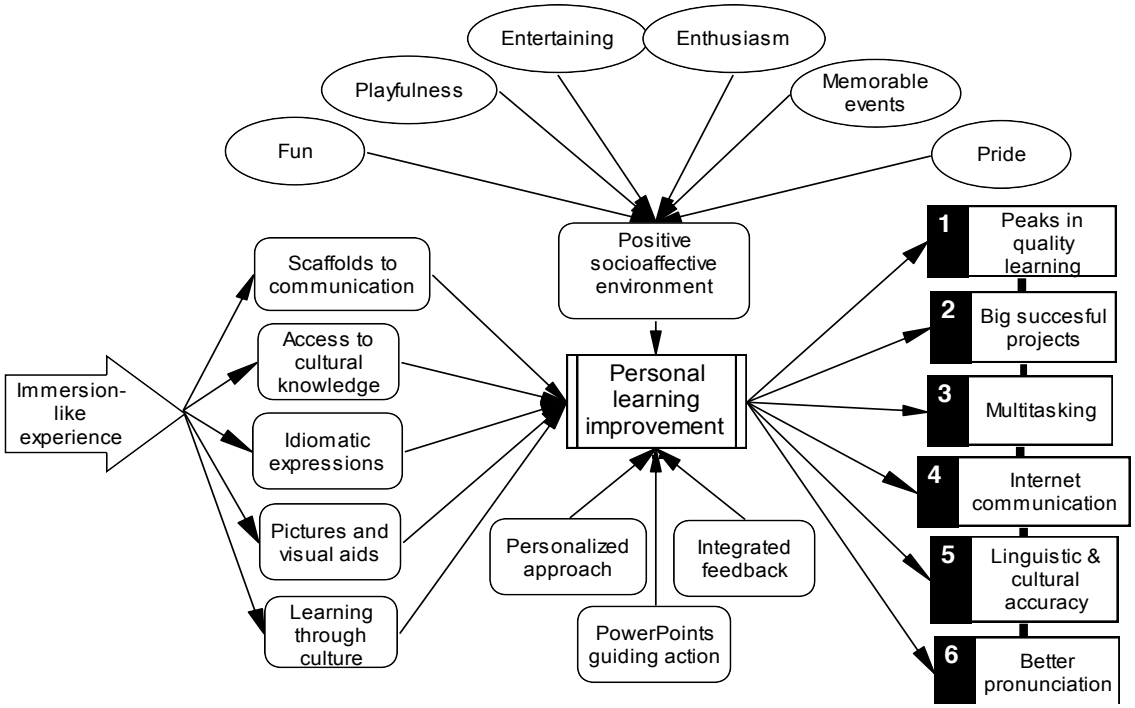
As language instructors in our study worked with the new approach, they offered various appraisals of the proposed materials. Of these, several related to visions of effective material development. For example, instructors expressed a preference for different ways of organizing the modules. The concept of PLEs encourages the teacher towards a pedagogy of self-determined learning, yet several of the teachers we interviewed initially refused to use the open-ended instructional designs presented in the self-directed learning modules. They had difficulty giving their students the necessary autonomy. However when the class takes control of instruction, the instructor is often amazed with the achievements in Turkish learning: students do homework they were not assigned, form their own reading club outside of class, and create their own Turkish movies. For some instructors, it was an astonishing experience. Students are intrigued by what they discover in authentic videos, want to learn more, and start exploring on their own … if they are not kept busy with vocabulary drills. They learn about culture, start reading the Turkish news or watching Turkish TV. They create projects their instructor would not have thought of. However, this only happens when learners are given freedom. The instructor must learn to go with the tide rather than against it. When learning takes off in this manner, instructors realize that the thematic resources are a pretext, a threshold, and that the Deep Approach is not about instructional material—it is all about the learners being in charge of their own learning.

Students received a lot of input about multiple resources—what to listen to, read, and watch. Their task was then to focus on their own output in the autonomous production of personal projects. With all the input they received from the videos in relation to their personal interests, talents, and efforts, their confidence manifested itself in fluency in the Turkish language. Immersion in the Turkish culture through the modules, as well as getting meaningful input, allowed the students to achieve higher levels of proficiency. The teachers could see the results in their students' autonomous projects:

> My students had an immersion-like experience in and outside of the classroom.… Experiments with the modules led us to bigger projects.
>
> The quality of learning peaked in my class because my students were so enthusiastic about their project that it seemed like it was the most important project they had ever done in their lives. They were multitasking, communicating, surfing the Internet to gather data, looking up words online, checking their Facebook pages to find photos, going onto YouTube to find the best moments of their favorite football teams, and having a great time in class. At the end of their project, they were proud to have their classmates and I watch the video. Being their instructor, I was proud of them for being able to put together such an amazing video. Furthermore, I would argue that sometimes those interviews stimulated linguistic and cultural accuracy.
>
> Although my students were doing these projects independently, I spared them some class time every other day to work on their projects in class so that they could come and seek my help if they needed it. At some point, I noticed that [they] were not interested in getting my help on their text. When I asked them if they needed my help, they said that they did not want me to see the text as it was going to be a surprise for me. It was such a pleasure for me to see my students feel so attached to their work and at the same time be so playful with it. To my surprise, I found out that there were many other jokes in the video that made great references to some of the most memorable events we had in class. Overall, [they] developed a coherent and an elaborate project, which was quite entertaining and informative.

Figure 3 presents a conceptual reorganization suggesting that PLEs create a positive socio-affective environment—fun, playful, and entertaining—that makes learning memorable and students both enthusiastic and proud. PLEs are noteworthy in the way learners take charge and personalize their learning, give feedback to each other, create successful projects with peaks in quality learning. As reported by instructors, this immersion-like experience improves linguistic accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary retention, cultural knowledge; and helps scaffold communication.

Figure 3. *Personal learning improvements through a deep approach*



The instructors' experiences drew attention to the promotion of student creativity and intrinsic motivation in relation to projects in PLE modules. Participants' observations documented how learning was enhanced by the engagement of students' multiliteracies. Some instructors likened students' ongoing project work to immersion experiences. Even if the students were not in a speech community in the traditional sense, by employing multiliteracies, they were able to read, view, and research online and communicate various perspectives in the target language.

To sum up, from their experiences in courses that gather various kinds of formative and summative assessments, proficiency measures and interviews, conversation tables and drills, the instructors noted peaks in quality learning in the achievement of big, successful projects that could not have been achieved with their usual approach. Students were multitasking and developing multiliteracies through the Internet. Thanks to the Turkish PLE and associated resources, they developed better pronunciation and increased linguistic and cultural accuracy.

4.3 Usefulness of PLEs in Dealing with Complex Learning and Letting Students Set their Own Pace and Bar

PLEs for language learning is a new field to explore. PLEs cannot be distinguished from a fascination for their content, which has the discovery of the other culture as its objective. If students sincerely liked certain topics, modules, and associated resources, it was because they were able, in the material proposed, in all its complexity, to locate their zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) defined the ZPD as "the distance between the actual

developmental levels as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). The ZPD is important, as personal learning can be increased through forms of collaboration with their peers and the teacher. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) mention that feedback on the learner's performance is crucial in defining the ZPD, in that the help is internalized and the responsibility for learning gradually shifts to the learner. This is what happens with the use of PLEs.

Nonetheless, the relativity of the ZPD must be discussed here. Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1985), in the field of second language acquisition, suggest that the teacher could decide what the ZPD is for each student. Research on teacher cognitive planning indicates that this is an impossible task (Tochon, 2002). The Deep Approach broadly sets up learning conditions for proficiency thresholds (such as intermediate or advanced) for learners to choose their ZPD level within a threshold (low, mid, or high) from a wealth of resources. Students learn how to process complexity. Therefore, the instructional resources we developed come with different difficulty thresholds; within each threshold, the amount of scaffolding is varied (such as text summaries, video transcriptions, glossaries, or content discussion), which makes all use of scaffolding eminently the student's choice. It was not that the teacher or the resources themselves had measured precise scaffolds; rather it was the multiplicity of scaffolds offered with the material (summaries in one language or the other; transcriptions; structural questions; culture tips; grammar clues) that led students to choose their learning path within this complexity and determine the best and most realistic avenues for their projects. Sometimes they transcended their own ZPD and leaped to new levels of proficiency, through a sudden reorganizing of their passive knowledge into a focused action supported by their peers. In addition, as noted by Tochon & Lee (2010), the growth of intercultural learning indicates the presence of a zone of proximal *identity* development (ZPID), in which cultural contents are negotiated. The ZPID influences the development of intercultural learning during Internet-mediated multimodal videoconferencing, for example (Tochon & Lee, 2010). To sum up, PLEs are interesting environments that allow learners to discover their ZPD and ZPID on their own.

4.3.1. Examples of Comments Instructors Received On One Module

For various reasons, students enjoyed the intermediate level module entitled "Love and Family/Aşk ve Aile." Students reported that the multimedia was very helpful in allowing them to access the transcripts of the interviews. After accessing the module online, they explored it on their own. While they found the interviews interesting, they had to keep up with the rate of the speech, which was not easy given their level of proficiency. Therefore, the transcriptions of these videos served as scaffolds and allowed a better understanding:

> Watching the [multimedia] entailed a great classroom discussion about what my students liked most about the Turkish culture. This was another event in my class when the mere language practice was not the focus of the activity. After all, my students naturally came up with their own way to tap into their own language development.

> The module was loaded with videos for listening and comprehension that students felt were very useful. The more the students were immersed into listening and reading, the better their proficiency was getting. Moreover, since it is a challenge for instructors to find relevant and appropriate videos in order to show students the people of various socio-economic backgrounds in Turkey, these resources were much appreciated by both instructors and students.

> This module was very helpful … as it included a number of videos ranging from interviews with single and married people, an interview with a shopkeeper who sells trousseaux, and several clips from a popular Turkish movie *Babam ve Oğlum*. If nothing else, these videos provided my students with a great exposure to the language with varying regional accents and points of view. For example, while watching one of the clips with my students, one student said that she felt good for being able to recognize the accents in the movie. It was not only the accents but also the types of behavior displayed in the videos.

Figure 4 presents a conceptual analysis of the relevant theme across participants. The environments proposed were perceived as useful inasmuch they led to student engagement; could be attractive enough that learners would feel like adding to the suggestions something of their own that corresponded to their life interests; stimulated contacts with native speakers in whatever form it was, such as video, Skype, or social networks; gave a sense that this exploration was self-sufficient; and allowed self-and peer-talk and self-tests rather than extrinsic assessments.

To sum up, the instructors underscored the value of transcriptions available in multimedia for self-directed learning, variety, and how the PLE module structures address the challenge of finding relevant thematic and content-based materials for a less-commonly-taught language. When discussing the ways PLEs improved learners' experience in Turkish language courses, participants frequently referred to increased interest and satisfaction due to the thematic organization of modules that helped them create their own projects. Several instructors explained how various themes connected to life in society promoted the exploration of culture. This was also closely related to the cultural potentialities offered by the wide array of videos with speakers from different sociolinguistic backgrounds.

4.4. Depth and Agency in Language and Culture Learning

In the final phase of analysis, the previous conceptual maps were reframed in higher-level categories that defined how language instructors perceived PLE use for deep language learning, following the grounded theory process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), which leads to the reframing of the understanding into broader categories of meaning. Culture and agency have a key role in this reframing. We earlier defined agency as the capacity for self-determination and decision making, and the ability to take responsibility for actions in reference to Van Lier (2010). Agency is what supports students' autonomous quest for meaning when they read or watch life events and stories captured in the form of films, videos, and interviews associated with their thematic learning environments. It is agency that helps them discriminate among competing meanings and build up their own interpretation of what is profound or not in certain mediated cultural events. Shaules (2007, p. 39) characterized cultures as "frameworks of shared meaning that allow for interaction and relationship building." The search for a deep underlying structure of any culture meets challenges considering the number of aspects and dimensions that needs to be included. In addition, the study of cross-cultural semantics (Wierzbicka, 1999) may be misleading in articulating generalizations that do not take into account the variation of cultural behaviors and contexts. Therefore, the option that was adopted in this work was to provide, rather than molar units of a supposed common structure, a broad variety of cultural situations in various modes such as filmic, audiovisual, regional, literary, aesthetic, etc. to which students could be exposed.

Figure 4. *Usefulness of personal environments*

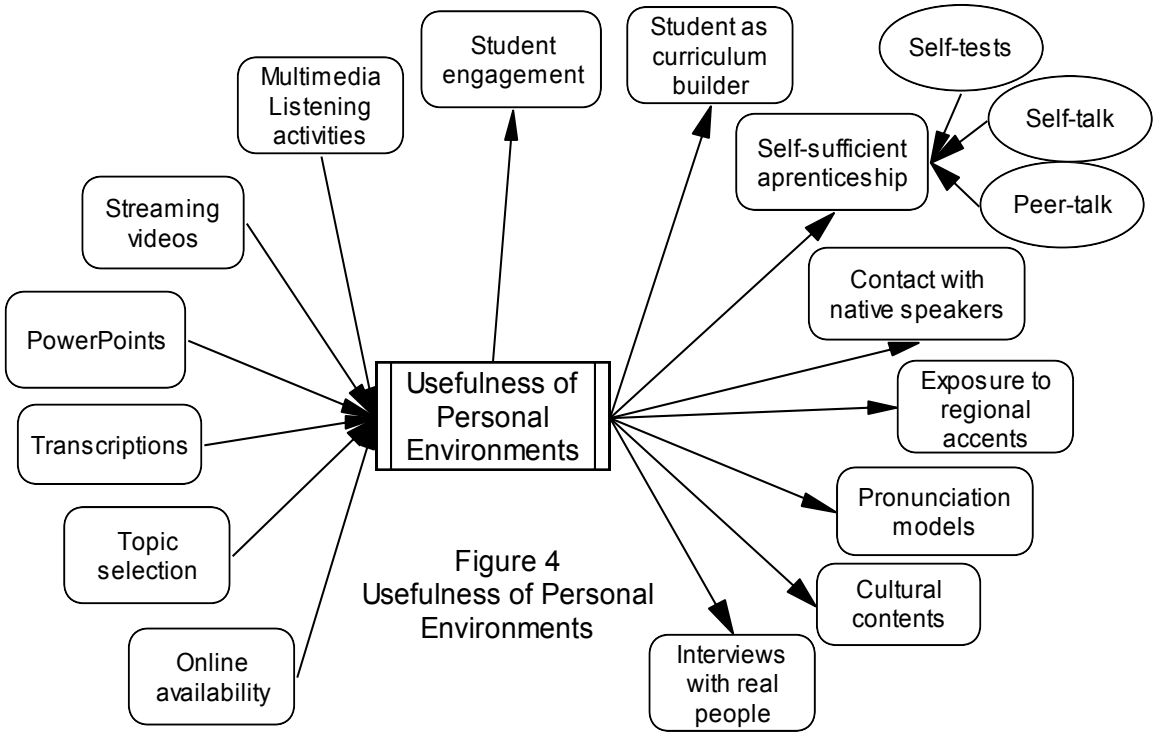
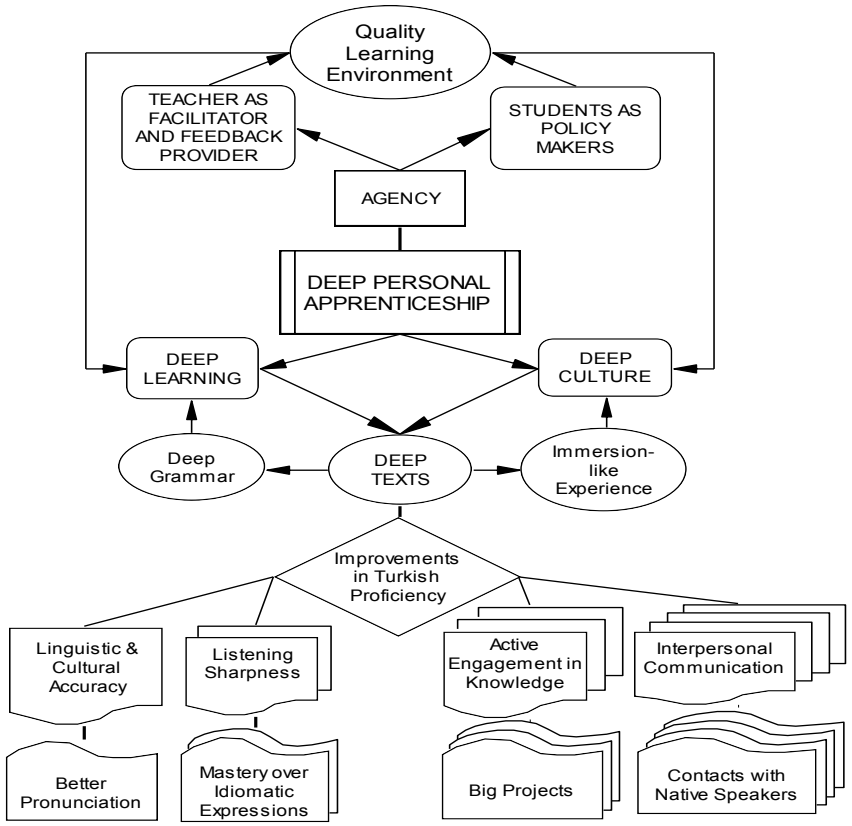


Figure 5 presents the grounded theory of deep language learning within a personalized environment. What emerges from the verbal protocols of the Turkish teachers is a notion that is diaphanous in their interviews and surveys, the notion of learning a cultural "deep text." What excited and enthused their students was their sudden ability, thanks to the environment, to "read" into the well-scaffolded video multimedia and accompanying resources a deep cultural text, a deeper meaning that would not have been accessible had they not been able to explore the semiotics of the target culture through the constellation of resources that the various tools thematically-gathered had represented.

In Section 2 (Theoretical Background) of the paper, we defined apprenticeship as the creation of entirely new knowledge, knowledge that was not produced by the teacher. In our study, through this new access to deep texts (at the center of Figure 5), deep personal apprenticeship became possible. Deep learning merged with deep culture through agency, provided that the teacher agreed to be a facilitator, allowing students to become policy makers. That process defined a quality-learning environment, which led to improvements in Turkish proficiency, the details of which are enunciated at the bottom of Figure 5.

Figure 5. *Theory grounding deep language apprenticeship*



To sum up, the concept map in Figure 5 proposes a conceptual reorganizing, and suggests that PLEs create a positive dynamic between deep learning, deep culture, and agency. The dynamic is provided by the online resources as forms given to multiliteracies in an immersion-like experience. Improvements in Turkish proficiency seemed to derive from these deep texts—aural, visual, and written discourses—embedded in the proposed pedagogy, which transcend language forms and transform learning into an active engagement through students' large projects that involve interpersonal communication and contacts with native speakers.

5. Concluding remarks

"Very little of the existing literature on materials development tells us much about the actual effect of different types of materials on language acquisition" (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 170). The present study fills a gap, in this respect.

5.1. Instructors' Reports

The data showed a link between the use of a PLE and student language performance in Turkish, as reported by their instructors, on various dimensions such as linguistic accuracy; better grasp of idiomatic expressions; improved listening and interpersonal communication; better pronunciation; active engagement in knowledge; ability to handle and realize big language projects; increased contacts with native speakers; and cultural accuracy.

The connection with higher levels of proficiency was noticeable for the Turkish instructors who used various forms of assessment in their programs, such as conversations, formative

and summative evaluations, individual and group comparisons across years, drills and examinations, and oral proficiency interviews. These results were confirmed through other means such as oral proficiency interviews and course evaluation questionnaires. PLEs are an important contribution to deep language learning, particularly in less-commonly-taught languages. They open up a world of resources in this field, in which textbooks are rare and often obsolete.

5.2. The Crucial Role of Teacher Training

Notwithstanding, an effort must be made to make sure teacher training is sufficient in terms of both resources and time allocated to professional development, otherwise programs may encounter the contradictions witnessed in other world language programs (Tochon, 2011). Teaching less-commonly-taught languages is problematic in many institutions due to the involvement of instructors who may sometimes lack the necessary skills to teach their language to foreign language students. The lack of teacher training could be compensated for with video study groups in which participants share their practice and reflect on future activities (Tochon, 2007; Tochon & Black, 2007). Indeed, video feedback has been shown to be an outstanding means of professional development.

The instructors' experiences revealed in our study attest to the value of personalized learning opportunities provided by diversified online content. For example, several instructors referred to an increase in their students' intrinsic motivation while navigating the videos and related projects within modules:

The challenging nature of the project work was also perceived as a factor that promoted students' self-directed learning. Overall, the incorporation of scaffolded multimedia content in modules for presenting authentic language uses in various contexts enabled students to have more interactive discussions and projects in the language classroom. Pedagogy took the lead, not technology. This defines "pedagogically appropriate technology integration" (Tochon & Black, 2007), with curriculum design principles such as analyzing the language learning situation and setting instructional processes before considering technological choices. For example, Colpaert (2006) offered criteria that any "appropriate" use of technology should include subordinating technology to prior pedagogical goals; open and bottom-up planning; the active role of users; the evolutionary adaptation of plans to users, their strategies, and styles; and the presence of users' integrated evaluations. These principles are enacted in a Deep Approach to languages and cultures. Nonetheless, any instructional material has its limitations.

5.3. Limitations of the Study

The language instructors in this study were mostly good-willed and interested in improving their teaching within the limits of what they were doing in their classroom; but half of them were not in the main interested in educational research, or did not really believe research might make any contribution to their profession. Data collection was a real challenge in this context. Furthermore, some instructors of less-commonly-taught languages do not have background training in pedagogy and Education as a field of study. These profile components, shared across some less-commonly-taught languages, make it particularly compelling to organize teacher training for innovative formats that place students as curriculum builders within PLEs. One limitation of the study is thus having had to work with some language instructors who simply could not give the necessary time for their basic training in the new approach, and whose frame of reference did not allow for the needed adaptation to the proposed format. Qualitative data analysis indicated that the situation was evolving, though, and teachers who started at Stage 1 would question their assumptions when

seeing the positive reactions of their students, and after a year or two with workshops and discussions, would move to Stage 3.

5.4 Overview of Responses to Research Questions

1. What are the conditions needed for self-determined language learning to occur?

We found these conditions to be an abundance of thematically interrelated resources in the field of study placed on various media, a flexible curriculum, and willingness on the part of the program stakeholders (department, coordinator, and teacher) to relinquish part of their control to the students for them to become curriculum builders. We suggest, however, that it is crucial that these language instructors go beyond the replication of pedagogies they are used to and be open to a new way of expanding their learners' linguistic and cultural knowledge and practice.

2. What are the language teachers' perceptions of the integration of authentic Internet-based PLEs?

In less-commonly-taught languages, teachers are most grateful when online resources specific to their languages are provided. The teachers we interviewed and surveyed longitudinally had a positive attitude towards the integration of authentic Internet-based PLEs, but none of them organized a full integration of the concept. They adopted blended learning alternatives and retained at least a couple of hours per week for directed grammar teaching.

3. What difference does the integration of such e-learning environments make for the course instructor in terms of usefulness and best practice?

Teachers noticed clear learning improvements through this "immersion-like experience." They were surprised with the potential of students to develop on their own "big, successful projects" with "peaks in quality learning." They noticed better pronunciation and linguistic and cultural accuracy. Contact with native speakers, exposure to regional accents and pronunciation models formally helped their students. In addition, multimedia, streaming video, and interviews with real people of all ages and professions increased student engagement.

4. What are the issues raised in practice by the attempt at developing pedagogy for autonomy?

We cannot develop student autonomy in an environment in which teachers have no autonomy. This autonomy must be negotiated. The change has a ripple effect on many levels: other courses and teachers are affected, it motivates new departmental discussion, and often teachers realize the programs and textbooks they use are limited and sometimes obsolete.

5. How do teachers develop professionally in their use of such environments?

Teachers could not really develop professionally unless they agreed to interrupt their traditional practice and question their directive form of teaching and its sequencing patterns. They first needed some theoretical and research confirmation to accept the probability that a blended approach could be as effective or even more effective than what they usually did. Thus, working on attitudes was crucial. Teachers also needed time to read, watch, and integrate the materials and the connections they could create with their own prior resources. They had to trust their ability to lead various small groups and peer teams that would organize different projects of different durations. One major area of negotiation for the teachers was related to letting go of their instructional power and creating a more horizontal relationship as facilitators. The self-trust they developed watching their students' skills grow

with self-determined projects helped empower these teachers vis-à-vis their departmental direction and/or language coordinator. Their professional development focused on pedagogy rather than technology.

6. What are the needed reforms of teacher education considering this experience?

As discussed earlier, teacher education for less-commonly-taught languages at the college level is almost inexistent. Therefore, teachers tend to replicate the pedagogies they were subjected to in their home country, with occasional modifications coming from personal motivation and brief, occasional workshops. Because there is not much chance funding will increase and help colleges create a comprehensive teacher education program in the near future, universities must hire specialists in world language education to provide the necessary support and training to faculty members and associates. Teacher educators and professional associations should consider ways of creating online environments and resources with teacher training videos that teachers of less-commonly-taught languages can access remotely. In the long run, deep and continuous teacher education should be systematized for language instructors to compare their experiences locally, in formats such as video study groups with video feedback (Tochon, 1999; 2008). The PLE topic needs to be studied more and the language-learning context provides an interesting area for the PLE research.

Overall, our inquiry revealed that instructional materials and technological innovation were not enough to bring change in the field of less-commonly-taught languages. The identities and circumstances of language instructors had to be seriously reconsidered; such that, for example, funds could be obtained to free instructors from part of their teaching load and incentives could be provided to make sure they would actually participate in the proposed professional development activities. The effectiveness of teaching less-commonly-taught languages in the United States depends upon a new vision of professional development adapted to this population of professionals.

Acknowledgments

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