



ENGLISH EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL: WHO IS AT THE CENTRE OF THE LEARNING PROCESS?

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Abstract: This case study investigates: 1) how the English Language Preparatory Education (ELPE) at a Private University in Ankara matches with the learners' needs, 2) the extent of learner-centred activities to improve learner autonomy, 3) the level of autonomy perceptions of the learners, 4) and its influence on the General Point Averages (GPAs). The study was conducted in the fall of 2009-2010 academic year. Population for the study consisted of 173 learners. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to strengthen the design through triangulation. A 'Learning Needs Scale' was developed to identify learners' perceptions in view of appropriateness of the ELPE for their learning needs. The data collected through the scale was supported with semi-structured interviews. An 'Autonomy Perception Scale' was developed to measure perceptions of the learners considering their autonomous learning skills. Data through semi-structured observations were also obtained to support the data collected by the scale. Findings indicated that: 1) approximately two thirds of the learners think the ELPE matches with their needs, 2) their perceptions in view of appropriateness of the ELPE for their needs change according to the schools they graduated from, 3) learner-centred activities are not practised effectively in the classes, 4) the level of autonomous skills of the learners is not sufficient to take responsibility for their own learning, 5) there is no correlation between the 'Autonomy Perception Scale' scores and the GPAs of the learners. In line with the findings, suggestions have been made to solve the problem.

Key words: English Language Teaching, learner-centred education, learner autonomy, needs analysis, autonomous learning skills

Özet: Bu durum çalışmasında; 1) Ankarada bir Özel Üniversitede İngilizce Hazırlık eğitiminin öğrenci gereksinimlerine ne ölçüde uygun olduğu, 2) öğrenen özerkliğini geliştirmeye yönelik öğrenci merkezli etkinliklere ne ölçüde yer verildiği, 3) öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenme konusunda özerklik becerileri algılarının ne olduğu ve 4) öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenme özerkliği becerileri algılarının akademik başarıları üzerindeki etkileri araştırılmıştır. Çalışma 2009-2010 akademik yılı güz döneminde uygulanmıştır. Çalışmanın katılımcıları 173 İngilizce hazırlık eğitimi öğrencisidir. Çeşitleme yoluyla araştırma desenini güçlendirmek amacıyla nitel ve nicel veri toplama araçları bir arada kullanılmıştır. Öğrencilerin İngilizce hazırlık eğitiminin gereksinimlerine uygunluğu konusundaki görüşlerini belirlemek amacıyla bir 'Öğrenme Gereksinimleri Ölçeği' geliştirilmiştir. Aynı amaçla geliştirilmiş yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formlarıyla ölçek ile toplanan veriler güçlendirilmeye çalışılmıştır. Öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenmeye ilişkin özerklik becerileri algılarını ölçmek amacıyla 'Özerklik Algı Ölçeği' geliştirilmiştir. Gözlem ile toplanan nitel verilerle 'Özerklik Algı Ölçeği' ile elde edilen veriler desteklenmeye çalışılmıştır. Araştırma bulguları; 1) öğrencilerin yaklaşık üçte ikisinin İngilizce eğitim programının gereksinimlerini uygun bulduğunu, 2) öğrencilerin gereksinimleri konusundaki algılarının mezun oldukları okullara göre farklılık gösterdiğini, 3) eğitim sürecinde öğrenci merkezli öğrenme etkinliklerinin etkili kullanılmadığını, 4) öğrenme süreçlerinde sorumluluk alma konusundaki özerklik algılarının yetersiz olduğunu, 5) öğrencilerin İngilizce akademik başarıları ile özerklik algıları arasında ilişki bulunmadığını göstermektedir. Bulgular doğrultusunda sorunun çözümüne yönelik öneriler getirilmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: İngilizce Öğretimi, öğrenci merkezli eğitim, öğrenen özerkliği, gereksinim çözümlemesi, özerk öğrenme becerileri

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1. Introduction

Although the preparatory year consists of 25 hour skill based courses with speaking, listening, reading, and writing per week at Turkish Universities, the English Language Proficiency of the learners is not at the desired level. In essence, teacher-centred traditional approach mainly based on grammar teaching is implemented whatever the official curriculum appears to be. Learners, as passive receivers, participate in the educational processes, from decision making to implementation, either minimally or not at all. However, The Council of Modern Language Project (2001) envisions a learner-centred approach that requires the participation of learners in the whole educational processes, beginning from the need analysis. In a learner-centred approach, the learner is expected to get involved in the development of the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum by conveying his needs and expectations. (Nunan, 1990; Richterich, 1983; Brindley, 1990).

The essence of the learner-centered approach is the learner-autonomy. Kohonen (2001) points out the complexity of defining it. Pemberton (1996) claims that the subjectivity in defining autonomy results from the use of diverse terms as synonyms or similar terms as distinct. Self-access learning and self-instruction learning are among the most significant of such terms. Another complexity is just about the definition. Benson (2001), for instance, assumes that self-access is a means to promote self-instruction learning. To prevent confusion of the terms, autonomy can well be considered as the uppermost term that covers all the others in the literature. And, precisely, the skills required by autonomy can help to identify the foremost objectives of a learner-centred ELT curriculum. Benton (2001) states that learners should develop self-management, self-assessment and self-observation skills in order to gain autonomy. Young underlines self-control (1986). Though all these skills highlighting ‘self-’ in the learning process apparently associates with learning independently, it does not mean acting independently of other people's association. Little and Dam (1998) emphasize that humans are social beings that learn from one another. The full responsibility, therefore, taken by the learner in the educational process (Holec, 1981; 1983, Knowles, 1975; Voller 1997) using these skills may be of concern. Yet taking the responsibility alone is not enough, Dickinson (1987) underlines the importance of fulfilling it. The autonomous learner is, then, the one who has the capacity to monitor his learning processes. To achieve this, he can determine his own goals, and define and follow the path toward them (Dickinson, 1992; Holec, 1985; Little, 1995).

A successful implementation of autonomous learning skills depends on the cooperation between the learner and the teacher (Gardner and Miller, 1999; Little, 1995). The teacher performs as a counsellor and facilitator (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986; Breen and Mann, 1997; Tudor, 1993; Cotteral, 2000) to help the learner use the necessary skills. S/he has to make certain preparations to specify the extent of freedom the learner will have in defining his/her goals, assessing his/her learning process and the like. The learner, on the other hand, can get more participatory and proactive by cooperating with the teacher (Little, 1995). Nunan, (1989) goes further and proposes to cooperate with learners in all stages of curriculum development from design to implementation.

Learner-centred education that aims to dynamically involve learners in all phases of learning processes mentioned above has significant positive pedagogic consequences. When learners contribute to the class, by defining the learning objectives, choosing the course book and so forth, they benefit from the learning process pre-eminently. It helps learners become more aware of English as it is used around (Dam and Legenhausen, 1992), and contributes to their

academic achievement (Salisbury et al., 2001). Giving opinions on determining the classroom activities also influences motivation positively. (Tudor, 1993).

In Turkey, although findings of limited research held in various educational stages point out some flaws caused by the traditional learning, they are nevertheless promising with reference to development of the autonomous learning skills. Learner attitudes toward autonomous learning is positive although learning environments are still under the control of teachers (Çelik, 1996; Çoban, 2002; Kennedy, 2002; Koyuncu 2006; Köse, 2006; Sert, 2006; 2007; Ustunoglu, 2009; Yıldırım, 2005; Yumuk, 2002). Yet, still a large body of research is required to better understand the existing and probable problems.

1.1 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate: 1) how the English Language Preparatory Education (ELPE) at a Private University in Ankara matches with the learners' needs, 2) the extent of learner-centred activities to improve learner autonomy, 3) the level of autonomy perceptions of the learners, 4) and its influence on the General Point Averages (GPAs).

The study will address the following questions to reach the predetermined aims:

- To what degree do the ELPE learners studying in a Private Turkish University in Ankara think the ELPE meets their needs?
- Are learner-centred activities administered in the classroom settings?
- What are the 'Autonomy Perception Scale' scores of the learners?
- Is there a correlation between the 'Autonomy Perception Scale' scores and the GPAs of the learners?

2. Method

In this case study; the triangulation design of mixed approach, in which quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques are used together, is employed. To gather diverse yet complementary data in the subject matter, in order to fully fathom the research questions, is the objective of this approach (Morse, 1991:122). One of the ways to enhance the study design is to diversify the data collection techniques (Patton, 1990). Accordingly, a 'Learning Needs Scale' to measure the learner's opinion on the degree to which the ELPE can effectively respond to their needs, was developed. A semi-structured interview form was developed for the same purpose to enhance the data collected by the 'Learning Needs Scale'. It is also sought to enhance the quantitative data obtained by the "Autonomy Perception Scale" with the qualitative data based on observations. Thus, it is aimed to improve the validity and reliability of the study. Correlational research method was used to calculate the relationship between 'Autonomy Perception Scale' scores and the GPAs of the learners.

2.1. Participants

The population of the study is composed of 1200 learners, 720 of which are female (60%) and 580 are male (40%), studying at the English Preparatory School of a Private University in Ankara. They have been placed in 57 classes, each having 23-24 learners, with the original female-male ratio being respected. Considering the gender and the class factor, random stratified sampling strategy is used to ensure the depth and integrity of the gathered data. Thus, 173 learners- 109 female (62%), and 64 male (38%) make up the working group of the

study. 104 of these learners are Anatolian/private high school graduates, and 63% of them are regular public school graduates.

2.2. Instruments

2.2.1. Scales

The 'Learning Needs Scale' previously developed by Sert (2008) was adapted. Exploratory factor analysis was used to statistically establish the construct validity of the scale. First of all, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test were employed to ensure the compatibility of the scale with the factor analysis. In such a context, the result of KMO test measurement should yield .50 or over, while the result of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity should statistically be significant (Jeong, 2004:70). At the end, the result of KMO test was found to be .73, while the result of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.01$), which led to the conclusion that the factor analysis can be applicable to the scale. In the first analysis, 12 factors with Eigen values over 1 were determined. However, it was understood that a single factor is predominant, which exceeded other factors in Eigen value, and which explained a higher variance. The factor analysis was repeated adopting .27 as the limit value. It was then seen that all items had a factor load higher than .27. Therefore, no item was removed from the scale. Consequently, a single factor with 10 items was obtained. This factor explained 38.38% of the total variance of the scale.

To establish the reliability of the scale, Cronbach Alfa reliability coefficient was determined. Since it was a single factor scale, a reliability coefficient was calculated for the entire scale, which was found to be .89. Tezbaşaran (1997:47) remarks that an eligible reliability coefficient in a Likert type scale should be as close to 1 as possible. According to these results, one can say that the scale in its entirety has a high reliability.

A five point frequency scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always) was developed to measure the level of autonomy perceptions of the learners. 21 learners were asked 4 open ended questions about their understanding of English Language learning autonomy. After their responses were content analyzed, items of the scale were pooled. The questionnaire developed by Figura and Jarvis (2007) was also made use of when writing scale items. The field experts ($n=4$) and participants ($n=5$) were consulted to check the degree to which the items available in the draft form are compatible with the intended purpose as well as their comprehensibility and applicability. Some revisions were made in the scale in line with the recommendations of the field experts. After piloting ($n=17$), the scale was revised as appropriate and given its final form.

Exploratory factor analysis was used to statistically establish the construct validity of the scale. The results of KMO test (.75) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.01$) indicated that the factor analysis can be applicable to the scale. In the first analysis, 4 factors with Eigen values over 1 were determined. However, it was understood that a single factor was predominant, which exceeded other factors in Eigen value and which explained a higher variance. The factor analysis was repeated. The items (20, 22, 23, 24, 30, 31 and 33) load values of which were lower than .27. were excluded and the analysis was repeated. Consequently, a single factor with 30 items was obtained. This factor explained 25.85% of the total variance of the scale. The reliability coefficient was found to be .89.

2.2.2. Interviews

The semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers was tested by referring to the opinions of 2 field experts and 3 participants. The revisions were made as needed following the piloting stage. In sampling selection, care was shown to ensure the maximum diversity, by taking as the base the gender and the school of graduation. The sampling group included 4 female, 3 male learners graduated from Anatolian/private High School, and 3 female and 2 male learners from regular public school. Each recorded interview lasted 30 to 45 minutes.

2.2.3. Classroom observations

An observation form was developed by giving attention to the autonomous learning activities defined by Mynard and Softlaren (2003). The opinions of 5 field experts were referred to to ensure the validity and reliability of the form, and the changes were made accordingly. The functional definitions of the choices in the scale are as follows: for behaviours that are repeated; once at most '1=Almost never', twice at most '2=Rarely', three times at most '3=Sometimes', four times at most '4=Frequently', for behaviours repeated 5 times or more '5=Always'. The observation was made for 3 hours in a week and 24 hours throughout 2 months.

2.3. Analysis of the data

Descriptive analysis technique was employed in the analysis of the data derived from observations and interviews. The data so obtained was summarized in line with the themes previously set and direct quotations were cited to assert the data effectively (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 1999).

Frequencies and percentages were employed to analyze the data in the 'Learning Needs Scale'. Mean scores were calculated to analyze the data in the 'Autonomy Perception Scale'. While interpreting the findings, 3.50 is taken as a cut-off score meaning that a score at 3.50 or over indicates that the skill specified in the item is realized at a sufficient degree.

The simple linear regression analysis was employed to investigate the relationship between the 'Autonomy Perception Scale' scores and the GPAs of the learners.

3. Findings

3.1. Learners' opinions on the degree that the ELPE meets their needs

The findings of the 'Learning Needs Scale' reveal that approximately two-thirds of the learners strongly agreed/agreed on all the items. This can be interpreted that most of the learners have no significant complaints about the English education, and they think that the ELPE matches with their needs (Table: 1).

Table 1. The ‘Learning Needs Scale’

DEGREE (D): (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Undecided (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

ITEM	D	N	%
1. We are motivated because the language used in our courses is not artificially constructed and coercive.	1	8	5
	2	14	8,8
	3	31	19,4
	4	72	45
	5	35	21,9
2. The language I hear in the lessons helps me improve my listening skills.	1	4	2,4
	2	20	12,1
	3	38	23,0
	4	70	42,4
	5	33	20,0
3. The language I speak in the lessons helps me improve my speaking skills.	1	4	2,4
	2	9	5,5
	3	41	25,0
	4	75	45,7
	5	35	21,3
4. The language I read in the courses helps me improve my reading skills	1	4	2,4
	2	8	4,9
	3	40	24,4
	4	83	50,6
	5	29	17,7
5. The writing activities I perform in the courses helps me improve my writing skills	1	5	3,0
	2	12	7,3
	3	34	20,7
	4	81	49,4
	5	32	19,5
6. We have opportunities to practice the finer details of English in our courses	1	6	3,7
	2	12	7,3
	3	36	22,0
	4	88	53,7
	5	22	13,4
7. The language used in our courses helps us improve cognitive/academic language skills (skills relating to concept development, thinking, reasoning, planning, and problem solving)	1	5	3,1
	2	14	8,6
	3	37	22,8
	4	71	43,8
	5	35	21,6
8. I believe that the use of English in our education notably contributes to my English	1	7	4,8
	2	10	6,8
	3	35	24,0
	4	60	41,1
	5	34	23,3
9. I think the language used in our courses will help us to find better jobs.	1	13	7,6
	2	9	5,3
	3	28	16,5
	4	51	30,0
	5	69	40,6
10. I think the language used in our courses will help us to be successful in the exams such as TOEFL and IELTS.	1	11	6,5
	2	13	7,6
	3	21	12,4
	4	53	31,2
	5	72	42,4

The results of the interviews make it clear that there are divergences in the learner needs depending on their school of graduation. The graduates of Anatolian /private high school expect a more advanced level of English to be taught, while graduates of regular public school are content with learning intermediate English. While the former considers a grammar-centred teaching a problem, the latter states that they benefit from such a teaching practice. The graduates of Anatolian/private high school do not highly regard of the education they are offered whereas those of the regular public school think just the opposite. It is however seen that the views of the both groups converge on the need to put more focus on the use of technology and the language skills (Table 2). Two quotations are given below as examples.

An Anatolian high school graduate: “.. The prep education is a complete waste of time. Grammar and grammar. How far can we go? ... This is not our teachers’ fault or our fault. This is the system’s fault.”

A regular high school graduate: “The prep education has not met my expectations I suppose. Nevertheless I am satisfied. ... I do not see the time I have spent as loss of time...”

Table 2. Interviews

Question	Anatolian School/Private School (n=7)	Regular Public School (n=5)
What were your expectations about the ELPE?	-To learn advanced English (n=5). -To improve my communication skills to an effective level (n=2).	-To learn English at an intermediate level (n=5).
How do you think the ELPE have met your expectations?	-It slightly improved my knowledge of vocabulary (n=6) -Only grammar is taught (n=3) -It slightly improved my speaking skills (1).	-I think that my needs with regard to grammar are satisfied. (n=2) -I don't think it met my expectations to a satisfactory degree. (n=2) -It did not help me improve my speaking skills at all. (n=1)
In what respect does the ELPE fall short of your expectations?	-I see it as a lost cause (n=3) -Only grammar is taught (n=3). -Communication skills are not sufficiently addressed (n=3). -It fails in every respect (n=2). -Speaking skills are not sufficiently addressed (n=1).	-Reading and writing skills are not sufficiently improved (n=2). -Listening and speaking skills are not sufficiently addressed (n=3).
How would you evaluate the ELPE in terms of its effect on your motivation to learn English?	-It increased my motivation. I watch movies in the original language and listen to English songs more often than before (n=2). -It decreased my motivation because I really got bored (n=4). -It decreased my motivation, because the stress of failing has a negative effect (n=1).	-It increased my motivation. I find it really useful to use English in the classroom. (n=2) - It decreased my motivation, because the stress of failing has a negative effect (n=2) -It decreased my motivation. The teacher attitude is very important (n=1)
What would you recommend for a more effective ELPE?	-Increased use of technology (n=4) -More assignments that provoke creative thinking (n=2) -Prep education should not be compulsory (n=4) -More focus on reading, speaking and listening skills (n=4)	-Increased use of technology (n=4) -More teaching materials should be used. Textbooks should be changed (n=2) -Prep education should not be compulsory (n=4) -More focus on reading, speaking and listening skills (n=4)

3.2. Frequency of Learner-centred Classroom Activities

Observations indicated that most of the classroom activities that help improve autonomy of the learners listed in the observation form below were not actively utilized except for making choices (for example: choose activity A or B for homework or choose someone to work with.) group works, peer and self editing to some extent (Table:3).

Table 3. Frequency of Learner-centred Classroom Activities

Activities	Frequency				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
1) Giving choices (For example: choose activity A or B for homework or choose someone to work with.)			x		
2) Encouraging group work			x		
3) Encouraging learners to predict how well they did on tests		x			
4) Encouraging learners to set some learning goals		x			
5) Encouraging learners to use authentic materials outside the classroom		x			
6) Encouraging learners to keep learner diaries		x			
7) Encouraging learners to build reflection and extension into activities		x			
8) Encouraging self and peer editing			x		
9) Creating a self-access facility in the classroom		x			
10) Encouraging self-assessment		x			

3.3. The Learners' Perceptions on Autonomous Learning Skills

The Learners' mean scores range between 3, 50 and 3, 96 for 8 items – namely item 3, 5, 8, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 20. It is possible to say that the learners are able to employ the autonomous learning skills indicated in these items at a sufficient degree. As for the remaining 22 items, the mean scores varies between 2.12 and 3.46 implying that the learners are either not capable of using the skills indicated in these items or they can use them at a minimum degree (Table 4).

Table 4. Autonomy Perception Scale

Skill	N	Lowest	Highest	Average	Sd
1.I plan my English learning process	169	1,00	5,00	2,88	1,05465
2.I plan my time while learning English	170	1,00	5,00	2,66	,99075
3.I identify my aims and targets in English learning	171	1,00	5,00	3,50	1,12393
4.I look for better ways to learn English	172	1,00	5,00	3,40	1,10160
5.I try to find tools and materials that well matches with my level in order to better learn English	172	1,00	5,00	3,62	1,09874
6. I try to practice English with my friends and teachers.	173	1,00	5,00	3,12	1,07954
7. I exchange ideas with my friends and/or teachers on how to learn English.	173	1,00	5,00	3,17	1,11229
8. I try to seek help from my friends and/or teachers when I learn unfamiliar subjects	172	1,00	5,00	3,96	,96060
9.At the end of a learning activity, I give feedback to my friends and teachers on how well I have learnt	170	1,00	5,00	2,75	1,11767
10.At the end of a learning activity, I ask my friends and teachers for feedback on how well I have learnt	172	1,00	5,00	2,76	1,25818
11. At the end of a learning activity, I make comments on how well my friends have learnt	172	1,00	5,00	2,51	1,16723
12.I write down either my comments or the comments made by others about my learning activity	172	1,00	5,00	2,12	1,15770
13.I listen to English broadcasting in radio, internet, etc.	166	1,00	5,00	2,83	1,35574
14. While listening to English, I focus on certain key words	127	1,00	5,00	3,55	1,09583
15.If possible, I listen to the same English listening material a few times in order to increase my understanding of it	127	1,00	5,00	3,54	1,07464
16.I try to understand English song lyrics while listening to them	127	1,00	5,00	3,62	1,15421
17. I take notes of new words, word groups, idioms and structures while listening	126	1,00	5,00	3,61	1,21308

18. I try to use every opportunity to utter each new word or structure that I have heard	125	1,00	5,00	3,01	1,09238
19. I try to use every opportunity to write down each new word or structure that I have heard	163	1,00	5,00	2,87	1,12092
20. I pay attention to images while watching a TV programme or movie in English in order to better grasp it.	139	1,00	5,00	3,82	,97988
21. I take notes of new words, word groups, idioms and structures while watching	142	1,00	5,00	3,28	1,32818
22. I try to use every opportunity to utter each new word or structure that I have come across, while watching.	140	1,00	5,00	3,03	1,12148
23. I try to use every opportunity to write down each new word or structure that I have heard while watching	141	1,00	5,00	2,82	1,14819
24. I read books, periodicals, internet etc. in English.	160	1,00	5,00	2,16	1,18633
25. Before starting to read, I first try to make predictions about the topic, by looking at the titles and pictures	108	1,00	5,00	3,46	1,11427
26. I try to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words in the text without resorting to the dictionary	106	1,00	5,00	3,20	1,07541
27. I take note of new words, word groups, idioms and structures, while reading.	107	1,00	5,00	3,40	1,19638
28. In order to promote my vocabulary knowledge, I regularly go through the text that I have read before.	107	1,00	5,00	2,69	1,11939
29. I try to make use of every opportunity to involve a new word or structure in speech, which I came across while reading.	107	1,00	5,00	2,96	1,07216
30. I try to make use of every opportunity to involve new words and structures in writing, which I came across while reading.	103	1,00	5,00	2,95	1,17472

3.4. The Correlation between the Scores of 'Autonomy Perception Scale' and the GPAs

According to the results of the simple linear regression analysis, the autonomy perception scale scores do not significantly predict the GPAs ($1.06 p > .05$). It is also the case when we look into the effect on the standardized β (Beta) value ($\beta = .08 p > .05$). The autonomy perception scale can alone merely explain 1% of the variance in the GPAs. This is a rather low percentage and reveals that the scores of the 'Autonomy Perception Scale' have no effect on the GPAs of the learners (Table 5).

Table 5. The Correlation between the Scores of Autonomy Perception Scale and English Language Performance Scores

Model	B	Standard Error	β	t	P	F	R	R ²
Dependent Variable GPA								
Invariant	58.74	4.52	-	12.99	.00	-	.08	.01
Autonomy	.06	.06	.08	1.03	.30	1.06	-	-

4. Conclusions and discussion

The main conclusions to be drawn from this study are as follows:

- About two thirds of the learners think that the ELPE meets their needs.
- There are discrepancies in the learner needs resulting from the fact that learners with different profiles are placed in the same classes.
- The learning processes in the classroom settings are teacher-centred predominantly focusing on teaching grammar.
- The learners cannot satisfactorily make use of autonomous learning skills.
- There exists no correlation between the scores of the 'Autonomy Perception Scale' and the GPAs of the learners.

A deeper look into seemingly incoherent results that have been summarized above raises concerns. There have been somewhat positive results indicating that the ELPE can satisfy the

learners' needs, which is one of the basic assumptions of a learner-centred education. That most of the learners believe that the ELPE meets their needs gives the impression that the programme has no serious problems. However, when looked carefully, the findings of the interviews reveal two problems. The inconsistency between the needs of the graduates from Anatolian/private high schools and those from regular public schools emerges as a problem. The graduates from Anatolian/private high schools in fact received a more intensive English education in comparison with those from regular public high schools. However, the education received was predominantly grammar-centred. Placement exams, on the other hand, test contextual grammar, knowledge of vocabulary, and communicative language skills. This explains why the former cannot perform better than the latter in the placement exam, and accordingly are placed in the same classes with the latter. It is however essential that the placement exam, which is a type of discrepancy analysis attempting to examine what people know and what they ought to know, match with the ELPE. Another problem is that the traditional grammar teaching still prevails in the ELPE. This means that the ELPE is simply a repetition of the previous education for the learners from Anatolian/private high schools.

As far as the requirements of the information age are concerned, the learners are supposed to maintain their English learning process after they complete the ELPE regardless of what profession they will enter in the future. The important thing that matters is the acquisition of autonomous skills required by effective learning process in the real life situations. Providing a solid ground for a lifelong learning through these skills should be among the ultimate goals of a learner-centred ELPE that will secure the success of the learner outside the school as well as in his social or professional life. However, an interpretation of a wholesome evaluation of the results of the study reveals certain shortcomings in how the ELPE provides the learners with the skills that are needed by each learner to take charge of his own learning. It is not surprising then the learners make minimum use of autonomous skills. These results also cast doubt on the awareness of the learners of their needs. If learners' opinions are to be useful in a learner-centred context, it is a prerequisite that the learners are conscious of their needs. The learner should know what, why and how to learn. Such awareness of the learners being able to state well-considered needs will be the driving force that is capable of initiating and maintaining the autonomous learning process.

It is fair to expect that the use of autonomous skills (even at a minimum degree) can predict terminal objectives such as GPAs. In this study however, the 'autonomy perception scale' scores of the learners do not correlate with their GPAs. One can relate this finding, which is contradictory to the literature (see Dafei, 2007), to the existence of two problems. Firstly, learners who were graduated from Anatolian/private high schools can survive with their previous knowledge of English in the ELPE, which is simply a repetition of their former education, and can thus perform quite well without actually being fully involved in the active learning process. Therefore, their grades may have little to do with the ELPE they receive or their autonomous learning efforts. Secondly, it is likely that the effect of autonomous learning skills on the GPAs diminishes since the traditional grammar-centred teaching is sustained and what is learnt is basically tested through classical exams. In this study, the scores of classical exams are unavoidably used as the measure of the success, since there are no other achievement criteria. One can say that the effectiveness of an ELPE can be evaluated by the extent it contributes to the performance of the learner in real life situations. Consequently, it is important to examine the relationship between the 'Autonomy Perception Scale' scores and the grades obtained through performance-based evaluation criteria that are compatible with the learner-centred curricula. This is one of the limitations of this study. Another limitation is that the graduates of Anatolian High School and private high school were examined in the

same category. Given some other limitations of the study, it is recommendable that the following steps should be taken in order to shed a better light on the subject under investigation:

1. The results point out that a good understanding of the dynamic relationship between all the variables of a learner-centred ELPE is essential if the autonomous learning skills are to be effectively put into use. Above all, appropriate communication means should continuously be maintained in order to deal with the learners' needs adequately.
2. The autonomy perceptions and attitudes of the teachers and the learners should be subjected to a detailed examination.
3. The relationship between the autonomy perceptions and certain variables such as general autonomy perceptions, social environments or family attitudes should be investigated.
4. Follow-up research should be made into the problems encountered by the learners in their later academic and professional processes.
5. A model ELPE curriculum should be developed, which accommodates autonomous learning skills as part of the aims and the objectives, and which ensures the effective acquisition of such skills. Such a model should also be tested via an experimental study.

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