Research Article ● *Araştırma Makalesi*

Understanding the Reasons for Class Repetition in an English Language Preparatory Department

Bir İngilizce Hazırlık Bölümünde Sınıf Tekrarlarının Nedenlerini Anlamak

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ABSTRACT

Repeaters experienced some unknown difficulties in learning English in the English language preparatory department (ELPD) of a Turkish university. Therefore, the present study aimed to find out what the difficultieswere and how the difficulties were experienced. The present study was designed as a hermeneutic phenomenological study. Sixteen students who studied in a level once or more than once participated into the study. The data were collected with semi-structured interviews and content-analyzed.Different strategies like thick description and decentralization were used for the trustworthiness of the study. The findings indicated that six sources led to the students' fear of failure and influenced their perception of education negatively, which resulted in studying in a level many times.

MAKALE BİLGİSİ

ÖZ

Bir Türk üniversitesinin İngilizce hazırlık bölümünde (İHB), sınıf tekrarı yapan öğrenciler İngilizce öğrenirken bilinmeyen birkaç zorluk yaşamışlardır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma, zorlukların ne olduğunu ve bu zorlukların nasıl tecrübe edildiğini bulmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, hermeneutik bir olgu çalışması olarak dizayn edilmiştir. Çalışmaya bir seviyeyi bir ya da birden fazla kez tekrar eden on altı öğrenci katılmıştır. Veriler, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerle toplanmış ve içerik analizi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın inandırıcılığı sağlamak için yoğun anlatım ve merkezsizleşme gibi farklı stratejiler kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, altı unsurun öğrencilerde kalma korkusuna ve eğitim anlayışlarını olumsuz etkilenmesine neden olmuştur ki bunlar katılımcıların bir seviyeyi birden fazla kere tekrar etmelerine neden olmuştur.

1. Introduction

Language learning is under the effect of various factors, and these factors play a significant role in language learning achievement. One of them is self-perception of English which is defined as to what extent a student perceives himself/herself to have English ability (Takahashi, 2008), and which is believed to correlate positively with language achievement, motivation toward language learning, and language proficiency, while negatively correlated with language anxiety/apprehension (Takahashi, 2008, 2009, 2010).

Personality traits can be also considered to cause success or failure in language learning (Ganschow, Sparks &

Javorsky, 1998; Karahan, 2007). According to Karahan (2007), despite knowing the social and economical benefits of learning English, students are not eager and motivated to become active in learning English. The relation of personality traits should also be considered with learning behaviors together with anxiety and motivation, language learning strategies, and attributions. In terms of language learning behaviors, Sheu (2017) claimed that personality traits determine how students learn a language, and personality traits and language proficiencyhave a direct effect on language achievement, but not motivation and attitude toward language learning. Regarding language learning strategies, students have a pre-dominant personality trait which determines what kind of language

learning strategies is going to be used by them (Obralic & Mulalic, 2017). Despite this finding, Sharp (2008) mentioned that there is not a direct relationship between personality, learning strategies, and second language proficiency. According to Fatemi, Pishghadam, and Asghari (2012), considering the personality traits' relation with attribution, some of personality traits are good predictors of the factors language students attribute their success and failure to.

Attribution is also closely related to language learning strategies. In one of the studies, Sorić and Ančić (2008) found that learning strategies aredirectly related to the students' attributions for their success and failure in language learning assuccessful language learners are aware of and good users of language learning strategies. Yet, unsuccessful language students may be active strategy users, but can not use language learning strategies appropriately due to their lack of certain metacognitive strategies and self-regulatory skills (Vann & Abraham, 1990).

In addition to the above studies, different studies were also made to find out to what language students attribute their success or failure in language learning. In one of these studies, successful students were found to be more likely to attribute their success to internal factors, while unsuccessful learners attributed their failure to external factors (Gosiewska-Turek, 2017). Similarly, Genç (2016) and Sorić and Ančić (2008) indicated that success in language learning is attributed to internal factors, but the attributions of failure in language learning relate with external factors. However, a different study by Thang, Gobel, Nor, and Suppiah (2011) pointed out that external factors are considered to be the most effective attributes for success, while internal attributes are related to failure in language learning. In another study, Mori, Ming, Nor, Suppiah, and Imm (2011) found out that the language students with a high level and/or a high self-perception of English proficiency attributed their success to effort and ability and failure to class- and interest-related activities, while the attributions of lower proficiency students related to lack of effort and ability. Similarly, according to Pishghadam and Zabihi (2011), effort and ability are considered to be the best predictors of high achievement in language learning, while luck and mood are found to be the predictors of low language learning achievement. In addition, Lu, Woodcook and Jiang (2014) stated that effort, luck and task difficulty were the causes of the students for success in language learning, while effort, ability, task difficulty, and luck were the attributions for failure, but teacher-centered and learner-centered educational background did not affect students' attributions.

Besides the above factors, there are several studies which have investigated the effect of English as the medium of instruction (EMI) and English language proficiency on overall academic achievement. On one hand, some of these studies claim that EMI and low English proficiency do not affect students' overall academic achievement a lot (Bani-Salameh, 2017; Dafouz &Camacho-Miñano, 2016; Wilson & Komba, 2012) because Wilson and Komba (2012) expressed that academic achievement is under the effects of different variables. On the other hand, EMI and English proficiency are considered to have a direct effect on students' overall academic achievement (AlBakri, 2017; Fakeye, 2014; Kinyaduka & Kiwara, 2013) because Rahmat, Min, Sungif, and Yusup (2015) found out that the students with a high English language proficiency can achieve more in other courses. Yet, if students with low English proficiency are instructed in English, this may cause students to not understand what is taught (AlBakri, 2017; Kinyaduka & Kiwara, 2013; Mchazime, 2001) and to drop out (Tahir, Rizvi, Ghazali, Ahmad, & Shafiq, 2017). Therefore, EMI and low English proficiency lower students' overall academic achievement (AlBakri, 2017; Kinyaduka & Kiwara, 2013). Similarly, Ganschow et al. (1998) emphasized that the students' level of language skills may influence their language learning negatively. Besides, linguistic differences may lead to difficulties in language learning because Shabbir and Bughio (2009) found out that several difficulties that Arab students encountered in learning the English language were due to the basic structural differences like writing conventions between Arabic and English.

Some other factors are thought to be involved in achievement in language learning. Gender is one of them and believed to affect language learning achievement because female language students are found to outperform male students in language exams (Główka, 2014; Zoghi, Kazem, & Kalani, 2013). Similarly, age has an effect on successful language learning because it was found to affect language students' uses of learning strategies and encourage them to use more social and functional strategies (Chen, 2014). In addition, Banks (2008) mentioned that language learning difficulties in second language learning can be resulted from deficiencies in native languages. Learner beliefs are also considered to have a possible relationship with strategy use and differ good learners from poor learners (Kayaoğlu, 2013). El-Omari (2016) added that attitude toward English, extracurricular activities, and socioeconomic and social situations directly affect a student's achievement in language learning. In addition, teacher-related issues may cause language students to fail constantly in language exams and to have demotivation attitudes, reluctance and apathy to learn the language (García Gutiérrez & Durán Narváez, 2017). Similarly, Taguchi (2006) told that implicit teachers' beliefs about their students and their expectations of their students' achievement can lead to success in language learning, but not motivation. In addition, Difino and Lombardino (2004), in their study, revealed that native speakers and inexperienced instructors without proper pedagogical training, curricular problems, oversized classrooms, and fast pacing were several potential reasons for language learning failure. Similarly, Sawir (2005) and Turanlı (2009) stated that language learners' prior education experiences might cause some weaknesses, so learners could not learn language well.

Affective factors like anxiety, aptitude, and motivation may also have significant effect on language learning (Ay, 2010; Doğan, 2008; Hemamalini, 2010; Horwitz, 2001; Kao & Craigle, 2010; Pappamihiel, 2002; Trang, Moni & Baldauf, 2012; Yu-ching Chan & Guo-cheng, 2004). These studies indicated that any type of anxiety in language learning like speaking and listening anxiety was negatively correlated with achievement in language learning, so if language

students are anxious, they can not perform well. Zare and Riasati (2012) also found that language learning anxiety correlated negatively with self-esteem and academic level. Yu-ching Chan and Guo-cheng (2004) revealed and listed low proficiency, fear of negative evaluation, competition of games, anxious personality, pressure from students themselves and their parents, tests, speaking in front of others, spelling, incomprehensible input, and speaking to native speakers as anxiety-provoking sources. As a result of anxiety, language learners could become less self-efficient, which could lead to demotivation (Pappamihiel, 2002). Motivation and demotivation to learn a language could create notable differences in terms of achievement in language learning (Ardasheva, 2010; González, 2011; Khodadady & Khajavy, 2013). Therefore, it is suggested in the literature to create stress-free environment by avoiding anxiety-provoking actions (Ay, 2010; Doğan, 2008; Kao & Craigle, 2010). Aptitude for language learning is also a cause of success or failure in language learning (Ganschow et al. 1998; González, 2011).

As aforementioned, various factors determine the success and failure of language students in learning a language. The researcher experienced a similar phenomenon in an ELPD of a Turkish university where he worked as the instructor of English between 2009 and 2014. Some ELPD studentshad to repeat a level or levels once or more than once every yearthough every student had to pass each level to graduate from the ELPD because the education medium of the university was 100% English in some faculties like faculty of engineering and 30% in other faculties like faculty of education.This situation-based phenomenon was commonly experienced in the ELPD, yet the essence of the phenomenon was not understood well owing to not knowing what repeaters experienced and how they experienced it/them in this situation.

Besides the explanation of the phenomenon, it is also important to know the higher education context of the phenomenon for understanding the phenomenon better. In theELPD of the university, there were four sections levelled as elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate. Each section lasted two months, which was named as a quarter. The ELPD had an intensive English language teaching program in which language skills were taught in a semi-integrated way, grammar was taught separately but in integration with other skills, a language lab program was used for practice, and an extensive reading course was included. It aimed to enable students to learn English to study in their departments through this intensive English language teaching program.

As stated earlier, why some ELPD students failed and had to repeat a level or levels once or more than once was not known. Therefore, the present study aimed to describe this phenomenon by answering the following questions:

1. What do the repeaters experience in learning English, which causes class repetition?

2. How do the repeaters experience them?

2. Methodology

Detailed information about the methodology of the present study was given below in terms of its research design,

participants, data collection tool, data collection procedure, and data analysis

2.1. Research Design

Phenomenological research frameworkfocuses on the lived experiences of some people about a concept or situation and demonstrates what and how they experience to provide the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Similarly, the present study focuses on the lived experiences of several students about class repetition in an ELPD and tries to indicate what and how these students have experienced when repeating a level or levels in the ELPD of a Turkish university to provide the essence of class repetition. In addition, the phenomenological method in the study was hermeneutic, which studies the lived experience as soon as it is experienced and reflects on it to make the phenomenon understandable without aiming to generalize the outcome of the study and try to solve a problem (van Manen, 1990). Like what van Manen (1990) said, the researcher in the present study studied the lived experiences of class repetition as soon as it was experienced, and he reflected on the experience to make the phenomenon - class repetition - more understandable.

2.2. Participants

Criterion sampling was used to choose the participants because it allows any researcher to work with participants who experience the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The participants were chosen depending on the following criterion: Being a student who studied in a level one or more than once in the ELPD of the university.

Sixteen participants (9 female and 7 male) participated into the study. They were 19 years old on average. Five participants repeated a level three times, and the rest studied twice. That is, the first group spent six months in the same level, while the second group spent four months.

2.3.Data Collection Tool

The semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data.The first interviews were designed depending on the aim of the study and had four questions: (a) Which levels (A, B, C, and D) the student studied again, (b) how many times the student studied in the same level, (c) what the student thought about the reasons for this situation, and (d) how these reasons affected the student in learning English. The first and second questions were prepared to provide background information about the participants.Before preparing the third and fourth research questions in the first interview, a literature review was made on the factors which could affect students' language learning. The literature review indicated that several factors including personality traits, self-perception of English ability, attributions, linguistic differences, learning experience, affective factors, and features of language teachers(like being native and non-native and having enough pedogogical training) might affect language learning process. Instead of asking specific questions to the participants based on these factors, general questions were preferred and developed to enable the participants to explain what and how they really experienced in this phenomenon instead of restricting them to these factors.

The second interviews were made for member checking of the initial analysis of the collected data.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

A legal permission was taken from the institution. The classes which had the students studying in a level once or more than once were determined, and then the students were informed about the study. Sixteen students became volunteer to participate in the study, and their consent was got. The researcher wanted to make the interviews orally, yet the students got very nervous and did not want to go on. When the researcher talked with the students, they told him that they wanted to answer the interview questions in a written way. As a result, the researcher gave them the printed version of the interviews, and the participants answered the interview questions in class time.

2.5. Data Analysis

The data were analysed according to the techniques mentioned in the study of Bugel (2011) as Figure 1 shows below.

Figure 1. The Steps of Analysing the Phenomenological Data in Bugel's Study
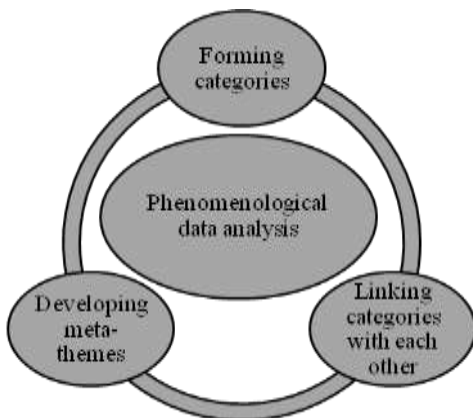
As mentioned in Figure 1, the selective words and phrases in the interviews were first labelled and coded, so the categories were formed. Second, the labels, codes, and categories were linked with each other. Depending on them, the patterns and themes of the study were derived. Finally, based on the patterns and themes, the meta-themes were developed. This process was cyclical as the researcher had to redo these procedures during the data analysis and inclusive since the study focused on all of the themes revealed during the research and included them in the findings. Consequently, the structural (what the participants experienced) and textural (how the participants experienced what was experienced) analyses of the data were made to provide the essence of the phenomenon under investigation as suggested by Creswell (2007).

2.6. Trustworthiness

Different strategies were employed for the trustworthiness of the study in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

To make the study credible, the decentralization of the researcher, building trust with the participants, member checks, thick description, and peer scrutiny were used. As Bugel (2011) and Schumacher (2010) recommended, the researcher decentralized himself by mentioning his beliefs, assumptions, and experiences related to the phenomenon to place the participants in the centre of the study. He built trust with the participants by informing them about the aim of the study and keeping their information confidential. In addition,the data analysis was presented with a thick description, and the researcher enabled each participant to check the initial analyses of the first interviews. He also wanted one of his colleagues with qualitative research background to scrutinize the whole research process.

For the transferability of the study, intensive descriptions of the phenomenon were used as Lincoln and Guba (1985) mentioned. In addition, criterion sampling contributed to the transferability of the study by providing the participants who really experienced the phenomenon under investigation as told by Bugle (2011).

The researcher employed van Manen's method of phenomenological study to collect, analyse, and report the data so that other researchers can follow the decision trail of this study and come to the same or comparable findings with the researcher of this study, which Table 1 indicates below. This strategy could make a study dependable (Schumacher, 2010; Bugel, 2011).

Table 1. van Manen's (1990) Method of Phenomenological Study

Categories	Explanation of the Categories
1. The nature of lived experience	Making the lived experience meaningful through reflecting on and interpreting the experience
2. Existential investigation	Exploring the data by collecting data and benefitting from the phenomenological literature
3. Phenomenological reflection	Making a thematic analysis by uncovering thematic aspects of the lived experience and developing essential themes
4. Phenomenological writing	Writing and rewriting by using the language of speaking and various examples

In addition to the audit trail of the study, he used member checks to make the study dependable.

To make the study confirmable, the study was tried to be made credible, dependable, and transferable by using the aforementioned strategies because it is mentioned in the literature that "when credibility, transferability, and dependability are achieved, confirmability is established" (Schumacher, 2010, p. 32).

2.7. Researcher's Personal Assumptions and Beliefs

The researcher taught several classes in different levels where there were several students who repeated a level once or more than once during five years. To understand

the possible reasons of this situation, a meeting was made with his students in one of his classes and another one with his colleagues by the researcher. According to the meetings with the students and colleagues, it was seen that the students had difficulty in learning English in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Therefore, it was considered that the students could not improve themselves in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation as well as four language skills, which caused them to give up studying. In addition, the students were thought to have negative attitudes toward learning English because of the lack of motivation to and interest in learning English. Besides, they were also observed to not review what they learnt in class and were passive during the lessons. These reasons were considered to create a negative learning experience for the students.Therefore, it was claimed by the researcher that negative attitude and learning experience were two of thereasons leading to this situation.It isbelieved that the main reason for class repetition was students.

3. Findings

3.1. Themes

Seven themes were found out during the data analysis. They are listed as follow:

1. Educational background
2. Language learning difficulties
3. Passing grade
4. Attendance
5. Instructors' teaching preferences
6. Percentage of English education in the faculties
7. Beliefs, thoughts, and feelings of a student about himself / herself

3.1.1. Theme 1: Educational Background

Two participants mentioned that they did not study English before they registered the ELPD as understood from the excerpts below:

> Student 5: I have difficulty because I do not know English and have never took English course before.

> Student 10: We do not know English and are not used to it because we did not study English before, so we have difficulty while learning English.

Two participants added that they did not consider their English education at high school as sufficient and efficient. This finding is clearly supported by the quotations below.

> Student 6: I graduated from a general high school where English was not paid attention. I did not pay attention to learn it, either. Here as I have to pay attention and English is obligatory, I have difficulty.

> Student 9: English education in my high school was not good, so I had difficulty.

As a result, they stated that these two situations influenced them negatively in their classes and led to difficulties in learning English.

3.1.2. Theme 2: Language Learning Difficulties

Most participants wrote that it was difficult for them to learn English because it is different from Turkish in terms of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Lack of vocabulary avoided some participants making sentences, and though some participants knew the meanings of the words, they could not use them correctly as the statements from the first interview demonstrate.

> Student 2: Lack of vocabulary. We can not make full sentences owing to the lack of vocabulary.

> Student 7: Although I know the meanings of the words, I have difficulty in using them because the meanings of some words change according to the sentence where it is used… I have difficulty in speaking because I can not make sentences according to the rules while speaking.

In addition, some participants could not learn grammar rules as grammar rules were difficult to learn. Therefore, it was difficult for them to speak in English. Also, the pronunciation of the words caused them not to speak. The followings exemplify these findings:

> Student 3: The difficulty I have in learning English is that it is not one of the courses I am familiar with. Learning new things is difficult, and also things including grammar are difficult to learn.

> Student 14: First of all, I have difficulty in pronunciation because I could not read and the words are not read as they are written since the pronunciation of some words is difficult and very long.

3.1.3. Theme 3: Passing Grade

Some participants emphasized that passing grade, which was 70, was a barrier that made learning English difficult for them. They stated that the department's passing grade was higher than the ones of most of other departments. The statements of the participants below indicate these findings.

> Student 8: Our passing grade is so high that we study in order to pass, but not to learn. This influences our English learning negatively.

> Student 13: My second complaint is that our passing grade is 70. In which school is the passing grade 70?

> Student 15: The difficulties I encounter in English classes are intensive language teaching program, difficult classes, and also the high passing grade.

According to them, the high passing grade led them to study in order to pass the level, but not to learn.

3.1.4. Theme 4: Attendance

> Student 16: I have difficulty in language learning because the hour limit for the absence is not enough.

As the quotation above illustrates, some participants complained about that the department's attendance policy which is that a student cannot come to class for 36 hours during each level, so if the student's absence exceeds 36 hours, he/she fails. They wanted the department to increase the hours of absence.

3.1.5. Theme 5: Instructors' Teaching Preferences

Some participants stated that their instructors started to speak in English in their classes and wanted them to understand the lesson. While doing this, their teachers did not take their educational background into account. Even if they did not understand the lesson, their instructors insisted on speaking in English. To demonstrate:

> Student 13: I was a general high school student and our English education at school was bad. I registered here and started to study in level A as a result. From the beginning, I had problems in the lessons because the teachers started to speak English and wanted me to understand them though I was a level A student and could say my name-surname in English difficultly. I can not understand why the teachers always speak English and want a student who start to study in level A and does not know English to understand them…

Consequently, it seems that not using Turkish when necessary caused them to have difficulty in learning English.

3.1.6. Theme 6: Percentages of English Education in the Faculties

Some participants mentioned that they had to take 30% of their courses in English in their faculties, while there were some faculties where students had to take all of their courses in English. Those students mentioned that their faculties were in the first group where 30% of the courses were in English, so there had to be a difference between the first and second group as illustrated by the excerpt below:

> Student 15: … that the passing grade is high causes problems in passing my courses. For example, as my department teaches 30% of its courses in English, my education should be less intensive than the one whose department teaches all of its courses in English because all of his/her courses are in English while two of my courses are in English in my department. That is, I do not like that he and I take the same education. We should pass more easily than them.

Also, some other participants said that there were some departments in which they did not need to know English such as child education. They suggested that the students of such departments should not fail as mentioned in the quotation below.

> Student 8: … Also, nobody has to learn English. I think a person whose department is child education does not need English. There should be the English language preparation department, and nobody opposes that, but there should not be a passing grade. Because of the fear of the passing grade, we do not really want learn English.

3.1.7. Theme 7: Beliefs, Thoughts, and Feelings of a Student about Himself / Herself

Some participants told in the interviews that they were not interested in English and could not understand English.

Consequently, they did not like studying and learning English, which caused difficulties during their education in the ELPD. The quotations below clearly support these findings.

> Student 5: I have difficulty because I do not know English and have never took English course before. But we learn here from the beginning. Despite this, I can not do as it is boring and difficult for me. Because of it, I do not want to study. As I do not study and English knowledge can be forgotten if it is not reviewed, I forget easily.

> Student 6: I do not like studying language. I forget what I learned if I do not review it for one day or two days. The main reasons that I have difficulty in learning English is that I am disinterested in English and do not like the course.

3.2. Metathemes

Two metathemes emerged from the thematic analysis of the data collected. They are as follows:

1. Fear of failure
2. Perception of education

3.2.1. Metatheme 1: Fear of Failure

The first metatheme is that the participants were afraid of experiencing failure. It encompasses four themes (e.g., language learning difficulties, passing grade, attendance, and instructors' teaching preferences). The participants mentioned that they could not make sentences because it was difficult to learn grammar rules, new vocabulary, and how to pronounce the words. They compared the passing grade with other universities' passing grades and thought that it was high. Therefore, they studied English to pass, but not to learn. Besides, they wanted the department to increase the absence limit since it affected their learning negatively. Moreover, they criticized their instructors because their instructors generally spoke English in the class and wanted the participants to understand them. According to the participants, all these themes influenced their learning negatively and made them be afraid of failure.

3.2.2. Metatheme 2: Perception of Education

The second metatheme is related to the perceptions of the participants about education. It includes educational background, percentages of English education in the faculties, and personal beliefs, thoughts, and feelings of a students about himself/herself. Some of the participants' statements showed that their educational background related to English education was not sufficient for them. They did not take English education or had English education that was not beneficial for them. This situation affected their personal beliefs, thoughts, and feelings of a students about himself/herself because they did not consider English important, and so they did not study it or were not interested in learning it. The ones whose departments use English as the medium of the education for 30% of their courses were not in favour of having an English education as intensively as other participants whose courses in their departments were in English. The participants believed that

these factors influenced their learning English in a negative way.

3.3. The Essence of the Phenomenon

The participants of the study took English education in one of the ELPD of a Turkish university. As mentioned before, there were four levels (A, B, C, and D), and each level lasted two months. In each level, there were one midterm and final exam to determine whether the students would pass or fail. Most students completed their education in the department after eight months, but some students had to study in a level once or more than once. Failure was what the participants in the study experienced, which led to class repetition.

The participants encountered some difficulties that influenced the lived experience above. The main difficulties were related to the participants' fear of failure and perception of education. The fear of failure resulted from some sub-difficulties including language learning difficulties, passing grade, attendance, and instructors' teaching preferences. In terms of language learning difficulties, the participants stated that it was difficult for them to learn grammar rules, new vocabulary, and how to pronounce the words, so they could not make sentences. According to them, compared with other universities' passing grades, the passing grade of the department was high. This situation resulted in studying English to pass, but not to learn. They also told that obligatory attendance limited their learning English. They mentioned that their instructors usually preferred to speak English in class and wanted the students to understand them, but the participants could not understand the instruction in English. The participants believed that all these difficulties caused them to be afraid of failure.

In addition, the perceptions of the participants about education were related to the participants' educational background, percentages of English education in the faculties, and personal beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about themselves. Some participants wrote that they had not taken English education before and their English education had been bad. They claimed that their educational background, therefore, influenced the way they studied English. That is, as English had not been considered important before, they became uninterested in and demotivated to learn and study English. In addition, the participants whose departments used English as the medium of the education for 30% of their courses were opposed to having an English education so intensively as other participants whose courses in their departments were 100% in English had. The participants, consequently, believed that the negative perceptions of English had a negative influence on their learning English.

4. Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

Class repetition is a common phenomenon experienced in almost every educational institution. It is also a very significant phenomenon which has direct effects on the general success of a language teaching program, instructional plans, institutions, teachers, and parents because class repetition lowers the general success of the language teaching program, creates unexpected changes in instructional plans, forces institutions to work hard for finding out and overcoming possible problems, demotivates teachers, and leads to extra burden on parents' budgets.

Being common, effective, and influential in different aspects of education including language education renders learning the reasons of class repetition obligatory. Similarly, class repetition is a common problem in the ELPD of the Turkish university where the present study was made. The findings of the present study have indicated that there are two main reasons for class repetition: fear of failure and perception of education.

The study has shown that fear of failure is first caused by language learning difficulties. It is known that Turkish (first language of the students) and English (second language of the students) are linguistically different from one another in different aspects including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. Linguistic differences may hinder students' learning grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and pronunciation as stated by Shabbir and Bughio (2009) in the literature. Students may get very anxious and demotivated to learn English, and so their performances may get affected negatively, which corroborates the finding that anxiety leads to poor performance and failure in the literature (Ardesheva, 2010; Ay, 2010;González, 2011; Doğan, 2008; Hemamalini, 2010; Horwitz, 2001; Kao & Craigle, 2010;Pappamihiel, 2002; Trang et al., 2012; Yu-ching Chan & Guo-cheng, 2004; Zare & Riasati, 2012). Language learning difficulties indicate that the students in the study may have a low level of English ability and use this an attribution to their failure in language learning. That is, the student in the study may tend to attribute their failure in language learning to an external factor as stated in the literature (Lu et al., 2014; Mori et al., 2011; Thang et al., 2011).

In addition, fear of failure is led by passing grade. The study has revealed that passing grade may create a psychological barrier which may prevent students from studying English, but may also act as an excuse for failure when compared to the passing grades of other ELPDs. Therefore, passing grade can be considered as an anxiety-provoking action which Yu-ching Chan and Guo-cheng (2004) stated is negatively correlated with academic success. Passing grade demonstrates that the students in the study may have a low level of English proficiency and so attribute their failure to an external factor, passing grade. This finding of the study is consistent with the findings of several studies in the literature that low proficiency lowers academic achievement (AlBakri, 2017; Fakeye, 2014; Kinyaduka & Kiwara, 2013; Rahmat et al., 2015). In addition, this finding in the study indicates that the students relate success in language learning to good grades which were found to be the cause of successful language learning by Thang et al. (2011).The students in the study can be considered as low achievers of language learning. Thus, they tend to attribute their failure to external factors, and passing grade in this aspect serves as an external factor for the students. The literature supports this finding because unsuccessful language learners attribute their failure in the literature to an external factor (Genç, 2016; Gosiewska-Turek, 2017; Sorić & Ančić, 2008).

The findings of the study have also demonstrated that attendance is another reason for fear of failure. It seems that obligatory attendance serves as an anxiety-provoking action which reminds students of failure and so discourages them from attending to the classes. As a reminder of class repetition, attendance may be associated with demotivation by students, which causes serious differences in academic achievement in language learning as mentioned in the literature (Khodadady & Khajavy, 2013; Pappamihiel, 2002).

Though low proficiency in language is not considered considered to be very effective in langauge learning achievement by Bani-Salameh (2017), Dafouz and Camacho-Miñano (2016) and Wilson and Komba (2012), it is thought to be a reason for anxiety by Yu-ching Chan and Guo-cheng (2004). In accordance with this finding in the literature, the study has revealed that fear of failure is also fed by low proficiency. That is, the medium of instruction in any ELPD in Turkey is English, so language instructors are supposed to speak English during their lessons. Therefore, students must have a certain level of proficiency to understand, learn, and study so that they can proceed in their English education. Speaking only English may be tolerated in the repeaters' classes, yet this toleration may change from instructor to instructor. Some instructors may be eager to teach in the first language, while others may go on teaching in the second language. In the second situation, the preferences of instructors may strengthen students' fear of failure because repeaters may have limited language proficiency and can not meet the requirements of an English-based instruction as the findings in the literature support (AlBakri, 2017; Fakeye, 2014; Ganschow et al., 1998; Kinyaduka & Kiwara, 2013; Rahmat et al., 2015). This situation may make the input incomprehensible for students, which is also considered as anxiety-provoking in the literature (Yu-ching & Guo-cheng, 2004). To conclude, fear of failure, together with its sources, leads to anxiety, and anxiety causes poor performances on language exams, failure, and class repetition as stated in the literature (Ay, 2010; Doğan, 2008; Hemamalini, 2010; Horwitz, 2001; Kao & Craigle, 2010; Pappamihiel, 2002; Trang et al., 2012; Yu-ching & Guo-cheng, 2004). Besides, this finding of the study indicates that the instructors of the students in the study can be considered as a certain factor leading to fear of failure among the students because it seems that the preference of the instructors (speaking English in the lesson) may have resulted in the students' constant failure in language exams and forming negative attitudes toward the language as García Gutiérrez and Durán Narváez (2017) mentioned. This finding also supports the finding of Taguchi (2006) who stated that success in language learning can be attributed to teacher-related issues by students. In addition, as Genç (2016), and Gosiewska-Turek (2017), and Sorić and Ančić (2008) stated, teachers may be used by the students in the study as one of the external causes of their failure in language learning.

In addition to students' fear of failure, their perceptions of education lead to class repetition as the present study has revealed. According to the findings of the study, perception of education is seriously influenced by students' educational background and beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about themselves. As Sawir (2005) and Turanlı (2009)

stated, students' prior education experiences may affect their language learning negatively. In accordance with this assumption, the present study has revealed that English education is not considered very important by the participants because their prior English learning experiences are negative as a result of the attitude toward English in their high schools (not considering English important by their schools, not studying English regularly, and not taking any English lessons). Therefore, students may be discouraged from learning English if their experiences are negative in a similar case as stated by Turanlı (2009).

In addition, transferring negative learning experience to present learning context may influence students' personality traits negatively. It is because the present study has indicated that transferring negative learning experiences caused the participants to be demotivated to, less self-efficient, uninterested, and unengaged in learning English, so they gave up being willing to study and learn English, which is in line with the literature (Ganschow et al., 1998; Karahan, 2007). There may be several possible reasons for this because personality traits are considered to be in relation with learning behaviors (Sheu, 2017), language learning strategies (Obralic & Mulalic, 2017), and attributions (Fatemi et al., 2012). That is, the students in the study may have pre-dominantpersonality traits and determine how they can learn what is taught through their personality traits.In addition, their personality traits may prevent them from using certain types of language learning strategies (cognitive and metacognitive strategies) and cause them to be the passive users of language learning stragies. Their personality may also create certain tendencies among the students in the study to attribute their success and failure in language learning to certain reasons like instructors, passing grade, and absence.

As Difino and Lombardino (2004) mentioned, some other factors related to instruction may also lead to failure in language learning. Similarly, the findings of the study have revealed that the percentage of English instruction in different faculties served as another instructional factor which led to failure and class repetition. The study has indicated that students may use the percentage of English instruction as a determiner to decide the intensity of English instruction that they should take in any ELPD. The study has also shown that departments of students may work as an instructional factor which may cause students to question the importance of English for their departments and them to lose their motivation and interest in learning English if they decide it is not important in their departments. These findings are corroborated by what Ganschow et al. (1998) emphasized: students' aptitude for learning a language may have negative effects on their learning the language. This supports the finding in the literature that forming learner behaviors can affect success and failure in language learning (Kayaoğlu, 2013).

All in all, the findings in the study indicate that students aremore likely to attribute their failure to external factors as supported in the literature (Genç, 2016; Gosiewska-Turek, 2017; Sorić & Ančić, 2008). This situation may result from the self-protective tendency which may lead to attributing failure in language learning to external factors (Sorić & Ančić, 2008).It may also be the result of low self-perceived

English ability. The findings of the study reveal that the students in the study seem to perceive themselves to have a low level of Englis ability. As Takahashi (2008, 2009, 2010) explained, low self-perception of English may trigger anxiety and demotivation among the students in the study, and the consequence of this situation is low achievement in language learning. Attributing failure to external factors and low self-perception of English ability, therefore, may prevent the students in the study from using language learning strategies appropriately because they may not be aware of the significance of strategies in successful language learning as found by Sorić and Ančić (2008) or may lack metacognitive and self-regulatory skills as emphasized by Vann and Abraham (1990). Considering age and gender as the factors affecting achievement in language learning, the findings of the study indicate that they are not very effective in successful language learning unlike what Chen (2014) found about age andwhat Główka (2014) and Zoghi et al. (2013) revealed about gender in relation with achievement in language learning. In addition, these negative issues may cause the students in the study to form negative attitudes toward English, which is believed to affect success in language learning directly (El-Omari, 2016).

To conclude, the aim of the present study is to describe a phenomenon, class repetition in an ELPD of a Turkish university. The study has revealed that fear of failure and perception of education are two main reasons for students to repeat in a level once or more than once. It has also indicated that different sources lead to these two main reasons: language learning difficulties, passing grade, attendance, and instructors' teaching preferences for fear of failure; educational background, percentages of English education in the faculties, and personal beliefs, thoughts, and feelings of a students about himself/herself for perception of education.

In terms of pedagogical implications of the study, any ELPD should consider the situation of repeaters and pay attention to the possible reasons of their failure in language learning. The first possible reason can be the fear of failure. ELPDs should emphasize that the main goal of their English programs is to help students to improve their English skills and proficiency so as to understand and study their majors in their departments. Assessment and evaluation should not be indicated the main goal of learning English. During English lessons, repeaters can be taught test-taking skills to reduce their test anxiety and language learning strategies (cognitive and metacognitive strategies) to deal with linguistic differences between Turkish and English. ELPDs can inform repeaters about the rationale of determined passing grade so that repeaters may not consider passing grade as an external factor leading to failure in language learning. Repeaters can also be informed about why regular attendance is important to learn a foreign language. Depending on the situation of a repeater class, instructors should speak Turkish in cases in which repeaters can not understand the topic studied in the lesson so that repeaters can understand what they study. ELPDs should learn the educational background of repeaters so that they can try to replace students' negative experiences with positive learning experiences by creating well-designed, supportive, and enhancing learning experiences in English

classes. Depending on the percentages of English in the faculties, the intensivity of English programs can be modified. That is, if the medium of the instruction is 30% English, ELPD administrators can contact to the related departments, find out what their expectations are from students, and organize English programs accordingly. If such changes are made, repeaters' negative attitudes toward and demotivation to learn English can be prevented.

The study is limited because of its qualitative nature and its small sampling size. Being conducted in a specific teaching context is also another limitation of the study. Therefore, the study does not aim to generalize its findings for other teaching contexts. However, class repetition is a common phenomenon among different language teaching institutions and is also very significant for such institutions as it has direct effects on different aspects of language teaching like language program evaluation. Therefore, the present study suggests that similar studies with the same research methodology should be conducted in different teaching contexts to find out the reasons of class repetition. It also recommends making action research based on the findings of similar studies to improve students' language learning and to minimize the effects of class repetition on institutions. By doing so, the present study foresees that such efforts can result in extensive literature on this phenomenon which can include the reasons and solutions to the problems that the reasons cause so that students' learning a language can be improved, and language teaching-related activities can be made more effective and efficient.

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