

T.C.
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES EDUCATION

**STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES REGARDING ELT SPECIFIC
PREPARATORY PROGRAMS FOR INCOMING ELT STUDENTS IN
TURKISH HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY**

MASTER'S THESIS
BERKE RESUL ALTUN

ISTANBUL 2025

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ABSTRACT

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES REGARDING ELT SPECIFIC PREPARATORY PROGRAMS FOR INCOMING ELT STUDENTS IN TURKISH HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY

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This qualitative study explores the necessity and implications of specialized English Language Teaching (ELT) preparatory classes in a foundation university in Türkiye. While the proficiency requirements are higher for ELT students compared to those from other departments, most preparatory programs do not provide tailored instruction to their needs. The study aims to investigate and provide insight on the topic through data collected from a wide selection of participants from different levels surrounding the topic, including ELT students, English teachers who have studied in an ELT preparatory classroom, preparatory school instructors, ELT department professors, and preparatory school administrators. The data collection tools are comprised of semi-structured interviews in addition to reflective papers to gather insightful information about the potential benefits and drawbacks of the establishment of these classes. The data collected were analyzed through thematic analysis, to discover the similarities or discrepancies between the opinions of the participants from different levels of the branch. The findings of the study revealed the advantages of ELT specific preparatory classes (ELT-S+), such as benefits to proficiency, motivation, and the limitations of mixed preparatory classes. They highlighted the importance of ELT-S+ classes in addressing the unique demands of the ELT department.

KEYWORDS: Preparatory School, Language Teacher Education, Academic Discourse Socialization, English Medium Instruction

ÖZET

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ YÜKSEKÖĞRETİMDE ELT ÖĞRENCİLERİNE YÖNELİK ELT BÖLÜMÜNE ÖZGÜ HAZIRLIK PROGRAMLARI HAKKINDA PAYDAŞ GÖRÜŞLERİ: KEŞİFSEL BİR VAKA ÇALIŞMASI

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Bu nitel çalışma, Türkiye’de bir vakıf üniversitesinde İngilizce Öğretmenliği (ELT) hazırlık sınıfları oluşturulmasının gerekliliğini ve etkilerini araştırmaktadır. ELT öğrencilerinin diğer bölüm öğrencilerinden farklı olarak daha yüksek dil yeterliliği gereksinimlerine sahip olmalarına rağmen, çoğu hazırlık programı ELT öğrencilerinin ihtiyaçlarına yönelik tasarlanmış bir eğitim sunmamaktadır. Bu çalışma, ELT bölümünden farklı seviyelerden geniş bir katılımcı yelpazesıyla veri toplayarak bu konuyu araştırmayı ve ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır. Katılımcılar arasında ELT öğrencileri, özel bir ELT sınıfında eğitim görmüş İngilizce öğretmenleri, hazırlık okulu okutmanları, ELT bölümü profesörleri ve hazırlık okulu yöneticileri yer almaktadır. Veri toplama araçları ise, ELT sınıflarının oluşturabileceği faydaları ve dezavantajları hakkında bilgi toplamak amacıyla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve yansıtma raporlarıdır. Toplanan veriler katılımcıların görüşleri arasındaki benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları ortaya çıkarmak için tematik analiz yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Çalışmanın ulaştığı bulgular, dil yeterliliği ve motivasyon gibi konularda özel ELT hazırlık sınıflarının getirebileceği avantajları ve karma sınıfların dezavantajlarını ortaya koymuştur. Bulgular, ELT hazırlık sınıflarının öğrencilerin ELT bölümünün gereksinimlerini karşılamasında faydalı olabileceğini ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hazırlık Okulu, Dil Öğretmeni Eğitimi, Akademik Söylem Sosyalleşmesi, Öğretim Dili Olarak İngilizce

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADS	Academic Discourse Socialization
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CoP	Communities of Practice
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ELT-S+	ELT Specific Preparatory Class
EMI	English Medium Instruction
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
GTM	Grammar Translation Method
HE	Higher Education
HEC	Higher Education Council
MoNE	Ministry of National Education

Chapter 1

Introduction

Owing to its status as the lingua franca (Sifakis, 2014), English has become an important language with an increasing number of people with the desire or necessity to learn it. Especially in countries where English is a foreign language, learning it can become a door to a more international world, a whole new world of media, or simply a means for a better salary as employees who know English are sought after more. Because of the prevalence of it in today's world, many students see their way into English Language Teaching (ELT) departments around the world with the aim of becoming teachers of the language. However, again in countries where English is considered a foreign language, these students are faced with an extra step in their journey, an immensely important one at that, learning the language to a certain fluency level before they can qualify as teachers.

According to the “National Needs Assessment Regarding English Teaching in State Schools in Türkiye” report prepared by TEPAV (Özen et al., 2014), it is stated that although students view English as an “important” language, the average proficiency levels are not adequate. In addition, the report suggests that a considerable percentage of students, mainly in high schools, do not find their teachers' proficiency levels at the desired level. According to Education First English Proficiency Index (2023), Türkiye is placed in 66th place out of 113 countries in the index, under the low proficiency category. Another study (Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu, 2017) implies that the actual proficiency levels of high school students significantly lag behind the expectations set by the national curriculum, with notable disparities observed across different schools. To overcome the proficiency issue before the students start their departments, universities in Türkiye have preparatory programs tasked with providing the students with the necessary language instruction.

When students graduate from high school and enrol in a university, they are faced with a “proficiency exam” unless they can provide a valid external exam result such as TOEFL or the national Foreign Language Exam (YDS), which the institution accepts as a valid proof of sufficient language competence. These proficiency exams are conducted by the universities to determine whether the students' English levels are sufficient or not to start their departments which utilize English Medium Instruction (EMI).

This is especially true for students of the ELT department, as they are required to attain a higher grade than the other students from the exam in order to pass. To illustrate, in two foundation universities located in İstanbul, the normal passing grade for the proficiency exam is 60. However, for the students of ELT, it is increased to 65 and 80 (Bahçeşehir University, n.d.-b; Yeditepe University, n.d.). In a state school, again the normal passing grade is 60, but ELT students are expected to score 85 if they wish to pass the exam (Yıldız Technical University, n.d.). This is owed to the higher expectations from ELT students regarding their language levels as well as the nature of the department itself, which requires countless academic pieces in English to be read, understood, and analysed.

The students who cannot meet the required grade to pass the proficiency exam start their preparatory school education in order to raise their language competency before they start their departments. They are separated into classes with varying language proficiency levels according to their results from the exam. However, despite being required to provide a higher grade to pass, ELT students generally get put into mixed classes along with students from all other departments and receive the same instruction as them. Among the top ten universities (e.g., Bahçeşehir University, n.d.; Boğaziçi University, n.d.; Middle East Technical University, n.d.; Yeditepe University, n.d.) ranked by the required grade for the English Language Teaching department from the university entrance exam held in Türkiye, only one has noted that ELT students are grouped in a separate preparatory class (Hacettepe University, n.d.) than the other departments.

As the purpose of the preparatory schools is to get students ready for their departments and their academic life, they adopt the “English for Academic Purposes” (EAP) approach, with the purpose of getting the learners ready to learn, research, and teach in English (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Through EAP, the students are able to learn the intricacies and the differences of the academic language, as well as get introduced to the skills required to study in their departments, such as producing an academic essay (Charles, 2015; Santos, 2006). However, studying along with other departments which may require a lower grade to pass, as well as having a lower percentage of the department instruction in English, may limit the education the ELT students receive. Being expected to attain a higher overall grade by receiving the same instruction as every other department raises some questions. If more is expected from them, shouldn't they be given more as well?

One common misconception about the English Language Teaching (ELT) department among its students is the expectation of receiving instruction on the English language itself. However, the content of the courses in the ELT departments revolves around *how to be a teacher*, not *language learning per se*. An examination of the curricula of the top fifteen ELT departments in Türkiye, based on university exam scores, shows that these programs mainly focus on developing students' theoretical knowledge rather than their language proficiency. Boğaziçi University, which is at the top of the list, offers only 2 compulsory courses out of 34 directly related to improving the students' proficiency levels, "Academic Writing," and "Developing Communicative Competence in English" (Boğaziçi University, n.d.-b). Middle Eastern Technical University (METU), however, provides students with 6 courses focused on different skills needed for English competency, "Advanced Reading and Writing I-II," "Listening and Pronunciation," "Oral Expression & Public Speaking, " and "Contextual Grammar I-II," out of 33 (Middle East Technical University, 2023).

Resuming the list respectively, the language-focused courses comprise the compulsory courses 5 out of 42 (Yeditepe University, n.d.), 8 out of 48 (Hacettepe University, n.d.), 1 out of 38 (TED University, n.d.), 4 out of 36 (Bahçeşehir University, n.d.-a), 9 out of 50 (Yıldız Technical University, n.d.), 9 out of 53 (Gazi University, n.d.), 6 out of 49 (Marmara University, n.d.), 7 out of 50 (Başkent University, n.d.), 9 out of 54 (Dokuz Eylül University, n.d.), 7 out of 39 (Anadolu University, n.d.), 9 out of 64 (İstanbul University, n.d.), 5 out of 44 (Medipol University, n.d.), 8 out of 33 (Akdeniz University, n.d.). The universities mentioned generally all have courses such as "Advanced Reading and Writing" and "Oral Communication" but do not provide expansive language courses, which may cause self-doubt for students who regard their knowledge of the language as lacking (Butler, 2004; Freeman et al., 2015; Llorca, 2005; J. C. Richards, 2017). As self-confidence and a belief in one's language competence is highly important in teaching, these students are liable to experience various problems due to this situation (Cullen, 2001). Furthermore, in case of passing the necessary exams such as the proficiency by attaining the required score, ELT students skip the preparatory school and start their departments and with that, their path of becoming a teacher (Bahçeşehir University, n.d.-b; Boğaziçi University, n.d.-a; Ekoç, 2022; G. Öztürk & Aydın, 2019; Yeditepe University, n.d.). However, this means losing access to the possible instruction they

could have received which might improve their English proficiency levels, and also their belief in themselves, and in turn, in their teaching abilities in the future. Even those who study in a preparatory school, usually do not have a curriculum or a class focused on the ELT department, but a curriculum for all, and a class with students from all departments.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Reviewing the existing research on ELT preparatory school programs shows that the bulk of the research is focused on the ELT students' proficiency levels or evaluating the preparatory programs (Efeoglu et al., 2018; Tekin, 2015; Ulum, 2016). However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the necessity of specific preparatory classes for ELT departments.

As the Türkiye National Needs Assessment report (Özen et al., 2014) and the Education First English Proficiency Index (2023) suggest, the proficiency of the language teachers does not evoke a high level of trust in the students. The cause of this might be attributed to the judgmental nature of the students themselves. However, keeping in consideration the situation portrayed in the report, with the low proficiency levels of the students, there is a possibility this has a factual aspect to it owing to the fact that in EMI contexts, English proficiency plays a key role as it is both a prerequisite (Richards & Pun, 2023) and a predictor (Altay et al., 2022; Lin & Lei, 2021) of academic achievement. Therefore, inefficient language education of pre-service teachers may negatively affect their ability to comprehend complex academic content within their departments as well.

This deficiency does not only affect their academic success, but also their professional careers (Lie, 2007; Yusuf & Novita, 2020). The importance of the language proficiency of a language teacher is highlighted more in countries where the target language is a foreign one, such as Türkiye, as the teacher mainly acts as the primary linguistic model of the language of the students (Littlewood & Yu, 2011). Furthermore, the teachers' language proficiency level affects their ability to improvise during lessons (Medgyes, 2001), potentially leading to missed opportunities for spontaneous learning. It also affects the extent of varied input the teacher can provide, along with the accuracy of their explanations (Richards et al., 2013). With the effects on teaching it can hold, language proficiency is a critical area for language teachers (Nhung, 2018). Therefore, ensuring that language teachers possess a high level of

language proficiency is important for both their academic success and also the learning environment they are going to create in their careers.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

As the lack and the necessity of a preparatory program specialized for ELT students remains to be investigated, a closer look into this gap has the potential to spark meaningful discussions around it. This study aims to help fill that gap and create a platform for the students, as well as the instructors, to voice these thoughts. Various views on the topic will be collected and analyzed through semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of participants providing the data, including junior and senior undergraduate ELT students, ELT graduates, English teachers who have studied in a ELT-S+ class, preparatory school instructors, lecturers from the ELT department, and preparatory school administrators, various views on the topic will be collected and analysed. Including a wide array of participants related to English teaching will help extract a healthy and comprehensive consensus.

The target of the study is to provide valuable information regarding the necessity of an ELT-S+classroom for the ELT department and highlight the possible advantages or disadvantages of having one, or the consequences of not implementing such a program. The findings of this research have the potential to trigger new research around the topic, which may prove to be a welcome addition to the literature as they help an existing gap.

1.3 Research Questions

Through the semi-structured interviews and self-reflection papers, the present study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How is the necessity of an ELT-S+ class perceived by ELT students, graduates, lecturers, preparatory school instructors, and administrators at a foundation university in Türkiye?
2. How do ELT students, graduates, lecturers, preparatory school instructors, and administrators evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of an ELT-S+ class?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The research carries significant importance as it aims to help fill in a gap regarding literature around ELT specific preparatory classes (ELT-S+). By gathering the views

of the participants at various stages within the same branch, ELT, the present study aims to create a sound discussion as well as explain the necessity of this special program. Through this discussion, it might eliminate a question mark existing in the field, or create new ones, which is similarly important as it leads to more research and investigation around the topic.

The findings of this study should also help with the preparation of the curriculum for preparatory programs, especially for ELT students, as this study will delve into the efficiency or the inefficiency of the current programs. As mentioned before, prospective teachers of English are required to have a good understanding of the language itself. Consequently, with the possibility of this study has in improving the chance of them getting a better language education, it should in turn help with their teaching.

In addition, with English being the language of instruction in their departments, it should also help prospective language teachers throughout their departments. Research has shown that English proficiency has a positive relationship with academic achievement (Altay et al., 2022), adding another value to the present study. With no hindrance in their academic success from problems caused by language proficiency, students can comprehend the various theories, approaches, and methods taught in an ELT department to a better degree.

Furthermore, policymakers in preparatory programs should be able to find practical value in this study. By sharing the insights of the participants on the topic and the needs of ELT students, the study can inform decisions revolving around the design of preparatory programs. The language learning experiences of future language instructors may be affected by these decisions, which in turn can help them prepare better for the high linguistic demands of ELT departments and EMI. This could ultimately contribute to enhancing the overall quality of language teachers and with better-prepared teachers, the effectiveness of English language education in Türkiye.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Teacher Knowledge

Although much less widespread and accessible throughout much of its history compared to today, education, therefore teachers and teaching, has existed for thousands of years. With its deep connection with religion and philosophy, education and teachers have been viewed with respect throughout different societies (Robinson, 2017). However, the establishment of formal teacher education is far preceded by the profession of teaching itself (Labaree, 2008). In its earliest forms, teacher education was conducted through apprenticeship (Labaree, 2008; Robinson, 2017).

The beginning of widespread formal teacher education can be traced to the establishment of *école normale* in France, which can be translated to “normal schools” (Edwards, 1991; Furlong, 2013; Robinson, 2017). The purpose of normal schools was to prepare and teach already educated individuals to become future teachers and establish a systematic and organized way to achieve that goal (Labaree, 2008; Robinson, 2017). Following the rapid growth in the number of schools around the world in the 19th and 20th centuries, there came a higher demand for teachers to employ (Edwards, 1991; Gardner, 2013; Labaree, 2008). The demand for these teachers brought about an increase in normal schools established, especially within Western countries like France, the United States, and England (Edwards, 1991; Labaree, 2008; Robinson, 2017).

In the east, for example in Türkiye, “village institutes” were established in 1940, drawing from “normal schools,” as an answer to the demand for teachers with the establishment of the Republic, as it led to an increase of public schools throughout the country (Vexliard & Aytaç, 1964). Throughout the 20th century universities increasingly began to establish departments for teacher training (Furlong, 2013; Labaree, 2008; Robinson, 2017) and its inclusion in academic research followed (Lagemann, 2000). This led to an organized creation of pedagogical approaches and a knowledge base in education.

In his seminal work (1986), Shulman conceptualized “teacher knowledge” through three domains; subject-matter content knowledge, pedagogical content

knowledge, and curricular knowledge. Through these distinctions, he framed the necessary “knowledge” a teacher should be familiar with for effective teaching.

Shulman (1986) defined subject-matter content knowledge as the “amount and the organization of knowledge (...) in the mind of the teacher” (p.9), which relates to the extent of the knowledge teachers have on “what to teach.” The second component, pedagogical content knowledge, works in tandem with the previous one, as it is explained as the ability or capacity to make the subject-matter content knowledge one has accessible and comprehensible for others through knowledge of appropriate and effective methods, examples, strategies, et cetera (Shulman, 1986), this time relating to the knowledge of teachers on “how to teach.” Finally, he defines curricular knowledge as the knowledge of teachers surrounding the curriculum of their subject, what information is included in it, what is expected from the students to learn, as well as the knowledge about the tools and materials necessary for teaching, and the knowledge of how to operate them efficiently (Shulman, 1986).

Building upon his initial proposal, Shulman later expanded his explanation of the components of the knowledge base for teaching in a later paper (Shulman, 1987) and categorized teacher knowledge into 7 categories; content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and finally knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values.

Shulman’s concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) especially has been a huge influence in the field of teacher knowledge (Borg, 2015; Fenstermacher, 1994; Gess-Newsome, 2002; Verloop et al., 2001). Based on his conceptualization of PCK, many new iterations were created. One example of these iterations is named pedagogical content knowing (PCKg; Cochran et al., 1993). PCKg refers to the understanding of teachers regarding pedagogy, subject matter content, student characteristics, and the environmental context of learning through a constructivist approach. Although the latter two factors were included in Shulman’s (1986) original text, they were often overshadowed by the emphasis on pedagogy and subject matter content.

In response to the technological advancements and their prominence in education in the following decades, Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK;

Mishra & Koehler, 2006) was created. TPACK differs from the original PCK through the addition of “technological knowledge,” which is the teacher’s understanding of how to operate the technological tools at their disposal, and “technological pedagogical knowledge,” which explains the teacher’s understanding of what technological tools or materials they can use and when to use them. In addition to the rather general iterations of the PCK framework, there have also been more specialized interpretations of the model, such as Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching (MKT; Hill et al., 2008).

Shulman’s PCK also differs from sole content or pedagogical knowledge definitions as it provides a framework for the interaction between the teacher and the student as well as the teacher’s subject-matter knowledge (Verloop et al., 2001). PCK, as Cochran et al. (1993) delicately put it, is what shows the difference between “expert teachers in a subject area” and “subject area experts.” It entails having a solid grasp of the subject-matter content alongside the ability of transferring that knowledge to learners who differ in every classroom (Shulman, 1986, 1987; Van Driel & Berry, 2010). Developing one’s PCK is a deeply complex activity, much like teaching itself (Magnusson et al., 2002). There has been a number of research on this topic, and various perspectives exist regarding how to bring about that development in PCK (Van Driel & Berry, 2010).

It is claimed that any possible deficiency in subject-matter knowledge may hinder or delay teachers’ PCK development (Van Driel & Berry, 2010). A study exploring this relationship, involving twelve trainee science teachers revealed that their limited content knowledge had an adverse effect on their PCK and hindered their understanding and expectations of learner misconceptions (Halim & Meerah, 2002). Another study with 162 preservice mathematics teachers discovered that the teachers’ inadequate subject matter knowledge and enthusiasm in grasping the history and significance of the content they were to teach affected their PCK, as it limited their instruction and their ability to recognize the level of student understanding (Even, 1993). A gap in subject matter knowledge is shown to be potentially detrimental to teachers’ PCK and instruction (Baumert et al., 2010; Capraro et al., 2005; Ding et al., 2014; Özden, 2008; Rollnick et al., 2008; Schempp et al., 1998).

Teaching experience can also be cited as a factor in PCK development (Van Driel & Berry, 2010). In a longitudinal study spanning ten years, Mulholland and Wallace

(2005) found that the teachers' PCK has increased, especially knowledge bases revolving around general pedagogy and interaction expanded while the subject-matter base remained stable. Another study (Kutluca, 2022) explored the effect of experience on the incorporation of PCK into the instruction of teachers with varying years of experience. The results suggested a favourable association between the two (Kutluca, 2022), which is in line with (Friedrichsen et al., 2009).

An alternative method of enhancing teachers' PCK levels discussed in the literature is teacher training programs, but with differing outcomes (Van Driel & Berry, 2010). Van Driel and Barry (2012) highlight the potential benefits of teacher training programs within the scope of PCK development, provided that they involve instruction or activities that are not distant from the teaching profession itself. Can and Boz (2022) focused on two chemistry teachers' PCK improvement over a period of two years, during which they received courses on PCK, leading to the discovery of an increase in their PCK levels.

2.1.1 Language teacher knowledge. The knowledge base for language teachers has mostly followed the frameworks of general education and for most of the 20th century (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). However, Richards (1998) has proposed six essential domains that lay the foundation of language teacher knowledge which are; theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical reasoning and decision-making, and contextual knowledge. Richards (1998) proclaims, within the scope of his first domain, that at the core of language teaching, there lies a "theory of teaching," which can vary from behaviourism to cognitivism, from communicative approach to audiolingualism. One important aspect he includes is the personal nature of teaching and he considers the idea that these theories will go through the lens of the teachers' prior experience and beliefs, creating "teachers' implicit theories of teaching" (Richards, 1998).

For his second domain, "teaching skills," he considers the general skills a teacher might employ regardless of their subject, such as giving feedback, monitoring the students, selecting activities, et cetera. However, he adds the following differentiators for language teachers; "preparation of communicative interaction activities (e.g., group work, games, roleplays, simulations), organization ... of communicative interaction, judgment of proper balance between fluency and accuracy, awareness of learners' errors," and "appropriate treatment of errors" (Richards, 1998, p.5).

In the third domain, he discusses communication skills, and he raises an issue around the lack of communication skills lessons in ELT programs, further adding the importance of language proficiency, linking it to teaching skills and subject matter knowledge (Richards, 1998), which is his fourth domain. Shared with Shulman's (1986, 1987) framework, in the teachers' subject matter knowledge domain, Richards (1998) is interested in the extent of knowledge teachers have over the language that they teach, regarding its theoretical basis as well as aspects such as phonetics, syntax, sociolinguistics, et cetera.

The following domain, "pedagogical reasoning skills and decision making," is also familiar to Shulman's (1986, 1987) "pedagogical content knowledge," as it is focused on the pedagogical knowledge of the teacher that works as the foundation of teaching skills. Richards (1998) also focuses on the lack of a "best way" to teach as every class and every student is different, he includes the act of monitoring the lesson and the students and selecting an appropriate course of action in this domain, calling these "interactive decisions."

The final domain mentioned is "contextual knowledge" (Richards, 1998), which is related to the teachers' understanding of societal and institutional contexts and their necessities. He also claims that these domains are not independent from each other, but interrelated, as the amount of knowledge a teacher has in one domain affects their understanding or practice of another (Richards, 1998). This relation highlights the importance of all domains as deficiencies in one can adversely affect others.

Another study concerned with the lack of a framework specialized for language teachers and carries the aim of proposing one, is the work of Freeman and Johnson (1998). In their proposal, they highlight the possible individual differences teachers of language may possess, and the effect these differences have on their teaching, citing "prior knowledge" as a crucial component of teacher learning (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). They stress the notion that learning how to teach is a "socially constructed" process as teachers' beliefs and experiences regarding their teaching, the content, the students, and the classroom life play a crucial role in their knowledge as teachers, and these are the product of interaction with different groups in education, including students, parents, and administrators (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

In their proposal, Freeman and Johnson (1998) include three main domains to work as the basis of language teacher knowledge; “the nature of the teacher-learner” (teacher-learner), “the nature of schools and schooling” (the social context), and finally “the nature of language teaching” (the pedagogical process). The focal point of the domain of teacher-learner in the framework is not the relationship between the educator and the students, but the idea of perceiving teachers as “learners of teaching” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). This perception suggests and requires attention to be paid to the process of teachers learning how to teach as well as any external factors that affect, shape, and influence this process by the language teacher education programs (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

The social context domain is related to schools and schooling, which are differentiated in the article. Schools are described to be physical places including sociocultural settings where teachers can carry out their lessons, interact with students and other members of the educational circle, et cetera, and these physical and sociocultural settings can be traced to a specific point in time, therefore “synchronic” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Schooling, on the other hand, is focused on values and norms that come to be and change over time, therefore “diachronic” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). An emphasis is made in the article on the importance of understanding the social context in becoming a teacher, it is deemed crucial to account for and learn to navigate these different values as they are critically influential in promoting or limiting the teachers’ actions or teaching (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Therefore, a comprehensive awareness of schools and schooling is of high importance to become effective teachers.

Regarding the final domain, the pedagogical process, Freeman and Johnson (1998) emphasise the importance that learning and learners carry within the purpose of understanding teaching. Like Richards (1998), they claim that the domain cannot be evaluated or conceived independently from the previous domains. Instead, they argue that these domains are interconnected. Here, they make three important points; the necessity of a transition from an individualist view to a social constructivist one, the importance of establishing broader parameters regarding what is included in “research-based knowledge” to reduce the gap between classroom practice and research, and the importance of teachers’ awareness surrounding the social, cultural, and institutional factors that are deeply connected with the profession, as well as their

own beliefs and perspectives on teaching and learning and how these beliefs affect their practice.

Twenty years later, Freeman (2020) returned to this proposal with an emphasis on the altering nature of English and language teaching, noting that the focus in the field had moved from learners to the subject matter itself. He then proceeded to put forth three focus areas (2020), use, agency, and confidence. In his first area, “use,” he focuses on the teachers’ English use in the classroom, with the concept of English-for-Teaching (Freeman et al., 2015).

English-for-Teaching revolves around the idea of having a purposeful and specific perception of the language proficiency of and for language teachers, that is, focus on English use in managing the classroom, delivering the lesson content, and giving feedback (Freeman et al., 2015). It is suggested that (Freeman, 2020; Freeman et al., 2015) through this focus on specified English rather than general English, teachers can utilize their time and efforts better.

His second focus is agency, which is the notion that teachers learn through “doing;” however, his emphasis here is not merely “experience,” but the teachers actively utilizing these chances to learn as they occur (Freeman, 2020). Finally, he touches on confidence, and states its importance in the profession as it is interlinked by use and agency, and it also defines the extent these are utilized by the teachers (Freeman, 2020).

Richards, a decade after his initial proposal for a knowledge base for language teachers (Richards, 1998), explored again what competencies comprise the elements of what makes a language teacher “exemplary” (Richards, 2010). In his paper, he discusses ten fields he deems “core” to language teaching, starting with “language proficiency” (Richards, 2010).

Non-native English teachers outnumber the native ones in the world (Canagarajah, 1999; Faez et al., 2021; Richards, 2017). This poses the problem of language proficiency, to which Richards (2010) suggests the existence of a threshold in proficiency for effective teaching to take place. If language teachers’ proficiency levels are placed under that threshold, it is noted that it affects their decision-making as a teacher, negatively affecting their improvised decisions on the lesson (Medgyes, 2001). However, once teachers reach this threshold, Tsang (2017) suggests that general

pedagogical knowledge assumes a more important role in teaching. Further demonstrating the delicate association between factors affecting teaching.

Language proficiency is seen as an important part of language teaching (Lantolf, 2009; Shin, 2008), especially in terms of teachers' self-confidence (Murdoch, 1994; Richards, 2010) and subject-matter knowledge (Andrews, 2003; H. Richards et al., 2013). While some researchers hold the opinion that the teachers' general proficiency is not fundamental to language teaching (Freeman et al., 2015), its effect on teaching ability cannot be denied, especially regarding self-confidence and more importantly, self-efficacy (Faez et al., 2021).

Bandura (1997), a pioneer in the field, described self-efficacy as one's belief in one's capacity to perform a specific task. It can be differentiated from self-confidence as the latter refers to a general concept, whereas self-efficacy is related to one's beliefs in a certain task (Hussain & Khan, 2022). Bandura (1997) also suggests that self-efficacy can affect one's thoughts, emotions, perspective, and decisions. In research, teachers' self-efficacy has been found effective in student achievement (Cantrell et al., 2013; Guo et al., 2012; Ma, 2022; Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012; Shahzad & Naureen, 2017), teaching practices (Choi & Lee, 2018; Ortaçtepe & Akyel, 2015; Pajares, 1992), and student motivation (Alexander, 2020; Sabet et al., 2018). In a study conducted with a population of one hundred language teachers with varying degrees of experience, Chacón (2005) investigated the relationship between language teachers' self-efficacy and language proficiency levels. The results (Chacón, 2005) showed a positive correlation between self-efficacy and proficiency levels. Therefore, an emphasis can be made on the importance of teachers' language proficiency in language teaching.

The second field of importance, following language proficiency according to Richards (2010), is "content knowledge," with which he combines subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Regarding subject-matter knowledge, Andrews (2003) suggests that subject-matter knowledge in English teaching is different than language proficiency as he defines the former as "knowledge about language" and the latter as "knowledge of language" (p.83). The subject-matter knowledge of language teaching drew from fields such as applied linguistics in its beginnings (Andrews, 2003; Richards, 2010); however, today it encompasses a variety

of subjects such as the history of language teaching approaches, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, et cetera (Richards, 2010). He differentiates these from PCK by categorizing them as disciplinary knowledge. As he defines, PCK is concerned about the basis for language teaching (Richards, 2010). Content (or subject-matter knowledge) by itself, Richards (2017) claims, is not enough to teach a language, utilization of PCK is also necessary. However, he also highlights the importance of subject-matter knowledge by suggesting that teachers with better content knowledge or subject-matter knowledge benefit from it in their teaching (Richards, 2010).

The next field Richards (2010) deals with is “teaching skills.” He defines teaching skills as the set of skills a teacher possesses and utilizes to navigate the lesson through their decision-making, which is affected by the teachers’ proficiency level (Medgyes, 2001). He (Richards, 2010) emphasizes the importance of “improvisation” in teaching, with modifying instruction according to factors such as learner understanding, which is a part of PCK. The complexities of these skills are also highlighted (Magnusson et al., 2002; Richards, 2010) as these “decisions” require highly complicated cognitive skills on the teachers’ behalf.

Similar to the “social context domain” of Freeman and Johnson (1998), Richards (2010) places an emphasis on “contextual knowledge” in his next field. Emphasizing the importance of different views on teaching or differences in the expectations from the classroom certain cultures may harbour, Richards (2010) suggests that understanding these differences can enable a teacher to have the capacity to teach despite these differences by adapting to them. Breen (1985) also highlights the importance of context in teaching by claiming that classrooms have their own cultures that affect the learning and teaching taking place. This situation can be utilized by the teacher to improve the efficiency of their teaching (Breen, 1985).

In language teaching, a transition from the focus on the subject (list of grammar rules or words) to language skill acquisition took place in the late 20th century (Benson, 2012), with emphasis on more communicative approaches which took learners at the centre of teaching. Richards (2010) examines the significance of “learner-focused teaching” in language instruction in his next field. As teachers progress in their careers and approach towards becoming an “expert” teacher, their focus tends to undergo a transition from their own performance to learner-centeredness (Farrell, 2009).

Although this shift from the traditional teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred one is encouraged, research on practice shows that teachers may state their beliefs in learner-centeredness and follow more teacher-centred methods (Ersel Kaymakamoglu, 2017; Liu et al., 2006). The benefits of learner-focused teaching are manifold, as it is an effective way to increase engagement, create a better environment for learning, and enhance the chances for learning to occur (Benson, 2012; Richards, 2010).

Richards (2010) follows his list with “pedagogical reasoning skills,” which is a shared field with his proposed framework more than a decade earlier (Richards, 1998). Here again, he deals with the teachers’ ability to use pedagogy and decision-making to prepare and perform their lessons (Richards, 2010), an important skill that falls under the domain of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986, 1987). He also emphasizes the importance of experience and collaboration with colleagues in developing these skills (Richards, 2010). He completes his list by following with “theorizing from practice,” which refers to teachers forming their own beliefs and knowledge about the profession from their own experiences (Richards, 2010), membership of a Community of Practice, and professionalism.

2.2 Language Socialization

In our daily lives, as individuals, we come into contact with societies and groups in a variety of settings, backgrounds, and power dynamics. These can include our families, neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools, et cetera. “Socialization” is the process by which newcomers are assisted in their integration into these social groups (Grusec & Hastings, 2015). Through this assistance, the newcomers are taught or helped in the acquisition of, the skills, behaviours, values, and motivations that are required for the individual to be equipped for surviving and functioning in the culture (Maccoby, 2015). The process has also been described as “the process whereby the child becomes a social being” (Grusec & Lytton, 1988, p. 161). Durkheim painted a definition of the process through a “second birth” metaphor (van de Walle, 2008), by suggesting a person is first born biologically, and a second time, socially. Family, a child’s most immediate social context in most cultures and cases, is the main socialization facilitator (Grusec & Lytton, 1988). In addition to family, socialization can take place through teachers, peers, colleagues, the media, the internet, and so on, as it is an ongoing process throughout one’s life (Grusec & Hastings, 2015).

Language socialization, a sub-category of socialization itself, is a “theoretical paradigm” (Kulick & Schieffelin, 2005) which describes how people acquire “linguistic, pragmatic, and other cultural knowledge through social experiences” (Duff, 2010a, p. 427). Research was pioneered by Ochs and Schieffelin in the 1980s (Duff, 2010a; Kulick & Schieffelin, 2005; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984), who were motivated by the lack of emphasis language had on socialization in research and the separation of cultural aspects from language acquisition, along with the concern towards the research at the time mainly including white, middle-class North American and European children (Kulick & Schieffelin, 2005; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984).

In their paper drawing on ethnographic studies of developmental stories from different backgrounds, which are white middle-class, Kaluli, and Samoan, Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) counter the notion of a biological choreography, proposing a social one instead, highlighting the differences between the three cultures examined, especially the nonexistence of simplified “baby talk” in Kaluli and Samoan and its implications on language acquisition. Furthermore, they (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984) claim that sociocultural factors have an impact on language acquisition, not only biological ones.

While language acquisition research focused on the source of linguistic competence (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011), socialization research focused on children’s acquisition of skills needed to function in society. This separation led to a lack of focus on the sociocultural aspect of the child’s communicative competence in research. To remedy this separation between the psycholinguistic and sociocultural disciplines, a team of psychologists, linguists, and anthropologists have devised a new approach to language acquisition research (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). Hymes’ (1972) reformulation of communicative competence emphasised sociocultural knowledge, and Gumperz’s (1968) “speech community” concept in the years that followed have amplified this endeavour.

Following the new approach, ethnographic research focusing on children’s communicative competence through the lens of linguistic, social, and cultural factors began to be more commonplace (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011), including Ochs’ (1985) study on Samoan children and Schieffelin’s (1985) study on Kaluli children, which are the basis of their aforementioned “three developmental stories” (Ochs & Schieffelin,

1984). Their claim regarding the impact socialization possesses on language acquisition integrated these two previously separated fields and this notion paved the way for the creation of a new field in research named *language socialization* (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011).

Language socialization can occur in a variety of contexts. The most immediate one a child faces is the family. In the family context, children can be socialized in regards of appropriate language use, provided they are participants in the conversation (Blum-Kulka, 1997), even in basic acts like family dinners (Blum-Kulka, 2017). In bilingual families, the parents' choice of language and input can affect the child's attitude towards and competence in the language of choice (Kulick, 1997; Zentella, 1997) and interactions between siblings can lead to a language shift (Kheirhah & Cekaite, 2018). Another context is schools where children can be socialized into language through communication with their classmates, teachers, and even administrators such as principles (Figueroa & Baquedano-López, 2017). A more specific field in socialization research concerned with tertiary education is academic discourse socialization.

2.2.1 Academic discourse socialization. Closely related to language socialization, academic discourse socialization (ADS) in its essence is related to the process by which newcomers to an academic social setting acquire the skills necessary to successfully engage in the written or oral discourses or practices within that context (Duff, 2010b; Friedman, 2023; Kobayashi et al., 2017). Socialization, as well as ADS, is not a one-way interaction flowing from the socializer to the socialized, but also a reciprocating practice (Duff, 2010b; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). The possibility that the “expert” can be subject to socialization by the newcomer does exist. Furthermore, the newcomer possibly can resist the process instead of mindlessly accepting whatever information they receive (Kulick & Schieffelin, 2005).

One highly important strategy utilized extensively in ADS is the “communities of practice” (CoP), put forth by Lave and Wagner (1991) who were influenced by social theorists and theories of social learning (Mercieca, 2017). CoP are groups of people who are faced with or possess a shared problem, concern, or passion. These groups convene to examine these problems or concepts, exchange knowledge and develop their practice together (Mercieca, 2017). The crucial elements of CoP are “mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998, p.73),

which were later renamed the domain, the community, and the practice (Wenger-Trainer & Wenger-Trainer, 2015).

The domain, the starting point of CoP (Mercieca, 2017), is what differentiates CoP with any other group; in that, it leads to the creation of an identity by shared interests or concerns (Wenger-Trainer & Wenger-Trainer, 2015). This domain leads to the members passing on and exchanging knowledge, information, and participate in common activities (Wenger-Trainer & Wenger-Trainer, 2015).

The second element is the community; however, the existence of a community does not guarantee the existence of CoP. To illustrate, a neighbourhood in itself is a community but not a CoP (Wenger, 1998). Similarly, a workplace does not manifest a CoP until there comes interaction between colleagues and exchanging of information (Wenger-Trainer & Wenger-Trainer, 2015). The final component essential for the forming of a CoP is practice, which involves the shared repertoire of instruments, knowledge, procedures, and so on of the members (Snyder & Wenger, 2010).

Discourse plays an essential role in academia as it leads to the creation of knowledge (Hyland, 2009). Therefore, in their introductory phases to academic contexts, the newcomers are required to acquire competence in their discourse as well as comprehend its content (Friedman, 2023). However, for some time, the sociocultural aspect of this process has been under-researched (Duff, 2010b). Academic discourse is a dialogic (Molle & Prior, 2008) process that potentially includes emotions and power dynamics (Duff, 2010b). The research involving socialization into academic discourse can be categorized into two main nodes, oral academic discourse socialization and written academic discourse socialization, with the written form exerting a predominant influence in early ADS studies (Duff, 2010b; Morita & Kobayashi, 2008).

Casanave (2002) likens academic writing to a social, political, and discursal game and points out the newcomers' need to familiarize themselves with the rules of the game in order to accomplish their tasks to explain ADS. Currie (1993) examined an EAP classroom with a focus on the skills necessary for writing to take place such as finding information, analysing data, comparing and contrasting, and so on. She pointed out that the relaying of these skills to the students could benefit them in writing activities of their university content courses.

However, a later study of Currie (1998) followed Diana, a non-native speaker of English who had a high TOEFL score and documented her struggles with the requirements of her writing assignments. She then pointed to the lack of emphasis the professor put on the aforementioned skills throughout the course due to his inability to make this tacit knowledge explicit for the learners (Currie, 1998). This predicament can be utilized to highlight a common misconception about ADS, and also socialization in general.

It may be common to possess the presumption that newcomers in an academic setting will receive sufficient scaffolding and socialization efforts from the experts; however, this is not always the case (Duff, 2010b). As seen from the latest example of Currie (1998) or a study done by Lea and Street (1998) which pointed out that instructors may not be able to pass on their knowledge about writing successfully to their students, the newcomers may not receive sufficient help for socialization to take place. When the importance of quality feedback is considered for writing (Duff, 2010b; Hyland & Hyland, 2006), the lack of guidance can prove to be detrimental for the students' socialization.

Another problem the newcomers experience when being introduced to academic writing is the concept of plagiarism. Diana, the focus of Currie's (1998) article, resorted to plagiarising due to the difficulties she experienced when faced with academic writing and her low grades. Deckert (1993) found in a study involving 170 freshman-year and 41 junior-year Chinese students in a Hong Kong university that the freshmen demonstrated an inadequate grasp of the Western conception of plagiarism whereas the juniors were able to recognize plagiarism to a better extent. In addition, the freshmen viewed plagiarism in a negative light because of personal issues such as laziness or inefficient learning; however, the juniors also acknowledged its effects on the original authors as well as the institution itself. After observing the change in their participants', who are 10 Chinese students at a British university, toward plagiarism, Gu and Brooks (2008) suggested that elevating their conceptual knowledge of plagiarism is required to help students avoid plagiarism rather than providing mere technical instruction on citation.

Over the years, research on oral academic discourse socialization has experienced a rise. Academic presentations as an instrument for oral academic

discourse socialization have been shown to provide valuable socialization opportunities for students (Duff & Anderson, 2015; Dumlao, 2020; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). One longitudinal study (Kobayashi, 2016) have examined the progress a Japanese student exhibited during a year-long study-abroad program in Canada. Through observations in multiple presentations tasks the student Otome performed, the researcher was able to map out and understand the differences between Otome's approach to the tasks. While reading notes and memorizing were the methods Otome adopted for the first two tasks, she put forth a more interactive presentation in her final task by utilizing more impromptu speech. Through her own reflection on the tasks, collaboration with her classmates, and most importantly by watching other presenters, Otome showed a noticeable growth in her oral presentation performance.

Another study (Yang, 2010) followed 5 Chinese students in a commerce course in Canada and pointed out that throughout the course, the students got socialized into academic discourse via their participation in presentation assignments, observation of others, collaboration within their group, and the feedback they received from the audience and the instructor.

Another technique that can be benefited from is oral discussions (Ho, 2011; Morita, 2004, 2009). In a study focusing on a secondary school class in Canada which had a high percentage of Asian students recently moved to the country, Duff and Oliver (2008) examined the classroom for an academic year. With the researchers' focus on the discussions that were held about current world problems, they noted that the students were socialized into not only culture and communicative competence, but also the academic discourse, owing to the new vocabulary introduced in the discussions, the research these discussions demanded, and the requirement of skills such as determining the credibility of a source. Although this effect was not observed with the Asian students in the class to the desired extent, it showed the function discussions can serve in ADS (Duff & Oliver, 2008).

2.2.2 Teacher socialization. Teacher socialization is the process with which an individual gets socialized into being a member of the teacher community (K. M. Zeichner & Gore, 1990). An immensely important contributor to teacher socialization research is Dan Lortie (K. M. Zeichner & Gore, 1990), with his seminal work "Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study" (Lortie, 2002) originally published in 1975.

Lortie introduced the concept of “apprenticeship of observation,” and argued that future teachers’ experiences as students help develop ideas and attitudes about their future teaching (Lortie, 2002).

However, he also mentions two concerning limitations of this apprenticeship. He suggests that the students’ perspectives are limited as they lack the pedagogical knowledge necessary to comprehend fully the teachers actions, in addition to the limited emphatical skill possessed by younger children (Lortie, 2002). The second limitation is the students’ “imaginary” participation, they do not usually get involved in decisions about the lesson or get the reasons behind these decisions explained to them (Lortie, 2002). These reasons cause the students’ ideas about teaching to be based on intuition and imitation and not pedagogical analysis (Lortie, 2002). Therefore, Lortie (2002) suggested that apprentice of observation can serve as a beginning point of teacher socialization and teacher identity; however, it does not create a foundation for informed pedagogical comprehension of teaching. Furthermore, owing to its individualistic and traditional aspect, it can hinder the future teaching practices of the student (Lortie, 2002).

Later language education researchers have also put forth similar ideas. Borg (2004) suggested that the result of this apprenticeship of observation might be the reluctance student teachers are said to have in accepting the modern and progressive theories presented in their courses. Johnson (1994) has also implied that the language teachers’ previous education experience will possess a place of high importance in their teaching practices, with a role of a strong model for teaching.

However, not all researchers agree with Lortie’s perspective on apprenticeship of observation. Mewborn and Tyminski (2006) strongly oppose Lortie’s claims that apprenticeship of observation posing as hindrance to change and limiting future teacher’s teaching practices. They claim that students’ negative learning experiences do not necessarily transfer into their own teaching as negative influences, but instead as learning experiences regarding what not to do (Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006).

Another criticism they put forth is the lack of emphasis on students with “good” teachers, who act as a positive role model (Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006). Through their interviews with and observations on new teachers, they found that while some of the teachers reflected on their own negative experiences to avoid replicating them,

others had teachers that were effective in their craft as a role model (Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006).

Furthermore, having analysed the reflective writings of 18 language teachers, Moodie (2016) suggested that the teachers' own experiences showed them what negative or inefficient practices they should avoid, in line with Mewborn and Tyminski's claim (2006). Moodie (2016) named this anti-apprenticeship of observation and shed light on the importance pre-service teacher education possesses in this issue, noting the value of having pre-service teachers reflect on their student experience from a more informed standpoint.

Moodie's (2016) concept of anti-apprenticeship of observation directly challenges that of Lortie (2002) with its suggestion that teachers can learn from negative learning experiences instead of adopting them in their own teaching. According to Moodie (2016), these experiences can function as cautionary examples of what to avoid. With the focus on a reflective approach in pre-service teacher education, teachers are encouraged to analyse these negative experiences, helping them to develop a more informed outlook, breaking the negative cycle of apprenticeship of observation that Lortie (2002) put forth.

Feiman-Nemser (2001) has also emphasized the importance of reflective practices in pre-service teacher education. Furthermore, she highlights the role this period plays in teachers' development of pedagogical and subject matter knowledge necessary for effective teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Through this reflective approach (LaBoskey, 2003) and the cooperation of teacher educators (Knowles, 2003; Su, 1992), student-teachers can overcome the negative effects of apprenticeship of observation and improve the efficiency of their socialization.

According to Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) another value of reflection is its agency in shaping teacher identity, which encompasses the values, beliefs, and attitudes that teachers carry in their practice. They argue that teacher identity is affected by both personal experiences and the sociocultural conditions in the teachers' environment. For student-teachers, the development of their teacher identity is influenced by their interactions with teacher educators and peers, as well as their own experiences in the classroom. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) go on to point to

preservice education as the ideal environment where an awareness for the shaping of teacher identity can be raised.

It has also been found that field experience has a great role to play in teacher socialization, provided that there is a sufficient level of cooperation and coordination between the teacher education program and the institution where the practicum takes place (Su, 1992; Wideen et al., 1998). Field experiences offer pre-service teachers a chance to combine theoretical knowledge and practical application before they start their teaching careers (Zeichner, 2010). Thus, they allow future teachers to develop a better understanding of classroom dynamics.

2.3 Language Teacher Education in Türkiye

Language teacher education history in Turkish culture is relatively limited owing to the aversion to Western cultures in the Ottoman Empire (Nergis, 2011). It had mainly consisted of Arabic teaching until the 18th century when the Ottoman government started adopting more Western-oriented policies (Kırkgöz, 2014; Nergis, 2011). Following this development, the government turned to France, which was the mainland of the lingua franca of the time (Wright, 2006). First, the government sent its youth there with the aim of welcoming them back as teachers, then asked for help in designing and establishing a school to create teachers (Nergis, 2011). With the help of France, the birthplace of “normal schools” (Furlong, 2013; Robinson, 2017), the first foreign language teacher education institution was established (Nergis, 2011).

Following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Gazi High Teacher School was founded in 1926 to meet the need to prepare language teachers (Demirel, 1991), which later transformed into the Gazi Institute of Education (Demirel, 1991; Nergis, 2011). However, in 1982, the Higher Education Council (HEC) passed a law that required teacher training to be unified in universities (C. Öztürk, 2008). With this shift, teacher education in Türkiye was standardized (Demirel, 1991). Furthermore, the law led to changes in the pre-service education of teachers such as mandating a higher number of hours of classroom observations (Nergis, 2011), where pre-service teachers observe real-life classrooms in active teaching.

The decade of the 1980s brought about a higher importance on English, as it attained a bigger role in social and economic life (Ahmad, 2000; Arik, 2020) and the demand for English teachers grew. In 1997, HEC and Ministry of National

Education (MoNE) put an educational reform in effect with a focus on improving ELT in Türkiye (Kırkgöz, 2007). The curriculum was redesigned to further the duration of primary education from five years to eight, as well as introducing English lessons as early as the fourth grade (Kırkgöz, 2007; Mahalingappa & Polat, 2013). Moreover, English was given the status of a compulsory subject (Kırkgöz, 2007). This reform also is remarkable in the view that it brought about the inclusion of the communicative approach into the curriculum for the first time (Kırkgöz, 2014). Following the reform, language teacher education in universities increased their focus on methodology and pre-service teachers' practice time (Grossman et al., 2007; Kırkgöz, 2014).

In order to attain a closer educational system to Western education, with the underlying political goal of Türkiye to join the European Union (EU), the 1997 reform to ELT underwent a revision in 2005 (Kırkgöz, 2017). Changes in language education towards a more constructivist approach were implemented following this revision (Kırkgöz, 2017). Overall, the new revised version of language education in Türkiye brought about a system with a higher awareness of learner differences and learning styles, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and a higher and more varied utilization of materials (Kırkgöz, 2012). The reception of the 2005 revision by language teachers in the country was revealed to be positive in a study with a participant population of sixty primary school teachers (Kırkgöz, 2012). Another policy change in 2012 lowered the introduction grade of English down to the second grade from the fourth grade, after the implementation of twelve years of compulsory education (Arik, 2020).

Language teacher education in universities has also undergone policy changes by the agency of HEC. After the 1997 reform, language teaching departments in universities placed a higher emphasis on the aforementioned practice of pre-service teachers by increasing the number of hours they were required to observe classes and implemented a more comprehensive approach to modern methodology (Soruc & Cepik, 2013; Yavuz & Zehir Topkaya, 2013). Necessary pedagogical courses were implemented to complement the reform. To illustrate, the inclusion of young learner education courses was an answer to lowering the grade where English as a subject was introduced in primary schools, leading to English teachers' contact with younger learners (Kırkgöz, 2007). Another reform to language teacher education in higher education followed in 2006 to better match the global standards in the field (Yavuz &

Zehir Topkaya, 2013). This reform brought about changes to the standardized curriculum of language teacher education programs. Some of these changes can be seen in Table 1:

Table 1

Changes in the 2006 ELTEP

Removed Courses	Added Courses
1. Turkish Phonetics and Stylistics	1. Listening and Phonetics I, II
2. Turkish Sentence Structure and Semantics	2. Effective Communication
3. Reading Skills I, II	3. Lexicology
4. Writing Skills I, II	4. Turkish Educational History
5. School Experience I	5. Teaching Language Skills I, II
	6. Second Foreign Language
	7. Drama
	8. Public Service
	9. Special Needs Education
	10. Comparative Education
	11. Turkish Educational System and School Management

Note. Adapted from (Yavuz & Zehir Topkaya, 2013)

The new reform had a categorization of these courses as Field Knowledge (FK), General Culture (GC), and Pedagogical Knowledge (PK; Yavuz & Zehir Topkaya, 2013). The distribution of these fields in the curriculum is estimated to be respectively %50-60, %15-20, and %25-30 (Hismanoğlu, 2012). The field knowledge (subject matter knowledge) and pedagogical knowledge courses made up the freshman and sophomore years in the ELT departments, whereas pedagogical content knowledge courses were mostly in the junior and senior years (Yavuz & Zehir Topkaya, 2013).

In a study involving 55 senior students and 3 instructors in the English Language Teaching department, the students revealed their concerns about the lack of practice in their curriculum, making a case for more pedagogical and practice-based courses (Coşkun & Daloğlu, 2010). In contrast, the instructors included in the study viewed the pedagogical emphasis in the curriculum as overshadowing the students' linguistic

competence (Coşkun & Daloğlu, 2010). It is also stated by the researchers that the quantity of PK courses was significantly higher than those of linguistic competence ones.

Another study, dealing with the curriculum implemented in 2006, explored the views of 72 junior and senior students in an English Language Teaching department (Hismanoğlu, 2012). The results implied the overall strength of the curriculum; however, it also showed the participants' view that the critical thinking aspect was inadequate (Hismanoğlu, 2012). A later study revealed implications more in line with the instructors' concern toward the curriculum's emphasis on linguistic competence in Coşkun and Daloğlu's study (2010). 32 senior students of a Foreign Language Teaching Department (Varol, 2018) revealed that although the participants regarded their knowledge as competent with the 2006 curriculum in place, an increased focus on language and content knowledge was desired (Varol, 2018). With a participant group of 90 pre-service teachers in their senior year and 10 teacher trainers, Kartal and Başol (2019) inspected the 2006 curriculum as well. In their study, the researchers found that the participants held the view that the curriculum in place was insufficient in preparing the students to be effective teachers. A problem of the students' ability to create and organize lesson plans was noted, as well as the inadequacy of practice for the pre-service teachers (Kartal & Başol, 2019)

In 2018, HEC implemented another change to the curriculum of ELT departments in the country (G. Öztürk & Aydın, 2019). In this change, the distribution of the categories of knowledge has been altered as can be seen in Table 2:

Table 2

The distribution of the categories of knowledge in the 2018 curriculum

Knowledge Category	Percentage (%)
Field Knowledge	48
General Culture	18
Pedagogical Knowledge	34

Note. Adapted from (Ordem, 2022)

The percentage of courses revolving around field knowledge (content knowledge) has been decreased, whereas those involving pedagogical knowledge have increased. HEC

also has increased the necessary practicum time compulsory for the students to two semesters (Kartal & Başol, 2019). In 2020, HEC enabled the education faculties in universities to organize the curriculum autonomously, granting that they follow the distribution of knowledge areas (Ekoç, 2022). Despite the percentage field knowledge courses possesses, Ekoç (2022) claims that courses directly relating to linguistic competence (language proficiency) have been eclipsed by those relating to pedagogical competence.

Students of language teaching departments in Türkiye, in light of the latest modifications to the curriculum and the changes in policy, receive a four-year education in their department providing that they can attain the minimum desired score on the proficiency tests the universities implement in order to prove they have the necessary language proficiency level to study (Ekoç, 2022). Acclaimed national or international exam results such as the Foreign Language Exam (YDS) facilitated by HEC or TOEFL also can enable students to present proof of their proficiency; however, in the case that they cannot, they are expected to study in the preparatory schools in their universities (Ekoç, 2022). These preparatory schools provide the students with a year of intensive language instruction with the aim of enhancing their proficiency levels to the desired level before they begin studying in their departments (Öztürk & Aydın, 2019).

2.3.1 English medium instruction. Due to the status of English as the lingua franca, EMI has become a widely adopted approach among many Higher Education (HE) institutions (Griffiths, 2023; Lasagabaster, 2022; Richards & Pun, 2023; Smit, 2023). To define EMI is no easy task, as there are various views regarding its definition (Lasagabaster, 2022). One definition of it is “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English” (Macaro, 2018, as cited in Richards & Pun, 2023). Other definitions of EMI include: “The use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English.” (Dearden, 2016), “EMI implies that content – which is given in English – is the priority. There may be little

accommodation in terms of methodology, only to guarantee comprehension and understanding of content.” (Aguilar, 2017).

As seen in these definitions, there are differing degrees of emphasis made on the EFL context or language learning. The emphasis on the exclusion of language learning as an aim of EMI is an important aspect that differentiates EMI from CLIL. CLIL is defined as “Content and Language Integrated Learning is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language. ... Each is interwoven, even if the emphasis is greater on one or the other at a given time.” (Coyle et al., 2010). Where in CLIL, language is a crucial detail and its improvement a desired outcome, EMI does not explicitly share that goal (Dearden, 2016). In addition, CLIL is more preferred for primary and secondary schools whereas EMI is mainly utilized at the tertiary level (Carrió-Pastor, 2021).

The roots of EMI can be traced to colonialism, in countries like Hong Kong and South Africa (McKay, 2014). With the implementation of English as the medium of instruction by the Anglophone colonizers, there came a historical tradition surrounding EMI that manifested itself even after the colonialism period. In South Asian countries, eradicating EMI post-colonialism proved to be a problem as it led to conflicts between different groups (Sah, 2022). In Sri Lanka, formerly colonized by the British, one of the local languages, Sinhala was designated as the sole official language, but was met with unrest as it disregarded other local languages, mainly Tamil (Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). In addition to these conflicts of interest, the economic benefits of English have also played a part in the continuation of EMI, with the government focusing on not falling out of the global economy (Golding, 2018).

In South Africa, similarly, the population regarded English as a means to economic and educational success (McKay, 2014), creating a parallel to the situation in India (Sah, 2022). This economic aspect proves to be a more general factor regarding the adoption of EMI in countries that have not done so due to colonialism (Galloway et al., 2017; McKay, 2014). In addition to the personal and governmental perspectives, institutions also may be in favour of utilizing EMI for their economic benefit, mainly through drawing in more international students and increasing their prestige (Bowles & Murphy, 2020; Dearden, 2016; Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Galloway et al., 2017; Macaro et al., 2018), by making themselves more accessible to students from other countries via English.

Another highly important factor is “internationalization,” which can be defined as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2003) in the context of HE. Functioning as the lingua franca in academia as well (Ozdemir, 2014), English plays a key role in the internationalization of higher education in the world, which can further explain the rapid growth and implementation of EMI.

Political factors have also furthered the adoption of EMI. In Europe, within the scope of the “Bologna Process” that was put into effect in 1999 the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was created (Kettunen & Kantola, 2006). This was aimed to give students the opportunity to continue their higher education freely among the member countries, using their qualifications from their own countries, through a shared credit system (Hultgren et al., 2015). Although the language to be used inside this area is not specified in the Bologna Declaration, it is clear that it had an important agency in the growth of EMI (Costa & Coleman, 2013; Hultgren et al., 2015; Phillipson, 2006).

Although the idea of freely moving between the countries is positive, there has been serious criticism regarding the Bologna Process and EMI throughout Europe, as well as resistance to their adoption, mainly through viewing the overall process as “Englishization.” Where Kachru (1994) viewed “Englishization” regarding the lexical and grammatical influence it had on other languages due to its dominance, Phillipson (1992, 2006) perceives it as the increase in its usage and the threat of it marginalizing local languages, even connecting it to “linguistic imperialism.” In Italy, following a decision to adopt English as the only medium of instruction at post-graduate and doctorate levels in Politecnico di Milano, a large portion of the staff members took the matter to court and won on the grounds that imposing English as the only language violated freedom and equality (Campagna & Pulcini, 2015).

A familiar instance also took place in France (Gavriilidou & Mitits, 2023). Outside of the cultural concerns, one of the most prominent practical oppositions to EMI stemmed from the requirement of a high level of English proficiency it brought. Regarding the European perspective, because the familiarity with and exposure to English varies between Northern Europe and Southern Europe (Campagna & Pulcini, 2014), the adoption of EMI proves to be more difficult as EMI, as its nature requires,

adds another layer to instruction in higher education, English. Hence, it can pose a problem for students who lack the required proficiency in the language (Galloway & Rose, 2021; Richards & Pun, 2023).

Also, while not the only one, English proficiency is an important predictor of academic achievement in EMI (Altay et al., 2022; Lin & Lei, 2021; Masrai et al., 2022a; Masrai, et al., 2022b; Rose et al., 2020; Thompson et al., 2022; Yüksel et al., 2023). In addition to being a predictor of success, it is also a prerequisite in EMI (Richards & Pun, 2023). A study conducted in Italy pointed to the problem of proficiency as %30 of the universities participating in the study put forth “lecturers’ insufficient English language competence” as the biggest hurdle in adapting EMI, surpassed by %31 referring to the insufficiency of the English language competence of Italian students (Costa & Coleman, 2013).

The proficiency levels of the students were a recurring concern regarding the implementation of EMI in Germany (Gürtler & Kronewald, 2015), Spain (Lasagabaster, 2015), China (Hu et al., 2014), and Türkiye (Kırkgöz, 2005). Due to the necessity of a certain level of proficiency in English, institutions employing EMI may require additional entry requirements regarding the students’ language levels (Macaro, 2018, as cited in Richards & Pun, 2023). The methods used and the strictness of these language requirements can vary from country to country (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014) with some institutions demanding proof via exams such as TOEFL and IELTS (Hultgren et al., 2022), with others implementing a bridging course or a “preparatory school” before the students are allowed to start their departments (Richards & Pun, 2023; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014).

2.3.2 English medium instruction in Türkiye. Preparatory schools, which are designed to provide students with an intensive language education in order to *prepare* them for their departments which utilize EMI, are common in Türkiye (Dearden, 2016; Macaro et al., 2016; Richards & Pun, 2023). In regards to Kachru’s (1985) “circles” theory regarding English, Türkiye is placed in the “expanding circle”, due to English not having an official or historical role in the country, but it is still used in varying contexts, especially in academia (Kırkgöz, 2005). Türkiye is one of the countries that have adopted EMI despite not having a colonial past (Yüksel et al., 2022) The official language of the country, Turkish, relatively differs from English structurally (Arik,

2020), in turn hindering the proficiency levels of English throughout the population. However, the first instance of utilizing EMI can be traced to 1912, with Boğaziçi University (Kırkgöz, 2005), then known as Robert College. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, Middle East Technical University was established in 1956, which served as the first higher education institution that utilized EMI (Selvi, 2014; Yüksel et al., 2022) and other universities, foundation and state, followed.

Türkiye's participation in the Bologna Process in 2001 (Karakaş, 2018) and the requirement of English proficiency to increase economic competitiveness, given the rise in globalization (Kırkgöz, 2019) can be put forth as main motivators in adopting EMI in higher education. Along with the institutional desire to attract more international students and improve prestige (Bowles & Murphy, 2020; Dearden, 2016), higher education institutions that provide EMI has risen greatly in number. Between 1999 and 2019, the percentage of universities that had partial or full EMI courses has changed from %43 to %66 (Yüksel et al., 2022).

However, this widespread adoption of EMI is not without its problems. Similar to their Italian colleagues (Costa & Coleman, 2013), language proficiency also presents a problem for lecturers and instructors in Turkish universities (Özer, 2020). Özer (2020) has found several problems lecturers face in their EMI courses such as difficulty in simplifying course content when necessary, the absence of English terminology knowledge, and struggles in improvisation during the courses. When asked their preference in the content of their training, pedagogical training (%12.8) was overshadowed by the desire to train speaking and pronunciation (%28.4), pointing to the lecturers struggles with language in their teaching.

Another group that may experience difficulties due to EMI is the students enrolled in those courses. According to a study conducted with 12 undergraduate students in a state university in Türkiye, students raised their concerns about their comprehension of the academic content in English, suffering a decrease in academic achievement, and initiating or participating in discussions in the class due to language proficiency problems (Özer & Bayram, 2019).

In order to eliminate or minimize these problems deriving from proficiency levels, universities in Türkiye that offer EMI courses utilize the aforementioned preparatory schools (Curle et al., 2020). Designed to provide intensive language

training to students, these programs help students reach a sufficient level of English proficiency in order for them to start their studies in their departments.



Chapter 3

Methodology

This study aims to explore the necessity of an ELT-S+ class and the benefits and drawbacks it would carry through the lenses of participants from the ELT field. To this end, the study strives to answer the following research questions:

1. How is the necessity of an ELT-S+ class perceived by ELT students, graduates, lecturers, preparatory school instructors, and administrators at a foundation university in Türkiye?
2. How do ELT students, graduates, lecturers, preparatory school instructors, and administrators evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of an ELT-S+ class?

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design due to its suitability to the exploration of complex social phenomena and obtaining in-depth insights from different perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). Through the collection of information from a wide range of stakeholders in ELT education, the main goal of this research is to investigate the need for a special preparatory school class for ELT students. A qualitative technique is the most suitable because of the exploratory nature of the research and the emphasis on the subjective experiences of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

This study is structured as a case study, with a foundation university in Istanbul as the main setting. A case study approach, since it permits a thorough examination of a specific context (Yin, 2018), is well-suited for this research as it aims to understand people's experiences and perspectives inside a specific educational setting. By focusing on a single institution, the research can provide a rich, contextualized understanding of the issue, while still allowing for the identification of broader themes relevant to ELT education in similar contexts.

The qualitative case study design was chosen because it enables the exploration of the research questions in depth, being informed from a wide variety of groups within the field. The study involves semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of 21 participants, including ELT students, ELT graduates, preparatory school instructors, English teachers who studied in an ELT-S+ class, ELT professors, and preparatory

school administrators. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they offer the opportunity to delve deeper into particular subjects while enabling the interviewer to follow up and extract more elaborate answers from the participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). This aspect of semi-structured interviews is especially valued in this study as understanding the participants' experiences and perspectives extensively holds great importance. In addition to the interviews, reflection papers will be collected from preparatory school instructors and English teachers who studied in an ELT-S+ class. These reflection papers will help tailor interview questions to obtain more precise information to build a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences.

The setting of the study, a foundation university in İstanbul, provides a more focused context for exploring the necessity of an ELT-S+ class for ELT students. A combination of purposive and convenience sampling was used to create the participant groups for this study. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure the inclusion of individuals from different levels of the ELT field, ensuring a more comprehensive look into the research focus. Convenience sampling was employed in selecting the participants as it allowed the selection of participants who were readily available and willing to participate in the study (Etikan et al., 2016).

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and supplemented by reflection papers from selected participants. The duration of the interviews varied between 30 and 60 minutes. After the data collection, the interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis involved identifying key themes and patterns within the data collected from the participants.

3.2 Setting and Participants

The setting of the study is a foundational university in İstanbul, where EMI is employed. As a result, the university offers a range of courses taught in English. To start their departments, students are required to provide proof of their English language proficiency. This can be achieved by submitting exam results from recognized tests such as TOEFL or the Foreign Language Exam (YDS) or pass the proficiency exam conducted by the university itself. While this is true for every student who is enrolled in a department that utilizes EMI, it is different for ELT students, as they are required to present a higher score in the proficiency exam. As it stands, when they cannot pass

the exam, ELT students are placed in preparatory school classes mixed with students from other departments.

The preparatory school in question uses a modular system, with students studying in a level for 7 weeks and taking an End of Module exam on the 8th week. Students who meet the requirements can retake the proficiency exam at the end of the second and fourth modules. If they pass, they are eligible to begin their studies in their departments. For ELT students, the passing score on these tests is 80 out of 100, whereas for general students it is 60.

The participant groups of the present study have been chosen with the aim and ambition to cover the topic from a variety of perspectives in order to reach a comprehensive and sound conclusion. The participants can be placed under six groups, with a total of 22 individuals.

Table 3

Participants and Groups

Participant Pseudonym	Participant Group	Gender	Language of Interview
Mr. Alp	Instructor	Male	English
Ms. Alara	Instructor	Female	English
Ms. Azra	Instructor	Female	English
Ms. Bengü	Instructor	Female	English
Ms. Deniz	Instructor	Female	English
Mehmet	ELT Student	Male	Turkish
Melis	ELT Student	Female	Turkish
Mert	ELT Student	Male	English
Miray	ELT Student	Female	Turkish
Prof. Selin	ELT Professor	Female	English
Prof. Işık	ELT Professor	Female	English
Ayşenur	ELT Graduate	Female	English
Gülnur	ELT Graduate	Female	English
Beyzanur	ELT Graduate	Female	English
Emrecan	ELT Graduate	Male	English
Ebrunur	ELT Graduate	Female	English
Gizem	ELT-S+ Graduate	Female	English
Gülşah	ELT-S+ Graduate	Female	Turkish
Güneş	ELT-S+ Graduate	Female	Turkish
Gözde	ELT-S+ Graduate	Female	Turkish
Yekta	Administrator	Male	English
Yonca	Administrator	Female	English

The first group is comprised of junior and senior ELT students, with the aim of collecting their insights on their experiences regarding their preparatory school or lack thereof. The second group is ELT graduates of the university focused in this study. They were chosen with the aim of understanding their perspectives on the topic, particularly considering how their perspectives may have been affected by their experiences after graduation, including any relevant work experience. The third group is directly related to the preparatory school, containing instructors who have graduated from an ELT department and work in the preparatory school. The fourth group is related to English teachers who have experienced an ELT-S+ classroom in their preparatory school. As the university in the focus of this study does not offer this experience, the participants of this group have been selected from different institutions. They have been selected as they can provide valuable information on the topic with their first-hand experiences with the ELT-S+ classes. The next group is made up of two lecturers in the ELT department. Their expert outlook and understanding of their students are expected to add valuable insights on the subject. The final group is the preparatory school administrators. These participants can provide background information on the possibility and necessity of separating ELT-S+ classrooms from others.

These groups were all carefully chosen to offer distinctive and varied viewpoints to the research. Through collecting data regarding a variety of experiences, from seasoned educators and administrators to current students, the research attempts to develop a thorough knowledge of the possible advantages and difficulties related to ELT-S+ classes. The information acquired from these participants will be crucial in answering the main research question and furthering the discussion.

3.3 Procedures

3.3.1 Data collection tools. This study uses semi-structured interviews and reflection papers as its two main data collection strategies in order to obtain thorough and in-depth insights about the need for a special preparatory school class for ELT students. The purpose of choosing these instruments was to comprehend the complex viewpoints of the wide range of individuals involved.

Semi-structured interviews are the primary method of data collection. This approach is compatible with qualitative research as it gives the researcher a flexible way to collect the ideas, perspectives, and experiences of the participants (Kvale &

Brinkmann, 2015). The semi-structured method provides a guide in the interview with premade questions and allows the interviewer to delve deeper into the topic with spontaneous follow-up questions, ensuring a deep exploration of the topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The questions for the semi-structured interviews were constructed based on the research questions and the literature review to cover the relevant aspects to the study. These open-ended questions were designed to elicit comprehensive answers from the participants, with the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews allowing the researcher to adapt or add questions according to the flow of the conversation. These interviews were held online through MS Teams. The participants were informed about the study before the interviews and their consent were obtained. The interviews, lasting approximately 30 to 60 minutes, were conducted in English or Turkish, depending on the participants' preferences, and were recorded with their consent. These recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure the preservation of the integrity of the data. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the process through obtaining informed consent from the participants, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining the anonymity of participants and institutions through pseudonyms.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, reflection papers were also utilised to collect data from two groups of participants: preparatory school instructors and English teachers who studied in an ELT-S+ class. These participants were asked to reflect on their language learning experiences and their departmental experience with a focus on their language proficiency level. They provided one reflection paper before their interviews were conducted. These reflection papers served as a supplementary data collection tool with the main aim of informing the semi-structured interview questions better and allowing the researcher to tailor specific questions according to the participants' experiences.

3.3.2 Data analysis procedures. The data collected via semi-structured interviews were analysed through thematic analysis, a method suitable for qualitative research. It is a flexible and systematic approach to identify and analyse themes existent within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2017). Thematic analysis enables the

researchers to extract key themes regarding the participants' experiences and perspectives from the complex data obtained through the semi-structured interviews.

An inductive and reflexive approach was utilized for data analysis, meaning the themes were constructed directly from the data rather than being products of a pre-existing theoretical framework. This approach was chosen to allow the participants' experiences to emerge authentically through the researcher's engagement with the data. A reflexive stance was used throughout the process, as it allows the researcher to thoughtfully engage with the data and reflect on their interpretations at every stage of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The data was first transcribed verbatim with the help of audio recordings. These transcripts allowed the researcher to start "initial coding," which is coding the overall ideas and notions systematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These codes were then analysed to compile them under themes based on their meanings and categories. These themes were developed through thorough inspection of the codes emerged from the transcripts, along with the creation of subthemes to allow capture more nuanced aspects of the data. Finally, these themes were presented in the findings chapter, highlighting the participants' experiences and beliefs in a structured manner.

3.3.3 Trustworthiness. The process of analysing and the collecting qualitative data can prove to be a varied experience (Stahl & King, 2020), as two different researchers can interpret the same data in differing ways. To ensure the validity and reliability of an qualitative research despite this subjectivity, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria were followed to ensure the trustworthiness of the present study. To achieve credibility, triangulation was utilized through the diverse population of the participant groups, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research area. For transferability, detailed descriptions were provided in the findings chapter (Nowell et al., 2017) along with the related quotations. Dependability was considered throughout the data analysis process with the utilization of consistent coding practices. Finally, the choice of including extensive direct quotations from the participants was taken

with the aim of achieving confirmability, and limit the capacity of the researcher's bias.

3.4 Limitations

Although the present study includes varied groups of participants who have been directly involved in the subject area through their connections to ELT, convenience sampling may introduce biases. Although variety of the groups has been pre-planned, the diversity of the participants' perspectives was a factor out of the researchers' control. Additionally, as the findings of this study relies on the participants' perspectives and their reported experiences, informed or affected by their memory biases and other factors, it is inherently subjective.

Moreover, the subjectivity the reflexive thematic analysis brings can mean that the themes that have emerged were affected by the researcher's perspective and decisions. This subjectivity, although expected in qualitative research, can affect the conclusions arrived.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study is to explore the necessity of ELT-S+ classes and the implications they would possess. To this end, participants involving different stakeholders from the ELT department were interviewed. These groups included: preparatory school instructors, professors, current ELT students, ELT graduates from Greenville University, and English teachers who attended an ELT-S+ class in different institutions. Through semi-structured interviews, these participants shared their experiences with the department and their perspectives. Through the analysis of the data, 6 main themes were created.

Table 4

Generated Themes

Theme 1	Foundational Language Learning Experiences
Theme 2	Relationship Between Proficiency and Experience in the Department
Theme 3	Benefits of the Current Preparatory Program
Theme 4	Challenges of the Current Preparatory Program
Theme 5	Benefits of the ELT-S+
Theme 6	Challenges of the ELT-S+

4.1 Foundational Language Learning Experiences

This theme included the participants' foundational language learning experiences. They shared their views on their language learning in primary and secondary schools, the impact their teachers had, and the relationship between their proficiency and their departmental studies. The participants who shared their language learning experiences mainly highlighted the lack of productive skill instruction in their education. They were not presented with the opportunity to practice their speaking and writing skills, which resulted in struggles with and low confidence in their productive skills. Another important finding was found to be the effect their teachers had on their language education. While some participants criticized the approach their teachers adopted, mainly the grammar focus, some believed that they had capable teachers who had to utilize the focus on grammar due to time or curricular constraints. However,

participants from both groups gained some perspective from their education. Those who viewed their teachers to be ineffective believed that they learned *what not to do* in their own teaching, and those who had effective teachers learned *what to do* from them.

4.1.1 Early language influences. Most of the participants had similar experiences regarding their early language learning. One prominent theme that manifested itself throughout the varied groups about early language education experience was the lack of focus on productive skills. Although several participants stated that they were content with the amount of practice they experienced with writing and speaking in their language education until the department, they proved to be the exceptions, as the majority sounded their criticism of the approach to productive skills their institutions or teachers held. This view has showed itself among the groups who shared their language learning experiences, including instructors, graduates, current ELT students, and English teachers who studied in an ELT-S+ class.

The preparatory school instructors were the group where this view was the most dominant. Ms. Bengü shared, “So we were just solving a lot of questions. I don't think we were learning the language itself. We were just focusing on how to solve those [exam] questions and memorizing the [grammar] rules,” when talking about her language learning experience in high school. Ms. Alara had a similar experience; “So you just learn the rules. You do not do any speaking practice or not listening, so you just learn the rules.” The inadequate practice about productive skills has persisted for most of the instructors; as one noted, “Up until that point [the department], I hadn't spoken English.”

The ELT graduates were no different. Majority of the graduates noted that they lacked practice in both speaking and writing. Gülnur noted “...but speaking requires more practice and I didn't have it,” when asked about her experience with productive skills. Beyzanur stated “In high school I didn't learn any writing. Not even a structured essay, any kind of writing,” explaining that she did not receive any instruction on how to write an essay. However, there was an outlier in this group, Ayşenur, who started learning English from the first grade of primary school in a state school. She commented:

“I was in a state school. And when I compare this one [to her friends' experiences], I really had a good education because my friends told me that

they didn't see any English in the first grade or second grade and so that was my luck.”

As she expressed, her friends, just as the rest of the participants who studied in a state school, started their English learning in school at the fourth grade whereas she had the opportunity to start as early as the first grade. Different to the rest of the participants, she mentioned that her education was more production focused. She illustrated this by saying “... things were happening, listening or touching role-playing. You know, we were actively using the English during the lesson.” This presented a stark contrast with the other participants who mentioned their lack of production as shown in their quotes.

The current ELT students shared their experiences as well, which coincide with the experiences of the aforementioned participant groups. Mert pointed this out while talking about his preparatory school experience: “About speaking, there are some group presentations [in the preparatory school] where you talk about something clearly different than your life and you try to role play. We had no classes like that in high school, I can clearly say that.” Mert also stated, “We had no English-speaking classes in my high school,” which showed his perception of the adequacy of speaking instruction he received. Another student, Miray, said “My speaking was pretty bad. I got no points from the speaking part [of the proficiency exam],” and signalled that she had insufficient speaking practice experience.

Finally, the experiences of the English teachers who have studied in an ELT-S+ class were in line with the other groups. Gizem emphasized this problem:

In the proficiency exam they asked me to write an essay. (...) I started to write by saying “Hi” and some emojis so that is what I wrote. I didn't know how to produce English because we just learned how to pass the English exam to go to the university and that is why I didn't know how to produce English [before preparatory school].

She expressed her lack of knowledge and practice about writing essays while underlining the emphasis her pre-university education had placed on the university entrance exam. This aspect has been also mentioned by the instructors, graduates, and students. They highlighted the discrepancy the focus on the university exam brought in the university, suggesting that their prior education aimed to prepare them for the exam, but not for their university education.

One important difference between the participants exposure to productive language skill practice was discovered to be the institutional differences. Participants who came from private primary or high schools stated that they had more opportunities to “use” the language compared to participants who have studied in state schools. This was apparent in the responses of the instructors, graduates, students, and English teachers who have studied ELT-S+ classes. One English teacher, Gizem, signalled this by saying “Because I came from a state school, I was not very good at speaking.” This quote demonstrated the view shared by most of the participants about state schools, where the focus lied on grammar and speaking or writing opportunities were limited. The participant pointed to the state school as the reason for her challenges with speaking which further added to the notion of private schools being more productive shared by the other participants. Ayşenur shared, “And when I tell people about it, they get really shocked because I was not in a private school, I was in a state school,” when talking about the speaking focused English instruction she received. The “shocking” quality of this statement in a state school further solidified the aforementioned notion. Prof. Işık summarized this difference clearly by saying,

The students are not coming from similar backgrounds, which is OK. So, it's about the K12 side of the problem. There are so many different schools and even though there is a common core curriculum provided by MoNE [Ministry of National Education] as a framework, in the implementation side, (...), we see a lot of differences. I mean those students coming from public school might not really have the same abilities with [a student coming from] a very well-known urban school.

The professor acknowledged the differences between private and state schools and the effect it can have on the student profile in the department. However, she also underlined the misconception that correlated private institutions with efficient language instruction by adding “I mean, it doesn't necessarily mean that every single student from that urban school will have a very good level of English” which can be solidified by the contrast between Ayşenur and Mehmet. Ayşenur, as seen in previous quotes, was satisfied and appreciative of the language education she experienced in a state school. Mehmet however, simply described his time in a private high school as “experiencing hell” and noted that he had good teachers but inefficient language instruction.

As the majority of the participants were dissatisfied with their formal language learning experience, they cited various sources as being more influential in their proficiency level. Mehmet pointed to video games as his primary source of proficiency, “I learnt English by speaking, I started playing CS:GO and games like that when I was in 7th grade, and I learned by trying to communicate with people [other players]. I can say that was the biggest influence.” His experience with multiplayer games provided him a space where he could practice speaking and use the language, which acted as a CoP. He also pointed out that watching TV series and movies had an influence on his proficiency as well. He stated, “I was trying to imitate the accents [from the TV series] and I developed my accent like that,” showing that he utilized his exposure to English from media as an opportunity to practice speaking. He also noted that video games, TV series, and movies had more influence on his proficiency than his formal education did.

Although Mehmet was the only participant who has mentioned video games, he was not alone in attributing importance to other media tools. Güneş, an English teacher who has studied in an ELT-S+ class, pointed to the influence of some musicians and actors had on her interest and motivation in learning English as she stated, “I liked to watch them and I liked to listen to their music, so I tried to understand them.” This awakened an interest in English and provided the motivation necessary to study. This effect of celebrities and especially TV series has been mentioned by a significant number of participants. Ms. Bengü shared a similar experience to Mehmet, “Actually I started [having English lessons] in the 4th grade and I just watched a lot of series. My accent just improved watching those series and trying to mimic them in front of a mirror.” She believed that she compensated the productive skill deficit in her school through watching TV series and practicing speaking by herself. This notion was echoed in the majority of the interviews of graduates and ELT students as well.

4.1.2 Teachers’ influence and the effect of teaching methods. While talking about the instruction that they received, some participants from each group identified that during their formal education, Grammar Translation Method (GTM) was utilized. This method, which focuses on explicit grammar rules and translation exercises using L1 over communicative and productive focus was mentioned in a negative light by the participants. One ELT student, Miray, explained, “State schools mostly use GTM in Türkiye,” further solidifying the perspective of private institutions being more

productive focused. However, Miray, who transferred to a private school in her last year of high school explained her experience there as:

I mean we had only one year [before the university exam]. We could not focus on communicative activities. We just studied for the potential exam questions. We did not even use English in the lessons, we did not have the time. My teacher would say that watching TV series would improve our English but suggested that we did not do it that year because we were not proficient enough for that. Instead, he said that we needed to study the grammar subjects. We really did not have much time, so that's how we studied.

The grammar focus she experienced in a private institution illustrated the point that Prof. Işık made which suggested that not every private school has this presumed communicative approach when compared to state schools. Even though the Miray transferred to a private school, the predominant focus on explicit grammar instruction was still existent. She recounted that her teacher was dissatisfied with this approach he had utilized due to time constraints, "He said it himself, he would tell us that he wished we had more time so we could focus more on other skills than grammar, but we didn't have time." Although the teacher held a negative opinion on the GTM, he felt he had to use it due to the time constraints created by the university exam.

The focus on explicit grammar stemming from the university exam was another common comment shared between the participants. Ms. Bengü shared, "We didn't use them [the coursebooks] effectively. We were just studying for the university entrance exam, so we were just solving a lot of questions. I don't think we were learning the language itself," while Gözde stated, "First, in the years when we were preparing for the university exam, we focused entirely on solving tests in high school. Before that, there was a learning system based completely on [grammar] rules," explaining the lack of focus on communicative skills in her formal language education. This relationship between the extensive grammar focus and the university exam was pointed out by most of the participants who held a negative perspective regarding their formal language education. Gizem explained the relationship clearly by saying:

I didn't know how to produce English because we just learned how to pass the English exam to go to the university and that is why I didn't know how to produce English. It includes writing and speaking. And I was not good enough

at listening as well. I was just good at grammar, reading, et cetera. So, I struggled a lot while producing English in prep school.

She pointed to the university entrance exam as the main reason why the language instruction she received in school was solely focused on grammar.

Some participants were content with their instruction being mainly on grammar, as Miray shared “I think that was the most logical approach. We just didn’t have enough time. We definitely had to do it like that.” The emphasis on the university exam was not exclusively imposed by the institution, the participant herself placed similar importance on it. She was satisfied with the situation as she viewed it as beneficial for her university exam experience. However, the utilization of GTM and the sole focus on grammar also elicited strong reactions from the participants. Ms. Alara recounted:

Yes, actually because I myself experienced that grammar translation method, giving the rules and everything, doesn't work at all. You just know the rules and that's all. But just focusing on speaking, for example, or teaching how to write is more beneficial in terms of producing the language. So that is why now in my prep school [teaching], I really try to spare more time in terms of producing [the language], like speaking in the program, maybe we don't have enough time for speaking. But I really try to create that time for my students.

As she explained here, her negative experience of GTM due to its effects on productive skills and her disapproval of it, led her to avoid using it in her own instruction. She displays an example of anti-apprenticeship of observation, as her own negative experience is transformed into an aversion to using the same method. This effect has been shared with other participants as well, as Güneş said “I don't use the grammar translation method. And I try to make my students speak. I'm working with young learners, so we always play instead.” Again, the aversion to GTM as an effect of experiencing it can be observed with her. She tries to focus more on production instead of grammar in her own teaching.

4.2 Relationship Between Proficiency and Experience in the Department

As the foundational language learning experiences of the participants followed a similar path, outside of a few outliers, with the utilization of GTM, a primary focus on grammar, and lack of practice regarding productive skills, the relationship between

proficiency and the department experiences of the participants also shared many commonalities. Most participants especially shared the problems experienced due to productive skill proficiency.

4.2.1 Speaking challenges and confidence. Many participants expressed the difficulties they experienced throughout their time in the ELT department, the first years in particular. The instructors all shared similar experiences regarding speaking, Ms. Azra stated “I had some problems with speaking, actually. That was a problem because I was shy and also, I had some problems to, you know, translate things from Turkish in my mind into English.” She has experienced the effect of GTM, as she felt it necessary to translate what she was going to say before she participated in her courses, adding an extra layer of effort needed to engage with the lecture. Ms. Alara shared:

Everything was new for me, so I was afraid to make mistakes. So, I wasn't participating a lot because I was afraid to say something wrong. Then I thought that people were going to judge me, so I was a little bit quiet in terms of that, because of the correctness.

She believed she experienced speaking anxiety resulting from the focus on grammar she had been taught with, placing a high importance on accuracy. This problem led to hesitations in participation in the lectures in fear of making grammatical errors. Every participant from the instructor group have experienced a degree of speaking anxiety hindering their participation during the lectures.

For graduates, the situation was not too different. They complained about the lack of practice they had about speaking, as Gülnur shared, “For example, it [presenting in class] was a nightmare for me because it was so hard for me to speak without any support, like notes? I don't know. It was very hard for me.” Due to her lack of practice, she experienced a lot of speaking anxiety during presentations and speaking in general to a point where she describes it as a “nightmare.” This anxiety and lack of practice were shared with the majority of the graduate group; however, Ayşenur proved to be an outlier again. She expressed that she had no problems with speaking, she said:

At the beginning of the department, my speaking was good as always. (...) Presentations were OK for me because it was speaking also. I liked speaking

so just preparing the presentation was hard for me, but presenting was not a problem.

Ayşenur, who had a relatively more production-focused instruction in her formal language education before university, felt competent in speaking. Whereas the other graduate quoted described presentations as a nightmare, Ayşenur not only stated that she had no problems with it, but also that she liked it.

ELT students shared similar experiences regarding speaking in the department. When talking about the Oral Communication course, which focuses on presentations which starts with general subjects and proceeds to include more academic presentations, Miray stated:

The oral communication course was pretty traumatic for me. (...) I had a scary amount of stage fright. I mean I wanted to take some medication before the presentations. It was really horrible. I didn't like that course but of course it helped me. Thankfully I had that course.

Presentations for this student has induced an immense amount of speaking anxiety to a point where she felt like she needed to take medication to help herself. She is one of the students whose previous language learning experience did not provide her with opportunities to practice her speaking. This lack of speaking practice combined with her stage fright appear to have affected her immensely in the department. However, through time and practice, she could improve both her speaking and her anxiety. Again, the outlier in this group who expressed that he had no problems with speaking was Mehmet, who had an opportunity to practice speaking via video games, where he could communicate with other players.

ELT-S+ graduates' experiences with speaking coincided with the other groups, much like their foundational language learning experiences. Gözde stated, "My speaking skills were not very good. I had no speaking practice anywhere except for the prep class, so I struggled to express myself in my department." Much like the previous groups, the lack of speaking practice hindered the participants' engagement with the courses in her department. However, for all groups, the main consensus was that through time, especially after the first two years of the department, their speaking skills improved. The reasons for this improvement for some participants was through individual efforts. For most ELT-S+ graduates, it was forcing themselves to participate and speak in their courses despite feeling anxious to do so. Gülşah shared, "I overcame this problem [speaking anxiety] by trying to speak up often in class and express

myself,” Güneş, said “I tried to speak in the lessons and participate, that helped me a lot.”

Along with their personal effort to participate, the oral communication course proved to be a significant contributor to the improvement of the participants’ speaking skills. Ms. Bengü noted:

I believe they [other courses] also helped me a lot, but the most effective one was the oral communication [course]. Because I believe that that lesson was not appropriate for the shy ones like me. I mean, I don't like speaking in front of others, but as a teacher I have to do it every day. So that helped me a lot actually to overcome my fears. And also, I now feel really nice on the stage.

Even though she experienced speaking anxiety and stage fright, she appreciated the oral communication course as it helped her overcome these problems by raising her confidence in her speaking ability. Mr. Alp said, “The oral communication skills course helped extremely for me because up until that point, I haven't spoken English. So that helped me realize I could speak.” Again, the course was deemed “extremely” important by the participant who had no prior speaking practice opportunities. This value the oral communication course carried was stated by the participant groups, especially those who have studied in Greenville.

4.2.2 Challenges with and improvement of academic writing. Aligned with the speaking challenges, the participants also experienced hardships with academic writing, particularly those who had not attended a preparatory school. As their formal language learning instruction generally did not include writing, much less academic, the participants found it difficult to meet the department’s expectations, which included writing articles, essays, and reflection papers. For those who had a degree of writing instruction in high school, the shift from general English proficiency to academic raised some problems, as the participants needed to adapt to this newly introduced academic setting.

Instructors shared their initial struggles regarding academic writing during their first years in the department. Ms. Deniz shared:

When I first started in my department, I didn't really feel confident about my English skills, and there was definitely a gap between my general proficiency and the demands of academic English. Especially in terms of academic writing and understanding complex research articles. I was expected to engage with

academic texts and write essays. It took time to adjust my approach to speaking and writing.

This struggle emphasized the effect of the lack of prior experience with academic writing had on the participants' department experience, as it left them feeling underprepared. Ms. Alara explained these challenges:

Actually, for the first semester I had difficulties in terms of writing something. Maybe writing like reflection papers academically, because, you know, at the faculty we have some rules we need to obey like APA style and everything, and also [academic] language. So, imagine that you learn new things, new terms, vocabulary and everything, and at the same time you need to apply them to your work. So, at the beginning it was hard.

She brought attention to the difficulty she experienced with the introduction of a multitude of new things like academic conventions, vocabulary, and new subjects of study. She felt it overwhelming to handle these despite having studied in the preparatory school for a semester.

Graduates shared a similar experience. They explained how they struggled with academic writing during their departmental studies. Ebrunur stated, "The writing part was quite lacking as well. I remember having courses about it, but I still felt it was hard. I had some hardships to write things." Although there were courses in place to improve their writing skills, mainly the *Advanced Reading and Writing* course which focus on the production and comprehension of academic articles, the lack of foundational practice in writing led to a high difficulty in meeting expectations. This difficulty was also experienced by the current ELT students, Mehmet shared, "I was OK with speaking, but my writing skills were low, so I had a lot of problems with writing, especially with the advanced vocabulary." He underscored how he did not experience many problems with speaking, due to his earlier practice in video games, but found academic writing quite challenging as he did not have much practice in that area.

In contrast, teachers who had attended an ELT-S+ class reported much less difficulties with academic writing. Some expressed affection towards writing even before the university, and some explained how their preparatory school experience helped prepare them for the writing expectations of the department. Gülşah stated, "I didn't really have a lot of problems in my first year. I didn't have any writing in my high school but I learned it in preparatory school, so I had no problems in my first

year.” They explained how their preparatory school experience functioned as a beneficial introduction to academic writing, which helped the participants initial experiences with it went smoothly in the department.

4.2.3 General impact of proficiency to the department experience. The participant groups experienced a different degree of impact their proficiency levels had on their departmental experiences. Some perceived their proficiency as sufficient to comprehend course material, while others expressed important problems, especially regarding vocabulary and lecture comprehension.

Instructors expressed a range of experiences, with some sharing their struggles in the initial stages of their departmental studies. Ms. Bengü shared, “When I first started in the department, I started in the second semester. So, the classes were ones I hadn’t taken before, so it was pretty hard. I didn’t understand anything at all, and I was terrified.” Although this instructor attended the preparatory school, she still struggled with the adaptation to the academic environment her courses provided. Ms. Alara, who also had experience in the preparatory school for a semester, remarked:

I thought my proficiency was good, but when I started the faculty, I realized that it wasn’t actually. Mostly because of the vocabulary, because back then no one had taught me the vocabulary I’m going to face at the faculty. So, I was shocked and surprised in my first lesson. Getting used to that was difficult, it was hard to understand to lecture and follow it. (...) In terms of vocabulary I had some difficulties and while I was participating, I had some hesitations because everything was new for me. I mean the vocabulary terms, concepts, everything was new, so I was afraid to make mistakes.

This quote illustrates the shared experience between the instructors in their initial years in the department. Even after spending a semester in the preparatory school, these participants still found it a “shocking” experience to enter the academic environment of their department.

Graduates of ELT also shared these challenges with their initial introduction to the department. Gülnur explained, “I lost all of my confidence because there were many good students, very proficient students, especially my best friends. I didn’t feel as confident as them.” As she had students who she perceived as very “good” students, she felt intimidated and critical of her own proficiency which affected her participation at the beginning. Beyzanur shared:

Actually, my prep school [in the USA] was different from the prep school in Istanbul, so I had advanced writing classes and also debate classes. So, thanks to them I did not have many problems let's say. Of course I had some problems. I didn't know the structure of the texts, but I had more experience than the ones who studied in Istanbul or who did not study any prep school anywhere. So, I didn't have many problems but if I hadn't had any prep experience I would have had many problems.

As she attended the university's preparatory school in the USA, which had more intensive academic writing and speaking instruction than the one in Istanbul. This helped her adjust better than participants those who did not have any preparatory school experience as well as those who studied in the preparatory school in Istanbul.

Teachers who have studied in an ELT-S+ class had mixed experiences. While the majority of them reported no significant adjustment problems to the department thanks to their preparatory school experience, Gözde stated, "I believe that even when I started my department, my proficiency level was still insufficient.

However, for current ELT students, their gaps in proficiency, especially regarding vocabulary has affected their ability to comprehend lectures and understand course material. Mert explained:

"In my first year I had a lot of problems because I wasn't that good at English and there was a native teacher. Because of his accent I had a hard time understanding the course for example. Overall, in my first year I wasn't enough, I can say clearly."

While he had attended the preparatory school, he still had problems understanding the course content, which hindered his overall comprehension of the courses. Mehmet reflected on the challenges he had faced with vocabulary:

I struggled mostly with some vocabulary related to educational psychology for example, some scientific words. Some words I could understand through context so they were not a big problem, but the other ones were hard to get used to. I still have some problems with those.

He emphasized the difficulty induced by the experience of being exposed to the field specific vocabulary for the first time in his courses.

The views of the professors of the ELT department also coincide with the experiences shared by the other participants. Prof. Selin shared, “It's hard to say that there's a standard here because some of the students are very proficient. They are native like, but some of them are still struggling, especially with productive skills.” She explains the differences in the proficiency levels the learners have. She continues by saying:

I mean, this department is not a place to teach them English, right? So, it's not our job and we don't have time for this here. So, we expect them to be proficient enough to understand what we're doing here, and I had some students, as I said, I just recommended them to work on their proficiency so that they can actually understand and pass their courses here. And I believe this is sad. But I need to emphasize that I also had very proficient students [with whom] I had no problems at all. And so that's the problem, I guess we don't have a homogeneous group here.

The professor explained the necessity of having sufficient level of proficiency for students to engage and succeed in the department. She recounted that in some instances she felt the need to suggest students with insufficient proficiency to improve it by themselves as the ELT department does not focus on teaching English to its students. She again addressed the lack of a standard proficiency level among the students, where some students have highly advanced language skills, some cannot even comprehend the lectures. Prof. Işık had similar opinions as she stated “Well, it seems that there is this varying degree of proficiency,” while talking about her students, further solidifying the notion that the proficiency levels were not standard between the students.

The other participants also mentioned this varying degree of proficiency of the students. They mentioned the effect both students with higher proficiency had on them, as well as those with lower proficiency levels. Mehmet mentioned, “I see some students who speak a lot better than me. Some of them have really good fluency. I can't even speak Turkish that way.” He also believed that these students had a positive effect on him, and functioned as a motivator to study more, to get on their level. On the other hand, Mr. Alp, an instructor shared:

I remember there was this girl. I'm sure you remember her. She was mixing am/is/are, right? Like she said stuff like “you is” et cetera. She went to prep school by the way. She passed the prep school and up until the second or third of the university she had a very, very bad grammar.

This quote underlined the inconsistency of the proficiency levels among students. Despite attending the preparatory school, the basic grammar mistakes his classmates makes implied the limitations of the preparatory program in developing its students' proficiency levels to a sufficient extent for the department. He went on to explain:

I mean, they were at a level where they could improve themselves on their own, but still, that's not what is expected [in ELT]. I believe that shouldn't be what's in ELT because they not only held me back, but also the professors and the instructors in the department they were trying to conform to their level. Instead of just doing whatever they want, teaching however they wanted to teach, they were trying to slow down.

He reflected how the proficiency levels of his classmates affected the nature of the courses and the lectures. He suggested that it posed a problem not only for the students, but also for the professors who needed to adjust their own lectures. He also shared the professors' views that ELT department does not need to teach English to its students:

But it's a private school. Everybody can join it as long as they have enough money, you will be there. And there were some people who shouldn't have been a part of the that department, because this is not a department where you can learn the language. Right? We are not there to learn a language, as you know, they did not teach us language at all.

He proved to be the only participant that mentions the foundation university aspect of the situation. He held a critical perspective in the institutions criteria of enrolment of the students. He brought attention to the entrance grade required from the university exam being not too demanding, and suggested that students with insufficient proficiency levels which cannot meet the expectations of the department can get in along with those who have higher proficiency levels. This might be a reason for the inconsistent proficiency levels among the learners.

The participants also mentioned the positive relationship between their departmental studies and their proficiency levels. Along with advanced reading and writing and oral communication courses, which are cited to be beneficial for productive skills and confidence, some participants feel that they have benefited from all courses in general. Emreçan stated, “Exposure helped me the most because we were all exposed to the language a lot in the classes. I was always using English [to participate], it helped a lot.” He explains that owing to the nature of the department, which utilizes EMI, he was constantly exposed to academic English and had to use it to participate. Therefore, he deems that it was a big factor that helped his proficiency. This effect of EMI was best described by Gülnur, another graduate:

I think being pushed to speak English [helped me the most]. Not accepting anything but English, because you have to express yourself to your professors, and sometimes you have some native students in the class. You have to express yourself and also the pressure that you're going to be an English teacher helps you to push yourself. When you push yourself, when you're exposed to the language, it helps you to learn it.

Again, she explained the importance of English being the main language in the class in improving her proficiency. As the intrinsic motivation of wanting to become a teacher motivates students to participate in the lesson, the medium of instruction being English forces the students to produce the language and express themselves, as well as engage with their classmates who are also communicating their ideas. This results in heightened levels of exposure and develops the proficiency levels of the students. Most participants viewed the aspect of exposure as a significant contributor to their proficiency levels.

The participants referenced courses like *Linguistics* or *Sociolinguistics* as an important factor. Ayşenur, a graduate, shared, “Linguistic lessons helped me because they show you the sentence structures,” as an ELT-S+ graduate, Gizem, said, “We had some linguistics courses and those helped me a lot as well.” Ms. Bengü also shared her perspective as she stated, “The linguistics course was like a really nice lesson. And also, I really loved the teacher. He was really nice. The lessons were also really fun.” These participants felt that they benefited from the linguistics courses as they equipped them with knowledge surrounding the sentence structure in English, which helped

them understand its grammar better. Finally, Ayşenur also underscored the specific benefit the sociolinguistics course had granted her, she explained:

In our last year in, the fourth year, we had sociolinguistics, and it was really helpful because until then you just think that you should have an American accent or British accent but in there you learn it's a world language and it doesn't matter how you speak, communication skills are the most important thing that you have. I can say this helped me to improve my proficiency, ability to speak, write, or understand what language is, how we use it and what's important in communication.

She underscored the sociolinguistics course especially as it broadened her perspective on the language, providing her with a more comprehensive understanding of what it is and how it should be spoken, or the non-existence of only one correct way it should be spoken, which helped her improve both her proficiency and confidence in it.

The reasons of lack of standard proficiency of the department might be linked to the difference in K12 institutions, whether private or state, they vary in quality of instruction and the approach adopted by the teachers, as explained so far. However, Prof. Işık suggested another possibility. She stated, "I cannot really relate this [lack of standard proficiency] to the formal education they go through. (...) Especially, along with access to several different social media or you know other channels." She explained the individual differences at play rather than the institutional ones, which can affect the learners' proficiency levels. She illustrated the possibility of practice through informal settings, such as social media or in Mehmet's case, video games. Another reason identified by Prof. Işık was the effect of the university exam. She indicated:

I mean it because you know, before the prep school, most of our students go through a very exam-oriented process, right? So those young people, they all think about getting a good score in the general exam (...) Once they come to the university, the whole story again changes. This time we focus on the communicative abilities you know, and this takes time.

She underlined the discrepancy the focus on the university exam creates, suggesting that the students struggle with adaptation to the department as the linguistic expectations are highly different than their prior institutions.

Regarding the relationship proficiency has with the department, Prof. Selin mentioned its effect on content comprehension:

Yeah, it's [English proficiency] just the prerequisite. Definitely. I mean, it affects their learning, and I strongly believe that it affects how long they work on their [courses]. I mean our course content as well, maybe they are doing their best or maybe they're spending many hours studying my contents but only because their English proficiency level is not good enough, they are not seeing the results of this effort and time spent on it. That's it. Which is a shame.

She acknowledged the necessity of a certain proficiency level the students need to be equipped with to successfully engage with the course content and gain a comprehensive understanding of it. Prof. Işık agreed, "Of course it definitely interferes with their understanding or other cognitive processes they go through in the advanced reading and writing or similar courses," echoing the notion that the students' proficiency levels can create a hinderance in content comprehension. Both professors also note the importance of individual differences regarding understanding the course content. Prof. Işık stated:

Some students are really self-regulated. I can see it outside the courses, I mean they, for example, they are aware of the fact that they are having difficulties, and they do something about it. They either take additional courses or, you know, put additional effort. And then they kind of compensate this, but for those who do not have the self-regulation, then I can say these are like few cases. But we have to, as the program developers or as instructors, we have to be careful about those cases.

She emphasized the importance of self-regulation in course comprehension and eliminating the hurdles created due to English proficiency, and drew attention to students who overcome their proficiency problems through self-study. She also cautioned towards learners who cannot or do not exert this extra effort to their departmental studies, in spite of them being rare cases.

Prof. Selin also stressed the importance of individual differences such as motivation and discipline. She stated:

So, I think it [academic achievement] depends on the individual students here because sometimes their proficiency level may not be that high but they're very

hardworking. And they're open to improve. They listen to my feedback and they work on it. (...) But on the other hand, we have some students who have no problems with English proficiency, but they are not motivated to work on the course content, and their work may not be that good enough, although their proficiency level is very high, so I think this [proficiency] is not the only indicator for their academic performance here.

She explained the crucial role the learners' individual efforts, attitude, and motivation towards course content plays on their academic achievement. She underscored that proficiency does not play the sole differentiator role when it comes to success in the department or comprehending the course content, as students with higher proficiency levels may give a poorer final product than those with lower proficiency levels. The role of feedback should be also highlighted here, as it provides the learners with an immensely important opportunity to improve themselves, as long as they have the motivation to do so.

4.3 Benefits of the Current Preparatory Program

As the preparatory program's goal is to prepare students for their academic studies, students' preparatory year experience plays a crucial role in their experiences throughout the department. Ideally, it is responsible with raising the proficiency level of its students to the sufficient level, as the professors explained, to meet the prerequisite of the ELT department. As the present study includes participants who have both attended the Greenville preparatory school and those who have not, their experiences reflect both perspectives, presenting similarities and differences.

4.3.1 Social benefits of the current preparatory program. One of the main contributions provided by the preparatory program involved the social aspect of the university experience. The participants expressed their gratitude towards the social role their preparatory year has assumed.

The graduate group mainly had a positive approach towards this aspect. As Beyzanur stated:

I have friends from the prep school from different departments and now also some of my friendships are still going on [after 9 years]. They are from different departments, one of them was an engineering student, one of them

studied advertising, one was studying architecture. (...) We are still friends and we formed our friendship in the prep school.

She brought to attention the importance this social role that the preparatory school plays as she illustrated being appreciative of getting the chance to meet with students from different departments, attributing as much importance to this chance as she did the academical aspect. She also underlined the different perspectives they had and went on to state that she would choose a mixed preparatory class over an ELT one, taking the social aspect as the basis. She also expressed that she currently is in touch with less ELT students than her friends from other departments, again emphasizing the difference in departments do not play a crucial role in social interactions, but the individual personalities do. Ayşenur, who did not attend the preparatory school, stated, “Maybe for one semester, I could choose to study in the prep. Probably that would help me with socializing,” showing that even the students who do not have any preparatory school experience were also aware of the social agency it possessed, and she articulated her desire to study it for social benefits.

For the current ELT students, the situation was similar. The two students who had preparatory school experience both expressed the importance of the social benefits of the program, as Miray stated, “I made the most friends in the prep. We were really close, we would always go out.” She again attributed more importance to the individual personalities of her classmates and expressed that she would prefer a mixed class over an ELT one. Mert mentioned the benefit international students in the preparatory school brings:

For the goodness of my academic life, I really needed the prep school and in my social life I really needed to make some friends. I really needed the [preparatory] school. I had some friendships with some people who were not Turkish, that was actually my dream, and it helped me a lot.

He expressed the positive impact his preparatory year had on his departmental experience, as well as his social life. He emphasized the important role his preparatory school experience played on his departmental studies and explains his satisfaction with his time there.

The instructors have also noted this positive effect. Ms. Azra stated, “It's good to have friends from different departments, like psychology. Those are actually useful

for us, you know? The other teaching departments like it's really nice to meet a science teacher or a history teacher.” She mentions the importance of meeting with people from other departments, which is again a benefit of mixed classes that are currently in place. Ms. Deniz described this benefit:

It [mixed preparatory class] also gave me the chance to meet people from different countries. My classmates played a significant role. Some of my classmates were stronger in certain areas such as speaking, and they motivated me to feel more confident. Being in a mixed classroom had both advantages and disadvantages. It was great to see different perspectives and learning styles, and it kept the learning process more dynamic.

Again, she pointed to the advantageous nature of different perspectives being present in the class. She also attributed importance to her classmates as he suggests that she has learned from them too, or at least they functioned as a motivational factor.

4.3.2 Benefits of the current preparatory program for ELT students’ language proficiency. The participants’ foundational language learning experiences shared a lot of aspects, mainly the lack of communicative focus on English and the overdependence on explicit grammar instruction. Therefore, their perceived benefits of the preparatory school also reflected these, as the preparatory program was viewed by many to be much different from their prior formal language education. It was noted by many participants that the preparatory class was significantly more focused on productive skills such as speaking and writing and played a crucial role in introducing the academical aspect of the language.

The graduates underlined this productive focus the preparatory school has. As Emreacan, who has attended the preparatory school has expressed:

[The preparatory school] was very useful, and it helped me a lot, not to create the assignments during my university, but to understand the class better. It helped a lot and also for first semester in the university it was also hard for me to create oral presentations and also assignments. But due to prep school, I was able to do them.

He attributed his successful adaptation to the academic environment of the department to his preparatory school experience and provided it as a reason he was able to meet the demands of his department. He went on to say:

But the biggest difference [with prior language education] to me was that it was very well detailed. I was learning different aspects of the language. That could be the biggest difference. It was a really holistic approach to the language. Rather than just teaching the [grammar] rules.

He compared his formal language education prior to the preparatory school and emphasized the nonexistence of the GTM and the primary focus on grammar. He appreciated the inclusion of communicative activities and the utilization of productive skills in the preparatory school. Beyzanur, who studied the preparatory school in the United States, stated that the preparatory year improved her confidence in her proficiency level, and it helped her adjustment to the department. She stated:

I started the debate and advanced writing courses in the second semester I think, I don't remember. But you had these classes to improve your English. (...) So, like when I went back to the department, I was feeling OK to talk to someone in the class to discuss. It was OK for me because of this experience because I had it.

She, differently to the preparatory school students in İstanbul, had separate courses about academic writing and debates, which focused on academic speaking skills. She illustrated the agency these courses had on her adaptation to the department as she had prior experience of the academic writing and speaking conventions thanks to her preparatory year. Ayşenur, who skipped preparatory school, when asked about the possible effects of this, has stated “Probably it would have been better for my advanced reading and writing course because I would have learned about academic writing. Maybe.” She shared her biggest problem in the department to be academic writing and viewed the current preparatory school as beneficial in that regard. This perspective aligns with the remarks of students who attended the preparatory school as well.

The current ELT students also shared the notion of preparatory school being helpful with proficiency as well; however, they held a more critical perspective on it compared to the graduates. Miray described the most beneficial part of her preparatory school experience as the discussions. She stated:

In the prep school we had some discussions. We had 4 people in a group, and we did discussions together. That was good. I mean, I don't like going up to

the stage and talking by myself, the discussions were very beneficial I think. I liked them. They were beneficial.

With the productive focus of the preparatory program, she described the discussion task as the most beneficial aspect of her experience. As she lacked any productive skill instruction, especially regarding speaking, in her former education, the discussions provided valuable practice for her. However, she still expressed an immense amount of difficulty in her first year of the department in the oral communication course, where the focus lied on speaking. Mert had a more general comment on his preparatory year.

I can say we didn't have a writing class as I said, and we didn't know how to read [prior to preparatory school]. You learn how to write these articles in the prep school. I didn't know that. So prep school helped me a lot with my writing skill. And at the same time, we had some speaking courses in the prep school that helped me a lot because I didn't know how to speak too. Two years ago, I didn't know how to write and speak, and I'm here right now.

He attributed great importance to his preparatory year as he suggested that the introduction to the academics setting with essay writing and the opportunity to practice speaking made great contributions to his department experience. He also viewed the language instruction he received there to be “enough” for his departmental studies.

The preparatory school instructors had a more comprehensive understanding of it as three of them had studied in the same preparatory school they now teach at. Ms. Bengü stated:

In prep school we started to learn about this [academic writing]. By the way I had no other experience about it before prep school, I didn't know how to write at all, and I didn't know what an essay was. I didn't know how to write. I didn't even hear of APA or whatever. And in prep school, we started like in baby steps and in time it just improved.

She emphasized the lack of experience about writing before preparatory school and explained how it functioned as an introduction to academic writing, as she did not know how to produce a piece of writing before it. Preparatory school not only was useful in writing practice but also in introducing academic conventions, as she comments that she did not hear about APA before it. She continues:

Prep school really made a difference because the content was matching with our needs. That was important. And the teacher was fun. The environment was fun, and we had a lot of opportunities to learn and also I didn't feel like, why are we learning all these because we were learning how to write. We had different lessons on essay writing. We were also going to need it in our courses in university, so I didn't feel in any part of it like "Why am I here? Why are we learning all these?" So, prep school was fun, but I started in B2 level, and I just passed to Prep C and then I passed to my department. Maybe if I started in A1, I would feel like "Why am learning these?" I started in a higher level, so I didn't feel overwhelmed. It was fun.

She expressed that her preparatory year instruction felt meaningful as she was aware that the things she was learning there was going to help her department. As she felt the time she spent there was meaningful, she was able to maintain her motivation better. She also touched on the "fun" factor of preparatory school as she enjoyed both her relationship with her teacher and the overall environment in the preparatory school. Ms. Deniz stated:

Looking back, I think skipping it [prep school] would have made my department experience much more difficult. The prep school helped me a lot to improve my academic skills. It made a huge difference. I felt more prepared for the academic challenges, especially with writing essays and understanding academic texts. Without prep, I would've struggled more with the transition into university-level English. It gave me time to adjust and build up the skills that I needed.

Again, she deemed her preparatory year as essential to her adjustment for the department, as well as her improvement of her productive skills. She claimed that it created an immense difference as it helped her accommodate to the academic environment her department had through practice and exposure. She also stated "My experience was overall positive. The prep program really helped me improve my grammar, vocabulary, and fluency," further explaining how the preparatory school helped her English proficiency. Yet Ms. Alara, another instructor who had preparatory school experience, compared it to her former language education by saying, "But at the prep school, of course it is different because you are focused on the skills, how to

speak, how to understand, listening, reading, etc. So yeah, it was so different,” again underlining the focus on the more holistic approach the preparatory school had to language instruction, as it did not only consist of learning the grammar rules, but focused on everything, especially the productive skills.

Administrator Yekta has also underscored the efficiency of the current preparatory program. With his experience in both the preparatory school and the ELT department of the institution, he had the chance to observe ELT students throughout both stages. He stated:

The current system has been proven to be effective and working. I can easily observe this at the department. I teach both at English Preparatory Program and the department of ELT. Students who study at the preparatory program have no difficulty in communicating during classes. Their written work (papers, assignments) is also at the expected level.

He expressed that he believed the current preparatory program was effective in preparing the ELT students for their departments in regards to proficiency, as he could observe them engage in course content and produce assignments.

4.4 Challenges of the Current Preparatory Program

The participants also had a lot of criticisms towards the preparatory program in place. They mentioned the disadvantages caused by the overall system in place, proficiency, and the mixed classes that are currently utilized in the preparatory school.

4.4.1 Structural limitations. One theme emerged from the participants’ data was the structural limitations of the current preparatory school system, such as the time constraints, preparatory school not being demanding enough for ELT students, and institutional interference. This subtheme will explore the limitations experienced by the participant groups.

Instructors pointed out various drawbacks with the preparatory program. Mr. Alp held a very critical approach towards it, as he stated:

I'm thinking about the prep school level, if I'm speaking from experience, it's the lack of methodology. Most teachers speak very good English in our prep school, for example, but the methodology is the problem really. Or burnout. They are just burned out. They don't want to do it anymore.

He commented on how some instructors in the preparatory school experience burnout and have lost their motivation to teach, which affected the quality of their instruction, despite the importance of the preparatory year has on the students. When talking about his opinion that the passing grade for the ELT students being higher, he explained:

If the passing grade is made even higher, most of them are going to fail and study in the prep for two years. This is not going to happen. Most of them are going to pass with easy to do repetitive exams that once you fail, the second one you will definitely pass. Or the teachers will want to do a perfect job and they will fail the students if they don't deserve to pass, but the school will help them pass.

Here he explained how the institution interfered with the students proceeding to their departments even though they may not possess the proficiency level necessary to survive in their departments. While talking about the proficiency levels of his classmates in the department, as he is also a graduate from the ELT department of Greenville, he recounted a peer who had preparatory school experience but still had made simple grammar mistakes, such as incorrect usage of auxiliary verbs. He suggested that even though the instructors in the preparatory can feel like the student should fail and study for another year in the preparatory school, the institution may interfere with adjusting the difficulty level of their second proficiency exam to make it less demanding.

He also perceived the overall experience of the preparatory school as a “loss of time.” When asked that if he would prefer to study in the preparatory school if he had the chance, Mr. Alp stated:

No, not to my biggest enemy. I wouldn't wish to go to prep school because, I mean, I'm talking about ELT students. Obviously, if you are studying ELT, I don't see the reason why you would want to study [the preparatory school]. Because I mean, firstly you are not going to learn a lot because its student profile is not going to be very high even if you are in C1 or B2 [level], this is not going to change. (...) I mean, you're not going to learn anything that you are not going to learn in the first year of your bachelor's degree if you have a specific level of English already, if you can pass the exam, I don't see the reason why you would want that.

Mr. Alp continued his critical approach to the preparatory school by explaining his lack of desire to study it and viewed it as unnecessary as he stated that students who possess a sufficient level of English proficiency already do not benefit from it. This implied that he believed that the academic instruction students receive in the preparatory school may be inefficient as the courses like *Academic Reading and Writing* in the first year provide enough practice and instruction for students.

Ms. Azra pointed out how the preparatory school does not raise awareness about plagiarism. She stated:

Yeah, we don't teach them the importance of plagiarism, how serious it is, so maybe we should focus on that a little bit more. But this applies to everybody. Whoever is studying at a university should know that plagiarism is a crime and they shouldn't commit it.

According to her, although one big aspect of the preparatory school is to introduce the academic setting and conventions, an essential subject such as plagiarism was overlooked. She discussed the importance of awareness of plagiarism held in the university and suggested that it should be included in the preparatory school. She also stated:

Maybe we could make them [the preparatory students] do more presentations throughout the year, not just one, and take it much more seriously. I don't think we are taking it very seriously, like we just do it once and we accept almost anything.

She suggested that the presentation task for B1 students in the preparatory school, which functions as an introduction to academic presentations, lacked demanding criteria. She defended the need for a more demanding rubric for the presentation task.

The graduates also voiced several limitations regarding the preparatory school. Ebrunur, who has skipped the preparatory year, shared “I don't think it did have an effect on me that much. Well, yeah, I don't think so.” She perceived that not studying in the preparatory school did not affect her departmental studies in a meaningful way. She later explained the root of this perception:

I am not sure how the level of the prep school was, you know, was it enough for the ELT students, because some people that I remember [from the

department], even though they were in the prep school, they were not able to talk that much. So, I thought maybe it was not enough in that sense, yeah.

She demonstrated how the existence of students that had a lower proficiency level in her courses in the department affected her perception of the preparatory school. Because some of these students completed their preparatory year successfully and still struggled with proficiency to a noticeable extent, it created doubts about the program's efficiency in the eyes of Ebrunur.

Another graduate, Ayşenur, voiced her concern about the time constraints of the preparatory program. She stated, "So actually one year is a really short time to learn English. To take a student from starting from A1 to B2, it's really hard [for them] to learn it." Because the program's duration is limited, with 8 weeks attributed to a level, Ayşenur views it as an important drawback, hindering the preparatory school's efficiency. She explains further with an emphasis on learning as a child:

What is the advantage of learning from the childhood? You're a child, you understand easier and it stays with you. But right now, the students [in the preparatory school] are very distracted and it's really hard to focus for them. I understand them. So, when you're a child, it's really easy to learn, but when your age gets higher, then you cannot understand that easily.

She stressed the importance of age and the correlation between the time required to learn English and age. As the preparatory school students are between 18 and 22 generally, with some outliers over 22, she suggests that it is harder for them to learn quickly as the preparatory school demands, as it provides 7 weeks of A2 instruction before the students take an exam to proceed to the B1 level at week 8. She elaborates:

But in prep school we need to be more active. As in usage of English, you know. And when you say just simple present tense, I can tell it five hours non-stop. But if there is no practice, then there's no use of it. So, there should be more practice.

As a result of a problem created by this time constraint, she mentions the lack of opportunities to practice English. She notes that the preparatory school students need more English practice for more efficient learning to take place.

Another graduate, Gülnur, expressed, “No, because I am right now familiar with the education we provide in the prep school. So, I think nothing would change for me,” when she was asked whether she had any regrets about skipping her preparatory year. Much like Ayşenur, she felt that it would not have a valuable impact on her departmental experience, even though she experienced speaking problems in the department due to her lack of speaking practice. She mentions that she is familiar with the preparatory school now as she is working as an instructor there. However, she deems that it would not have been enough for her struggles with speaking.

The professors from the ELT department had a primarily appreciative approach towards the preparatory school. Prof. Işık, mentioned the limited time preparatory programs have, explaining:

I value them [preparatory schools] a lot, but what I'm seeing is I think we are putting too much responsibility on prep schools because this type of language or you know improving language abilities is not just a one-year thing, it's a lifelong thing. So yes, this one year is really important, and especially with hard work, with a lot of additional effort, it's possible to come to a very good proficiency level. we put too much responsibility on prep schools.

She reflected on the importance of the preparatory school while highlighting the high expectations placed on them. She expresses that while the preparatory year is an important step in the students' language learning experiences, it is only a step, and language learning is a lifelong process. She also reported the importance of individual efforts as she mentioned the necessity of “additional effort” for the achievement of a good proficiency level. Prof. Selin shared this notion too, as she mentioned, “I mean, language learning does not stop at some point, you keep learning all the time,” echoing Prof. Işık's idea of language learning being a lifelong process. She also added, “And maybe, I don't know. It still can be, I mean different things, a more intense program may be used. But in general, I think they're doing their best,” keeping an appreciative tone while commenting on the program and suggesting that a more intensive approach may be an improvement for the current preparatory school.

4.4.2 Proficiency challenges

The participants had a varying degree of satisfaction regarding the improvement they experienced to their proficiency in the preparatory school. Although most

participants appreciated the preparatory school's more communicative focus on language instruction, they also noted some instances where this focus on productive skills falls short than desired.

The current ELT students had varied experiences in the preparatory school. Out of this participant group, only two had attended the preparatory school, Mert and Miray. As mentioned before, Mert had a positive attitude towards his experience in the preparatory school, as he appreciated its positive effect on his departmental studies. However, Miray finished her preparatory year desiring more. When asked about her experience, she explained:

It didn't help me a lot. We did some presentations and stuff but, it didn't help me at all. I didn't learn anything in the prep school, I can honestly say. Because they were stuff I knew before, I just wanted to fix my speaking, that was my only problem. And prep school didn't really help with that. Yes, they make you do some presentations and stuff, but you need to always speak. I know the teacher can speak Turkish, my classmates can speak Turkish, so I spoke Turkish too, maybe that's my mistake but, yeah.

In her high school, she had mentioned that her education was focused solely on the university exam, therefore she lacked speaking practice. Even though the preparatory school provided this opportunity via various speaking tasks like presentations and discussions, which she remarked that she had enjoyed, she viewed her experience as lacking in speaking. She expressed that she already knew everything else, meaning the grammar and vocabulary taught in the preparatory program, but still had speaking problems. However, she does not put the whole responsibility on the preparatory school, as she is aware that she may have put more effort into practicing it, echoing the professors' notion of individual efforts. She also understood that others may have had different needs as she explained, "I mean I only wanted speaking, but if generally there were some [students] that didn't know grammar at all. It was a mixed class, and it was focusing on everything as much as it could. It was for everyone." She stated that the preparatory school education included all aspects of the language to provide a more comprehensive language instruction, but still she felt like she needed more focus on speaking.

Overall, Miray stated that her preparatory year did not prepare her for the department. When asked if the education she received in the preparatory school was enough to prepare her for the department, she explained:

Absolutely it was not enough. I had the biggest problem with the oral communication course, I was shocked in that course, I was totally not ready. Also, most of the class could express themselves very clearly. Their accents, fluency, they affected me [negatively] too.

She deemed her preparatory education not enough to feel prepared for the demands of the department, especially regarding speaking. She also felt that her classmates were better in speaking than she was, so she felt intimidated as well. When asked that how the preparatory program could be improved, she suggested:

I think it should be communicative. I mean, we didn't have time in high school, we prepared for the [university] exam. But in the prep school we don't have anything like that, so I think it should be more communication focused. (...)

Because it is the most problematic area for students as far as I've seen.

Even though the preparatory school has a more communicative approach than most participants' prior language learning experience, Miray feels like it can still be more communicative.

Another ELT student, Mehmet, who hasn't studied in the preparatory school but has some experience in observing the lessons there also had a negative view of it. When asked about if he thought the students graduating from the preparatory school had reached the sufficient proficiency level, he stated:

I don't think so. I think, no. Because some of them just study prep for fun, and some really fail the [proficiency] exam and study it. I don't think it really works, of course there are some exceptions but in general, no. Because we already saw everything in the prep school in high school. That's why instead of studying prep, I think the [proficiency] exams should be harder, and if somebody fails, they should just take it again.

He, like Miray, expressed that the preparatory school's content coincided with the content of high school English lessons. He viewed it as unnecessary as he suggests that an ELT student should not need it, "I mean you're going to study ELT, so you should already know these." Although he was also critical of his high school education, he

still viewed preparatory school as unnecessary, maybe due to his improved proficiency through video games and TV shows, as he attributed more importance to these factors than his formal language education.

With the graduates, there were again a varying degree of perception of the preparatory school. As a limitation, Ayşenur suggested:

Most of the [ELT] students have the same level of English. You can easily understand what they need and according to that, you help them. Because the students from other departments don't know that much, that can be complicated for the teacher.

She explained the difference in the proficiency levels of ELT students and others. She viewed that as a limitation of the program as the ELT students are grouped with students with lower levels of proficiency, which can complicate their education. As Miray suggested before, they may be provided with instruction that encompasses all the skills equally, while needing a bigger focus on the productive skills, which can lead to them feeling like they are learning what they already know. She illustrates her point by explaining:

I think it will be easier for ELT students to understand the teachers. But let's say there's an [ELT] student in B1. Somehow, he's stuck there and the other B1 students are not as good as him. So, he may understand, but the others don't. So, it will be a problem for the teacher to simplify the language and then it will be bad for the ELT student.

She explained that the level difference between the ELT students and the others could create complications for both the student and the instructor. She also suggested that due to the nature of the mixed classes, the instructor loses the opportunity to focus on the individual needs of the ELT students.

With instructors, there were more instances of criticism due to the mixed classes in the preparatory school. Mr. Alp shared one important problem existent in the program:

Because I mean, if I need to give a percentage, I would say like 70% of the students in the prep school, they lack motivation for some reason, they either don't want to learn after the first module or they just don't learn for some reason.

While talking about the student profile, he explained that the student profile generally suffered from a lack of motivation, which created a block in their learning experience. He explained the effect of this, “Currently I'm trying to create a fun environment as much as I can but overtime it just goes away, and I become more authoritative because they don't listen and they lack motivation.” He illustrated how this lack of motivation affects his approach to his lessons. The authoritative approach he later unwillingly adopted may limit the chances of speaking opportunities for the students as well, as a more relaxed and “fun” environment may lead to more authentic instances of speaking opportunities.

Another important problem experienced by two of the instructors, Ms. Alara and Ms. Deniz, was the lack of field specific vocabulary instruction. Ms. Alara and Ms. Deniz both have studied in the preparatory school where they now work as instructors. When sharing their experiences here as a student, they expressed their desires for field specific vocabulary instruction. Both of these instructors were cited as having encountered problems with field-specific vocabulary in their departmental studies. Ms. Deniz explained, “Being in a mixed classroom had both advantages and disadvantages. (...). Sometimes, we couldn't focus on the specific skills needed for our fields.” As her class was a mixed one, she felt that she missed more specific instruction which she felt would have prepared her better for the department.

Ms. Alara also expressed problems due to the lack of field specific focus in the preparatory school:

It's because like you know, we memorized everything because of the university exam and also in the prep school we were working hard and everything, but we didn't learn anything related with vocabulary related with the faculty, major lessons and anything. That is why it was difficult.

She explained how the lack of field specific vocabulary instruction increased her initial difficulties in the department. She illustrated that even though she put in her individual efforts as well by working hard, the initial stages of her departmental studies were still difficult, as she was not familiar with the demanding vocabulary items in her department.

Another instructor, Ms. Bengü, addressed the limitations of mixed classes as she mentioned the limited presentation opportunities in the preparatory school:

We don't have much presentations [in the preparatory school]. And we do it a lot in ELT. But we don't know how, do we? Maybe they don't want to include it because they don't want to force everyone [students from other departments] to present. Maybe that's why, but definitely it will influence their [ELT students] confidence.

She mentioned that because the ELT department requires more presentations compared to other departments, ELT students could benefit from more presentations; however, in consideration of the other students, they are not given the opportunity to do so. She also believed that doing more presentations can have a positive impact on students' confidence in speaking, which was frequently mentioned as a big problem for the participants' departmental studies.

Ms. Azra also commented on the mixed classes' effect on ELT students. When talking about the passing grade being higher for ELT students, she shared:

I think those students [ELT students] are probably taking extra courses or just, you know, studying by themselves because in the classroom there are less proficient students. The teacher has to downgrade their speaking and arrange activities according to everyone's level. So, they're probably doing extra work at home, I think.

She noted how she perceived that ELT students were studying more on their own or by the help of extra language courses, stemming from a higher grade being demanded from them in the preparatory school. Her assumption may suggest that she does not believe the preparatory program is not fully sufficient on its own for these students to meet the higher demands. She also agreed with the notion that the ELT students generally have a higher proficiency level than those in other departments, and she also thought it influenced the instructors' choices during the lessons.

Mr. Alp commented on the difference between ELT students and those in other departments too. He stated:

Bring the level higher as much as possible, right? I mean, it's not fair to bring the level higher for everyone because as you know if they get 65, they pass after C1 to their departments. That's fair enough. It doesn't mean they know English to perfection. It doesn't mean that they are C1 or B2, but they know [enough] English. They will understand their lessons. They should improve the

rest on their own, but again, English Language Teaching has a prerequisite. You must speak the language before that, so make it 90 to pass. Force them to fail.

He advocated for the idea of a more demanding preparatory experience for the ELT students, accompanied with a more intensive language education to help them meet those demands. He stated that in mixed classes, ELT cannot be the focus, and the level of the instruction should align with everybody's needs. However, as he suggests, the ELT students have different needs than the rest, as English is a prerequisite of their department. So, he suggests that with this more demanding structure, ELT students should be given more and more should be expected from them.

Administrator Yekta stated the increased needs of ELT students as well, as he said, "While students from other departments could survive with a "just enough" level of English, ELT students cannot as they are going to start learning how to teach the language." He explained the difference of the proficiency expectations between ELT students and those in other departments, stating that ELT students need more. He elaborated:

I believe if we were allowed to have only one department with a higher pass score, that would be ELT. ELT students must be able to use the language. They should have no language barriers or no further need to improve their foreign language skills before they start to receive training at the department. The only thing they need to focus on should be "how to become a teacher".

He expressed the crucial importance proficiency had for ELT students' department experience, and how they should reach a sufficient level of proficiency to successfully engage in their departmental studies.

4.5 Benefits of the ELT Specific Preparatory Class

Regarding the benefits a ELT-S+ class could bring, the participants mainly had a positive attitude, as they emphasized its potential to provide ELT students with a more accurate instruction, addressing their unique and demanding academic needs. They illustrated three interconnected areas where an ELT-S+ class might prove beneficial: enhancing proficiency levels tailored to the specific needs of ELT students, contributing to the students' future teaching practices, and providing motivational and social benefits.

4.5.1 Benefits of the ELT specific preparatory class for proficiency. The instructors had a positive view on the ELT-S+ class concept. They underlined that it would be beneficial for students' preparation for the department regarding their proficiency levels. While talking about her struggles in the department, Ms. Deniz stated:

To be honest, a separate ELT prep class could have made a big difference. It would have given me more focused practice with the skills I needed like academic writing or speaking. It would've also helped me learn how to manage reading and writing long essays and develop my skills.

She mentioned her struggles with academic speaking, writing, and especially vocabulary. She suggested that her experience would have been impacted positively by the experience of an ELT-S+ class. She was appreciative of her preparatory year experience in the current program as she shares, "Yes, I did study in a preparatory program. Looking back, I think skipping it would have made my department experience much more difficult. The prep school helped me a lot to improve my academic skills." However, she also added, "If there was an ELT focused prep program, I would have chosen it. An ELT specific program would have focused on the specific skills I needed for my field." She explained how although she had a good experience in the preparatory school, an ELT-S+ class could have prepared her better for the demanding nature of her department.

Ms. Alara had a similar view on the topic, as she explained:

Prep school should prepare students in terms of, of course language, but at the same time for the departments. Maybe for the other departments, yes, their English proficiency level is not enough. Maybe their priority should be English, but especially for ELT students, I mean we go to the university with our high level of English. So, that is why we could use some preparations related with the department. I'm not saying that they should teach us some teaching methods, no, I'm not talking about this, but at least some vocabulary terms for example. I think we should be familiarized with this.

This quote reflected Ms. Alara's perspective on how a tailored instruction for ELT students could be beneficial. She pointed to the notion that the ELT students having a higher proficiency level than students from other departments and argued that they can

benefit from this ELT-S+ class in their departments. She emphasized the importance of including content related to the department, in that it could introduce key concepts and vocabulary and helps the students adjust to their departments with less difficulty. She also illustrated how an ELT-S+ class could have helped her departmental studies:

Actually, again, the first thing coming to my mind is like vocabulary, like preparing students for their major related vocabulary terms and everything. I think that the most important one for me, maybe because I struggled because of that, I don't know.

She stressed the inclusion of field specific vocabulary instruction and explained that it was her biggest problem in the department. With tailored instruction preparing her for the ELT department, she suggested that she would have had less difficulties, mainly in content comprehension, as that was her major problem she pointed to while talking about her department experience.

Mr. Alp also suggested that ELT students would benefit from a more tailored approach in the preparatory school. He explained:

Why not create an ELT class specifically for ELT students? Because up from that point, things can get more intense, right? I mean what I'm trying to say is you can do the things that are not required from the other departments. Students, I mean the ones in other departments, they are not expected to know the details of academic writing to perfection, right, as long as they can write a cohesive paragraph, we are happy in the prep school. But writing a cohesive paragraph in ELT is not enough.

He illustrated the different linguistic demands the ELT department had for its students compared to the other departments. He explained that while the ability to write a complete paragraph is satisfactory for the students in other departments, it is insufficient for ELT ones, as the department demands the creation and comprehension of more complex articles. He suggested more intensive instruction for the ELT students to help them meet the needs of their departments. He then proceeded to give an example from his own departmental experience:

I'm sure you remember every week we were writing something academic constantly, even if it was a reflection paper, it was something academic and we

were constantly writing, and I'm sure our professors had some problems with them. I mean, even with me, right, I see myself as a great student. But I used to check my first year of university papers, they are very bad. Unbelievably bad compared to now, like you wouldn't believe it. The simplest mistakes, I mean I keep saying people were mixing am/is/are, but I was still mixing them too.

He explained how even he, with a high perception of proficiency, struggled to create pieces of academic writing without making highly simple mistakes. He also added, "After all, I mean it's not that I didn't know. It's just I didn't check it after right, I didn't see my mistakes." He explained how his mistakes were derived not from inadequate proficiency, he was aware of the proper grammar structures he was to follow, but he was not accustomed to the conventions of academic writing, an essential aspect such as proofreading for example. With more intensive instruction in an ELT-S+ class, he suggested that he would not have made these mistakes.

Graduates focused on the motivational benefits of ELT-S+ classes, which will be the next subtheme discussed. However, Ebrunur shared an example of her struggles in the department while illustrating the possible benefit of an ELT-S+ class:

I think it will help like. I remember that in one of our courses, I was quite overwhelmed because we were writing, in my life for the first time. I was writing papers, and I was quite overwhelmed about it. And if there was an ELT prep school, even though slowly, you learn those things before the actual university starts, it could help better, I guess.

She underlined her struggle with academic writing and the overwhelming nature of it for students. As she lacked writing instruction in her foundational language education and she skipped the preparatory year, it was her first experience with producing a piece of writing. It proved to be difficult for her; however, she suggested that studying in an ELT-S+ class could have prepared her for this task and overall, her department.

Current ELT students mainly possessed a positive outlook regarding the ELT-S+ classes. Mert, who has attended the current preparatory program, started with the importance of a more elective proficiency exam process for ELT students. He expressed:

I think you will have to change proficiency exam. So, low level proficiency students won't be able to pass it, so you can get them to this classroom. Other than that, it will truly help them in their academic life. As future teachers, we have to be good at English. Yeah, you will have to change the [proficiency] exam.

He suggested that a more elective proficiency exam should be adopted so that the students who required further studies for their proficiency levels could not skip the preparatory year. While talking about his classmates in the department, he also mentioned the existence of students who could not meet the required proficiency level of ELT, so this notion may stem from his own experience with his peers. He also noted that the ELT-S+ class could prove beneficial for these students' departmental studies. Mehmet, a student who does not have preparatory school experience, shared his thoughts and explained:

I think firstly, ELT prep class will teach more advanced English. From vocabulary, I don't know, writing, I think the class can be adjusted for that, making students read more complex reading I don't know. I mean a preparatory class where we can learn more vocabulary can be beneficial.

While talking about his departmental studies, Mehmet pointed to vocabulary as a big reason of his initial struggles, so he focused on the benefit of introducing these field specific vocabulary in the preparatory school. He added, "I think if we learn some concepts, get introduced to them will be a profit for the students. I mean it's hard to learn something when you don't know anything about it." He explained how an introduction to the key concepts and vocabulary could help not only students' proficiency levels, but also make their comprehension of the content in the department easier as well. He suggested that this introduction to the field could work as a foundation, over which the students can construct their knowledge with less difficulty in the department. When asked about if he would have benefited from this field specific vocabulary instruction, he stated:

I would guarantee that I would be more successful. I could guarantee because, in the department when talking about Chomsky for example, I have no idea who he is. If I was introduced to him, maybe read a text about him or something, if I were in that utopic ELT class, I would have already been

familiar with him, his ideas, and his work and I could have studied more efficiently. I mean, first I research the guy, then I research what he did, I'm trying to understand all these in the department for the first time and that creates an unnecessary waste of time. For me at least.

He expressed his positive view of the ELT-S+ class as he used the word “utopic” while describing it. He also explained how a simple introduction of the key concepts from the department in this ELT-S+ class could have benefited him immensely by providing a foundation for him to base his future learning on. He suggested that this would help him comprehend the content of his courses better.

Melis, who skipped her preparatory year, agreed with Mert as she thought that the proficiency level should be more selective and demanding. She also pointed out the opportunity ELT-S+ classes provide for students to improve their proficiency levels and speaking confidence. She explained, “If I give myself as an example, I think for students struggling with confidence, more speaking and presentation practice in ELT prep class can help.” Again, she illustrated a problem she experienced in her own experience, especially with the oral communication course, as she experienced a high degree of speaking anxiety. She expressed that an ELT-S+ class can also improve students' confidence levels in their speaking and overall proficiency by providing more opportunities to practice presentations.

The professors were more sceptical of the benefits an ELT-S+ class would bring. However, one professor, Prof. Işık, had a more embracing approach towards the idea than Prof. Selin. While talking about the possible improvement to the students' proficiency levels, Prof. Işık stated:

I think I am little bit in favour of English for Specific Purposes because you know, to me all these programs or formal education should have a clear purpose. So, if our goal is, I mean obviously not only for ELT programs for different departments too. I am thinking we most probably have different expectations. I mean, we shouldn't have the same expectation from an engineering student and ELT student and an economics student, right?

She illustrated the agency English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can play in the tailored education of different departments, not only the ELT department. She also underlined

the different expectations these departments need to meet to have a healthy process during their departmental studies. She elaborated:

At least you know the content of language they should be able to use will differ. You see what I mean? So maybe. Yes, having different groups like engineering students and training them accordingly in English or ELT students and giving a different type of training would work. This is my personal opinion, but still at some point they also should have common courses as well.

She approached the topic with a more balanced option, by suggesting the need for common courses along with field specific classes, like an ELT one. She mentioned the different expectations these classes would serve to meet. She explained her balanced approach:

I mean, maybe you know for language abilities they can come together because I strongly believe that this type of this type of interdisciplinary, mixed type of groups will benefit from each other, but also at some point they should have their separate courses which I think will prepare them better for the program. I mean maybe the reading text might be different or the projects they prepare might be different but, I should say both, I mean both common courses for general language, you know skills but also for specific or program wise expectations or abilities ESP might be considered.

She suggested a structure for the proposed ELT classroom, where the existence of a common class with mixed departments would serve for improving students' general proficiency levels, and an ELT class would be implemented to provide the students with a more tailored instruction. She believed that this separate class could prove beneficial for the students' overall preparation for their departments. She also elaborated on the importance of the existence of a common course:

You know, it could be better to read text in education or social sciences, but still, we cannot really ignore other topics like hard science as well and vice versa? Same for engineering students as well. I mean, they should read about social sciences et cetera as well, so I think. Yeah, both goal-oriented courses with common or shared purposes, plus more interdisciplinary perspectives or groups of students.

She underscored that the tailored approach towards the ELT class should not limit its content with materials solely linked with education but should also include other disciplines. She expressed the agency this approach and mixed classes that provide different perspectives plays in cultivating the students' critical thinking, a quality deemed immensely important by Prof. Işık. She cited providing students with an education that will improve their critical thinking as another responsibility of the preparatory school. She later added:

We shouldn't be focusing on only the language or local aspect of it. We should also be focusing on the global aspect of it. What does that mean? That means, you know, it's not only improving language, but it's also developing the intellectual abilities of the students. So even if we have all ELT students in the classroom, they should be talking about maybe a text in philosophy. See what I mean? Or maybe they should be talking about a content on arts and music. So, if this is the situation, then they will all bring their individual perspective into the classroom. They will all bring their individual background to the classroom, attitude to the classroom.

She emphasized more the importance of not limiting the ELT-S+ classes' material to only teaching, but also provide them with thought provoking readings, listening activities, or discussions about various fields in order to equip them with an ability to utilize critical thinking and improve their intellectual abilities, which could also help them prepare for the university.

English teachers who have studied in ELT-S+ classes had varying degrees of satisfaction regarding their programs. However, they acknowledged its benefits about their proficiency levels. Gizem stated:

Yeah, it was [beneficial]. It prepared me, of course, because instead of focusing just grammar or just vocabulary, I also focused on writing, reading, and speaking as well. Of course it helped me. I cannot say it didn't help me. So, it prepared me for the university life for the department.

She noted that her ELT-S+ experience prepared her for the department, noting the focus on productive skills during her experience that she lacked in her previous formal language education. She believed her preparatory experience to be more communicative than her high school. However, her phrasing hinted at a reluctance,

specifically when she said, “I cannot say it didn’t help me.” She later elaborated by sharing:

I really don't know because it was a really short time. I don't know. Of course it affected me in a good way. I cannot say it affected me in a bad way. But I cannot say it affected me a lot to be a good English language teacher because I forgot everything that I saw in prep school.

She commented that her ELT-S+ class experience did not create a long-lasting effect on her. Although she acknowledged its benefits, it did not create a significant impression on her. The main benefit she perceived that she received from her preparatory experience was the productive focus on language she experienced. For the reason of this neutral view on preparatory school, she illustrated her limited time there:

I just needed one semester by the way, not a whole year. In January, I passed to the department because I started in B1 level as far as I remember, and then I passed B2. Then I took the proficiency exam in the half of the year, and I went to the department. So that is why I cannot say this was so effective for me to learn to produce English.

She explained how she studied for one semester in her ELT-S+ class, which was not enough to completely overturn her language learning experience. Because she lacked this focus on productive skills in her prior learning, adjusting to it required more time to be more effective.

Gözde had a more positive stance on her experience. When talking about its benefits, she shared:

Our teachers focused more on the topics because we would encounter them in our department. We studied those topics in more detail. They expected us to do this as well. For example, if we were writing a paragraph, we were asked to write in more detail. When we did reading exercises, we discussed each paragraph in the reading passage one by one.

She stated that they have received a more intensive education compared to the mixed classes. She also explained that their teachers could adjust and manage their focus to better equip them for their departmental studies. Gözde appreciated this as she shared, “I had no problem with the intensive program. In fact, I can say it was more satisfying

for me. Because it was very important for me to fill in my gaps before moving on to my department.” She was aware of the importance her preparatory year had on her department experience, so she was satisfied with the heightened intensity. She explained these gaps by stating:

As I mentioned before, I believe I filled my biggest gaps in language during the preparatory class. Not only my practice in pronunciation and speaking, which boosted my confidence, but also my knowledge in writing, I built the strongest foundations during that year.

She reflected on the important role her ELT-S+ class played in improving her productive skills. Along with her confidence, which is a key factor in the many presentations the ELT department requires, she improved her writing. However, as she used the term “knowledge” instead of abilities, it can be implied that she also learned about the academic conventions to which students should adhere when producing an academic piece of writing.

Gülşah echoed this positive view on the ELT-S+ classes. She stated as a main contributor to her proficiency:

In the prep school our teachers, actually one of our teachers, always used English. She never spoke Turkish. That affected me a lot. That way I could get more familiar with daily speech too. I mean we not only learned academic, but daily English too.

She explained how the constant usage of English by one of her teachers provided her with valuable exposure and improved her general proficiency too.

Finally, Güneş expressed the benefits of her ELT-S+ class provided for her proficiency level, “I learned so many things. I developed my vocabulary and my writing skills. I didn't know how to write essay before and now I really like to write essays.” She also commented on another benefit of having ELT students together compared to a mixed class:

I think ELT prep class is good for language skills. Because, for example, in engineering, there were so many students who didn't know anything about English. In an ELT class, because there is a better foundation, we could develop quicker.

She echoed the general notion about ELT students having a higher proficiency level than those in other departments. Therefore, she suggested that an ELT-S+ classroom creates a better learning environment as it has a higher average proficiency and can intensify the level of its instruction accordingly.

4.5.2 Benefits of the ELT specific preparatory class for teaching. The participants shared various possible benefits of the ELT-S+ class could have on ELT students' later teaching practices. The instructors emphasized the importance of the teacher being a role model for the students. Ms. Azra stated:

I mean, prep school is about preparing them for university life, right? So, we're not just teaching English. I would be preparing them to become teachers. So, I would share my experiences with them, I would bring relevant materials about teaching or educational sciences. I would teach them that the classroom is not going to be what they expect, and there's going to be all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds. So, I would mention those things, I would definitely mention classroom management and I would give examples from my own practice, like when I make a mistake or when I do something effectively.

She illustrated a key benefit of ELT-S+ classes and explained that she would try and raise her students' awareness about being a teacher. She also acknowledged her role as a role model as she expressed that she would show her students real life examples from her own teaching, to help them understand their future careers better. She also shared:

Also giving examples from my classroom behaviour would give them a message that you don't have to be a perfect teacher to be able to teach or you don't have to have perfect English to be able to teach it and things like that. So, they would maybe be become more confident in their speaking, for example, because you know most of the ELT students are really afraid to speak in English.

In acting as a role model, she claimed that she could help students construct a more realistic perception of being a teacher. Instead of their possible unattainable preconceptions such as having a "perfect English," they could be more aware of what it actually means to be a teacher, who are capable of making mistakes, which could

provide them with less instances of harsh self-criticism and positively influence their confidence.

Another instructor, Ms. Bengü, also reinforced the idea of the instructor becoming a role model, as she stated:

I believe the teacher would have more role. I believe they should. They should feel more responsible of their actions because they are the role models of the future teachers. So, they should first start to learn before teaching. I mean we need to also have teacher trainings then, that are meeting our needs in this century.

She explained how before teaching in the ELT-S+ classes, the instructors should undergo further teacher training as their actions carry more gravitas owing to their role as a role model for ELT students. She went on to criticize the current methods some instructors employ, “Usually teachers, especially the older ones, they tend to just present it from the presentation or sometimes even a presentation is too much. They just open the books, and make the students read and learn on their own.” She criticized the passive methods some instructors use and indicated the importance of avoiding these methods in the ELT-S+ class. She also reflected on her own language learning experience in high school and primary school, “This is what I suffered the most. My teachers, I don't think they were well educated, even though they graduated from some nice schools.”

She also suggested further benefits that would help the ELT students be better prepared for their teaching career:

Other than just teaching English, I would teach them how to be present, both physically and mentally. To actually be there for their students and also for the parents, for the administration. I mean, we shouldn't just underestimate it to just teaching a lesson or teaching grammar. There are lots of lots of other aspects to think about once you become a teacher, but the other departments, they don't care about all of this.

As the ELT-S+ classroom would be full of ELT students, she felt she could focus on the teaching profession and share her experience with her students, which may prove to be a valuable opportunity for teacher socialization to occur.

Ms. Deniz had a more teaching focused idea about the ELT-S+ class, as she suggested, “I think studying in a specialized ELT prep school would be incredibly beneficial. It would provide training in areas which are crucial for teaching English, such as lesson planning, classroom management, and understanding different teaching methods.” She had an approach to the ELT class that shared more similarities with the department itself, rather than the preparatory school. She claimed that providing training for students about lesson plans, classroom management, and teaching methods would be “incredibly beneficial” for them. She elaborated by stating, “A specialized ELT class would focus specifically on teaching English as a language, with an emphasis on pedagogical techniques, language acquisition theories, and practical teaching skills. It would include practice on creating lesson plans and teaching.” She suggested that by including these in the ELT-S+ class instruction, the students could be better prepared for their departments.

Administrator Yekta suggested that the tailored instruction could provide a chance to provide students with materials related to ELT and a chance to practice teaching, as he shared:

If we had specialized ELT classes at prep, then the curriculum, outcomes, learning points could be different for these students. The tasks, assignments, assessment tools could be different. Since these students will start to train as future English language teachers, we could give them more teaching or ELT-related materials and tasks. For instance, we could ask them to perform micro-teaching at some point. This would enable them to have more background information and experience about ELT before they start studying at the department. (...) This early exposure could really help their performance in the department.

He suggested that the ELT students could be made aware of materials related to their field in their preparatory year, obtaining familiarity with some of the concepts included in ELT. They can also be given the opportunity to perform a micro-teaching in their preparatory year, introducing and increasing their experience with teaching as well. He stated that this could help them when they begin their departmental studies.

The graduates also hinted at the benefits an ELT-S+ class might bring for ELT students’ future teaching practices. Ayşenur suggested:

The teacher can change the method according to the ELT students so I would like to see that, I would like to be in the ELT class so that I can learn more. Because in the other class you may not have the same chance to learn more or ask different questions because there will be only one method to teach you know, we just focus on the book. We just focus on the language. There's some collaborative tasks and stuff, but in the ELT class maybe you'll be free.

She explained how she perceived that an ELT-S+ classroom could be more liberating for the teacher as they are not required to adjust their teaching for the students from various departments. As she suggested that the sole focus may not be on the coursebook or the language itself in the ELT-S+ class, she implied that students can focus on the teaching style of their instructor as well, observing and learning more.

Another graduate, Gülnur, expressed the opportunity an ELT-S+ class creates for students to gain experience regarding teaching earlier via practice. She explained:

Maybe materials, we can say we would read something about teaching just to motivate ourselves about next year. We're going to be teachers. Let's study first. Let's practice. Maybe right now we could role play about being a teacher. I don't know. I cannot imagine right now because when we started university, we didn't even do them. We started doing practice about teaching in our third year, I think. Is it early for prep school, I'm not sure.

She suggested that ELT students can be provided with roleplay activities where they act as the teacher. She believed that these roleplays could motivate and prepare students for their departments better, and also create more time for them to practice further, as she stated that she started practicing teaching in her third year, which may be a result of the first year of the department focusing on accommodate the students to the academic climate it possesses, through courses such as *Academic Reading and Writing* and *Oral Communication*. Prof. Selin also echoed this idea, as she stated:

If there is a specifically designed program for ELT students, it may be easier for us faculty members. (...) If the program is planned specifically, maybe the things that they discussed during first year, like academic reading and writing and oral communication, they may even start it earlier.

This idea suggested that with the implementation of the ELT-S+ class, the load of the first-year courses might be lightened, which would provide more time to prepare students for their practical experiences.

Emreçan, another graduate, also mentioned the inclusion of an added focus on teaching in ELT-S+ classes and its possible benefits, he stated:

Yeah, ELT prep will be different because we could be learning on how to teach as well instead of just taking all these subjects at a time, we can also study how to teach the pedagogical approach for the students, et cetera. So, if we're in the classroom, and if we're all ELT students, we will be able to get ready for the department a little bit more compared to my old experience in the prep school because we're all teachers and they can teach us not only the language, but also the specific aspects of the language as well.

He explained how for ELT-S+ classes, focusing on not only the language but also how to teach it simultaneously could prove beneficial for the students as it can provide them with a better chance of preparing for the department. He suggested that by comparing it to his own preparatory school experience.

Gizem, an English teacher who attended an ELT-S+ class, noted the crucial role the instructor can play in an ELT-S+ classroom. When asked what she would do differently there, she explained:

Yes, I would give so much importance to my methodology. But for mixed classes, my main purpose is to just give knowledge related to English and teach them how to, let's say, produce English. So, the other part [ELT-S+ class] also includes methodology. Because they will be English language teachers in the future, so that is why I need to focus on my practice, focus on my theory a lot.

To affect them in a good way.

She suggested that she would be more deliberate in conducting her teaching as it could provide the ELT students with a valuable chance of observation. Instead of only focusing on teaching the language, she would be more aware of *how* she teaches in order to act as a role model for her students.

Gülşah provided an example of her teaching, which was affected by her teacher in her ELT-S+ class. She shared:

My prep class affected my teaching because our lessons were very fun with the teacher who always spoke English. She would always add an activity, a game to the lesson and that affected me very much. Because I came from a state school, I always saw English with coursebooks and tests, but I saw a very different English [instruction] in the prep, I said ‘So, English lessons can be fun.’ I saw that, so it affected me a lot. Thanks to her, I try to make my lessons like that too. I try to add some activities and games always so the kids can enjoy the lesson and have fun, don’t see it as just a lesson. Like I did in prep.

This showed the positive effect her preparatory school experience had on her teaching practice. Even though she criticized a major part of her language learning experience, in the preparatory school she was able to learn from her instructor and observe a new way of teaching English, which she desired to adopt in her own teaching.

4.5.3 Benefits of the ELT specific preparatory class on motivation & social aspects. The participants generally emphasized the advantage ELT-S+ school would bring as it gives the opportunity for ELT students to get acquainted before their departments. The instructors shared the benefits this would provide, as Ms. Alara explained:

In my first lesson, it was educational psychology. So, the lecturer started her lesson, and I didn't understand anything. The whole lesson. So, I was just looking around like I was questioning if the others are in the same position with me. Do they understand or do I really know English like I was questioning myself a lot so I could ask these questions to my friends.

She explained how having familiar faces in her classroom would help with her adjustment to the department, as she struggled immensely with her initial experience, feeling lost and not understanding the lecture. She suggested that if she had met her classmates in the preparatory school, it would have helped her as she would have had some peers to share and understand her experience better. Ms. Azra had a more social approach to the subject, as she stated, “Also, there's the social side of things. When they finish prep school, they have already found each other, so they could make a long-lasting friendships.” She suggested that meeting in the preparatory school could strengthen students’ relationships, and they can have stronger bonds.

Mr. Alp elaborated with more detail as he explained:

OK, I think it will definitely create a camaraderie for the future, maybe not during the time that they are in prep school, but they will get to know each other during prep school, right? (...) When they start their departments they will see each other in a class, where they don't know anyone. Now there is not an instructor in front of them, but there is a professor, I'm sure it's a bit scarier. It was for me when I first started university. Then you see people you know, I think it will be more comfortable for them to get used to it and they will have someone to ask help, right? Second, language socialization, after all they will have a chance to socialize in that class with someone that they already know. They will have a source of information. I mean, if they miss something, they know that they can ask someone comfortably because they are new there too.

He explained how the initial stages of the department can be intimidating for students as they are experiencing something new and something relatively more serious than their previous education. He shared that he found it scary at first, much like Ms. Alara. As the students would share their preparatory school class, a less intimidating environment, with other ELT students, they could have a more comfortable transition to the department as they can support each other, as well as having more opportunities for socialization to occur.

This benefit of ELT-S+ classes was shared by the majority of the participants. A graduate, Ayşenur said, "Because when they start the faculty, they would know each other and maybe they would help each other socially or academically," a current ELT student Mert shared, "I would make more friends, and I would still be friends with them because we are in the same department and we will see each other. That would really help a lot actually." Prof. Selin also agreed with this opinion, as she stated, "I mean, when they come here, they will know each other. They will have some kind of connection between them themselves. So that might be helpful for us. Because they will be socially ready for this." She suggested that ELT students knowing each other before the department may prove beneficial not only for the students themselves, but also the faculty members of the ELT department.

Teachers graduated from the ELT-S+ class has also reinforced this perceived advantage. When asked about her relationship with her classmates in the department, Gizem explained,

When I went to my own department, I was also seeing my classmates outside the classroom environment. We were sharing our knowledge related to English. So, it was effective, of course, because we knew each other [from preparatory school]. We were seeing each other outside the classroom. And yes, we shared a lot among us.

She expressed how already knowing her classmates created a stronger bond between her and her classmates, which not only led to language or academic discourse socialization, but also meeting outside of the classroom. For Gülşah, the experience was similar:

Because we knew each other from prep, we got really close in our third year. We motivated each other. (...) We helped each other, studied for the exams together, tried to complete each other's gaps. I gained some good friendships this way.

Again, she noted how getting to know her classmates in the preparatory school helped them connect better with each other in the department, helping them socialize into the language and the academic context.

The participants have also shared their views on how the implementation of an ELT-S+ class can affect students' motivation. Ms. Bengü illustrated the difference in motivation via an example from her mixed preparatory class experience:

I felt like we [ELT students] were the same [with students from other departments]. My [ELT] friends, they were, let's say, more dedicated and determined to learn. I was one of them, but I don't know if it was because I was in ELT or not, maybe it's just my character. I don't know.

She pointed out how she viewed her other ELT classmates and herself as more dedicated and motivated to learn. She also brought attention to the possible individual differences; however, this notion was shared among the other participants as well. Mert, a current ELT student, shared:

We were all in different departments, that affected us a lot because there are some [future] teachers who want to learn teaching and first of all, English, and there are some students who study, I don't know, engineering, and they don't

really care about English. So, if I was in an ELT class only in prep school it would really motivate me actually.

He explained how in a mixed class, he perceived that students from other departments had a lower level of motivation and desire to learn English than him, as he was aware of his goal of becoming a teacher. Gülnur, a graduate, also shared:

All our motivations, our goals would be the same [in ELT-S+ class]. So, we would motivate each other. Language level would be OK. It would be a good option for English teachers because again in the same classroom when they're learning English, they observe each other. They give feedback to each other and maybe they could push themselves harder than normal.

Gülnur also emphasized in an ELT-S+ class, the students sharing the same goal could facilitate more motivation as they thrive to reach their goals together. She also explained how their observations on their classmates could help them gather more motivation to keep up with each other, with the participants' general conception of higher proficiency levels with ELT students, this would be more likely to occur in an ELT classroom.

Ms. Azra, an instructor, also sheds light on the motivational factor of this goal of becoming a teacher:

They [ELT students] will have a better group work. Some of the students in group work don't do anything at all, but those [ELT] students would be doing a little more. I mean we did group work in our ELT classes, sometimes some people were lazy but still, but it will be better because they know that they're going to need it. And this is their last chance. Nobody is going to teach them English after that, so maybe they'll take their classes more seriously, their group work more seriously.

She stated how the goal of reaching the department and being a teacher can motivate ELT students more to study and be successful in their preparatory year. She underlined the individual differences, but still believed that it will be more efficient. Ms. Alara agreed as well, as she shared, "Academically, yes, I would have preferred to have more ELT students so we could share we could help each other more." She also believed

that having more ELT students in a class could create more collaboration and thought that the ELT-S+ class would be more beneficial academically.

More collaboration between ELT students was emphasized by other participants as well. Melis, a current ELT student, explained:

Sometimes I get shy when I ask for notes from my classmates. But if I knew them from prep school, I would know them better, I would know if they are hardworking students or not, so I would know who to ask for notes. It would be very good, I think.

Again, she explained how having an ELT-S+ class would create a more comfortable environment in the department as well and increase the support students can find. When talking about her department experience, Miray also shared, “The oral communication course was pretty traumatic for me. I started in the second semester, so everybody already had friends, and they knew each other, I knew nobody.” If she had an ELT-S+ class, this overwhelming nature of her introduction to the department might have been remedied to an extent as she also would have had classmates she knew and would not have felt as a complete outsider.

4.6 Challenges of the ELT Specific Preparatory Class

The majority of the participants had a positive view on ELT-S+ class, but interestingly, the teachers who have studied in an ELT-S+ class and the professors had some reservations towards it.

The professors shared some possible limitations on the idea, expressing a more grounded perspective. Prof. Selin was more sceptical about ELT-S+ classes. When talking about the social aspect, she stated:

The thing is, when you put all ELT students in the same classroom, not surprisingly, their levels, their interest areas or their life standards, their views, general viewpoints towards life might be similar to each other. The things that they discuss with each other, they are about teaching, about English. (...) Yeah, I had many students who had different interests and areas which make even my classes more colourful, let's say. But when there are some students from different departments, I think they have different things to discuss. (...) They have different friends from different lifestyles. So, I think the more various the

learner profile is, the better the chances are that they are going to talk about different things. So, then you give them different aspects or daily language that they are supposed to use in that discussion, for example. Then I think it gives them a chance to realize what they're missing or what they need to know to be able to express their own idea of about this. So, I think in terms of them being more talkative or being more into discussions or being more into different ways of socializing with others, I think the all ELT kind of approach may not be the best strategy here?

This quote explained a benefit of mixed classes, as she underscored the notion of ELT students possibly being similar might have a limiting side effect on the variety of discussions they hold. She suggested that students from other departments might bring different perspectives or different sets of skills which could provide valuable observation opportunities for ELT students to both engage in discussions and also evaluate their own language compared to their classmates. This perspective was shared by Prof. Işık as well. Although she had a more embracing approach to the idea of ELT-S+ classes, she also pointed out two key aspects that was needed in its implementation according to her. She expressed the importance of varied materials, which should not only be about teaching but also philosophy or science and so on, and she suggested that along with an all-ELT classroom, the students should also have a mixed class where they focus on more general English skills too. This could provide the students with the varied perspectives Prof. Selin deemed important, and also create more variety in their discussions thanks to different topics in their materials.

Prof. Selin also disagreed with the notion of ELT students having higher proficiency levels than others, a notion shared by most of the participants in the present study. She suggested:

So, you might think that ELT students are better. So, I'm [the instructor] going to have a better class, not always the case, I don't believe. Because you might have an engineering student whose proficiency level is a lot better than your ELT student.

She again expressed the importance of individual differences when it comes to proficiency. She explained that not every ELT student has a higher proficiency level than those in other departments. Administrator Yonca echoed this notion by sharing,

“You can assume that those [ELT] students already have a good command of English (...). It’s not the case with each and every student.” She explained that some ELT students who come to the preparatory school lack the relatively high proficiency that they are assumed to have.

For teachers who have attended an ELT-S+ class, there were some disadvantages that they have experienced. Güneş, who found the idea of ELT-S+ classes beneficial in an academical sense, she criticized the social limitations it brought for her. She explained:

I think being with only ELT students limited the social interactions and I think it affects the socialization the most. You should meet with different people and you should meet people with different interests. So, I think it is a significant loss. Because meeting different people is a huge and important part of the university life. And I met really little people in prep school so, I hardly had any friends studying in different fields and departments

She shared her dissatisfaction with her ELT-S+ class as it limited her social interactions. She, much like Prof. Selin, emphasized the importance of interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds, describing it as a critical aspect of the university experience. As they express that they lacked friends from other departments, it hindered her ability to create and maintain meaningful connections outside of her immediate ELT circle. She indicated that she would have chosen a mixed class if she had the chance, despite viewing the ELT-S+ class to be more helpful for academical aspects.

Gülşah supported the idea of ELT-S+ classes and expressed that she would have studied it willingly as well; however, she expressed a significant problem with its implementation in her university. She stated, “I think my experience was bad because we were not on the same level with my classmates. There were some who were really bad and some really good, so it was a mixed class proficiency-wise.” She stated how the lack of a standard proficiency level in her ELT-S+ class affected her experience negatively. When asked about the situation, she explained:

We had only one class, not according to levels. So, every ELT student was in the same class, B1, B2 doesn’t matter. There were some really good students,

some in the middle, but also, we had really bad students. It was all mixed, so it was hard.

She reflected on the challenges deriving from the implementation of her ELT classroom. Because her class was not divided according to the students' proficiency levels, this lack of standardization created a diverse learning environment where students' language abilities varied significantly, negatively affecting her learning experience. This mixed nature of proficiency might have made it challenging for both the instructor and the students, as the lesson needed to be adjusted according to the needs of a diverse group, where advanced students might have felt held back, and less proficient students might have struggled to keep up with the instruction. This comment indicated the importance of a standard proficiency level, and it should be considered during the implementation of ELT-S+ classes.

This situation might have been caused by the limited number of ELT students attending their universities' preparatory schools. This limitation has been voiced by different participants too. Mr. Alp shared his thoughts on the subject:

So, let's say there will be three different levels of ELT students, and I cannot imagine in a year that are going to be like 50 [ELT students] in a prep school. So, I mean, how many classes are there going to be? One ELT class for every level A1 to B1, B2, C1 and like three students each, maybe 10 students each, something like that. That's a negative for the school because you are spending the teacher's time, you are spending the classroom for three people, right? Just unnecessary resources.

This quote explained a significant limitation of ELT-S+ classes. He shared his concerns about the logistical challenges of implementing these classes. He expressed his idea that dividing ELT students into classes based on their proficiency levels creating impractically small class sizes, which would result in inefficient use of the institution's resources. This limitation brought attention to the importance of careful planning for the implementation of ELT-S+ classes, as it might prove impractical to do so. A graduate, Gülnur, shared this concern too, as she shared, "I don't know, maybe the number wouldn't be enough, because like 5 or 6 students would be in that class." She explained how the number of ELT students attending preparatory school would not be enough to create a practical classroom.

Prof. Selin also emphasized this issue, she stated:

So, we if we have 50 students every year [in the department], there are, I don't know, twenty of them who are very good at English. And then there are 5, who need maybe at least two years of prep school education, right? So, it is not a homogeneous group. So, if you put them all together in the same room, you might experience the same thing with what's happening right now in the prep school. I mean, for 50 students, you may need to have three different sections, at least if you are going to put them in a group according to their proficiency level. So, it might be more demanding on the administration.

She illustrated the complexities born due to the number of ELT students with varying proficiency levels. She suggested that the lack of homogeneity among these students may result in similar problems that are already existent in the current preparatory program, if all the ELT students are put in one classroom regardless of their language proficiency levels. She also suggested that these students may be put in different classrooms, with their proficiency levels in consideration; however, she acknowledged that this could impose additional demands on the institution due to resource allocation and logistical planning.

Administrators have also pointed out the limited number of ELT students. Administrator Yonca shared her views:

If we assume that the quota [for ELT students] is 30, some of them will just pass the proficiency exam. Maybe we will have 10, 15 [in the preparatory school]. If they are at different levels, then we can't afford to have a class for 10 students. And I'm sure there will be times when we won't even have 10 students in each class, so it's not practical.

She suggested that the limited number of ELT students make it impractical for the institution to establish a separate classroom for them, especially when the differences in their levels are considered. Administrator Yekta had a similar idea:

One potential challenge could be the total number of English prep student to study ELT. As I've mentioned before, we do not have many ELT students studying English prep. Our [mixed] classes at prep consist of 20-24 students.

We may have a very small number of ELT students at the prep program and this could force us to create one class with only a few students.

He explained how the low number of ELT students can make it hard to create meaningful classes for ELT preparatory students. He added, “Small classes might not be sustainable in terms of resources like materials, classroom usage, and teaching hours,” highlighting the structural problems ELT-S+ classes bring.

Another significant drawback of ELT-S+ classes was shared by a graduate, Beyzanur. Although she acknowledged the benefits regarding the academical aspects, she disapproved of the ELT-S+ classes in general, she stated:

Actually, I don't think it's a good thing because I mean if you separate the ELT students you have to teach different things to them, and they would start their department in prep school. But the prep school is not that. I mean, in an ELT class, you have to make them ready for the department, to write an essay, to debate, to teach something, I don't know. You have to focus on more department courses as well. But for me, I don't think this is a good thing because the focus should not be ELT.

She underlined her concerns about the ELT-S+ classes and its content. While many participants expressed the tailored approach ELT students would receive in their preparatory classes, with the inclusion of teaching related materials, as a major benefit, Beyzanur viewed it as a drawback. She argued that the implementation of such a class would not coincide with the purpose of the preparatory school but would be merely an extension of the department itself. She argued that the preparatory school should not focus specifically on a department, but rather maintain and aim for a more general academic preparation for its students. She continued her argument:

For example, now I have friends from the prep school who are from different departments and now also some of my friendships still going on. (...) So, we were four girls together and we're still meeting up. We are still friends, and we formed our friendship in the prep school. So, our focus [in the preparatory school] is not only our department. (...) After 9 or 10 years we are still friends you know. It's a good thing but if I had only friends in the ELT department, let's think about it. I mean from the department how many people are you meeting up still, I mean 3 or 4 right? Yeah, like it is not about being ELT or it's

not about only the preparation for your department. Prep school is for the preparation of the university and English. So, I don't recommend separating them because with the other students from different departments they can have more social opportunities.

She appreciated the social agency the current preparatory school had played in her own life. Thanks to the mixed classes, she could establish strong bonds with her classmates. She viewed this diversity of friendships, which was still going on after nearly a decade, as a significant advantage of mixed classes. She also emphasized that the preparatory school should not solely focus on specific departments but instead provide a broader preparation for students' university life and English proficiency. She suggested that the creation of ELT-S+ classes would limit the social opportunities students could have, especially with people from other departments.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusions

The present study aimed to explore the necessity and impact of specialized ELT-S+ classes at a foundation university in Türkiye. By investigating the perceptions of ELT students, graduates, professors, preparatory school instructors, administrators, and English teachers who have studied in an ELT-S+ class, the research strived to answer two research questions:

1. How is the necessity of an ELT-S+ class perceived by ELT students, graduates, lecturers, preparatory school instructors, and administrators at a foundation university in Türkiye?
2. How do ELT students, graduates, lecturers, preparatory school instructors, and administrators evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of an ELT-S+ class?

To answer these questions, various participant groups connected to the ELT field with varying degrees of experience and expertise were interviewed. As the study was structured to be a case study, all the participant groups, with the exclusion of English teachers who have studied in an ELT-S+ class, were members of the aforementioned foundation university. The data was mainly collected through semi-structured interviews, with reflection papers gathered from instructors and English teachers that informed creation of the interview questions.

5.1 Discussion of Findings for Research Questions

The discussion will be carried out with a focus on the two research questions. First, I will discuss how the participants viewed the necessity of the proposed ELT-S+ classes. Second, I will discuss the perceived advantages and disadvantages of these classes' implementation.

5.1.1 The necessity of ELT specific preparatory classes. This section will mainly delve into the struggles the participants experienced throughout their departmental studies and workplaces, with a focus on different perspectives from different members within the ELT field. The first research question was “How is the necessity of an ELT-S+ class perceived by ELT students, graduates, lecturers, preparatory school instructors, and administrators at a foundation university in Türkiye?” The findings presented an overall positive approach to the idea of ELT-S+

classes. The participants' foundational language learning experiences shared important similarities, with many expressing that they had received grammar-focused language instruction which resulted in a limited ability to produce the language. This situation negatively affected the participants' adjustment to their departments, as the demands of their courses did not align with their previous education. Many participants struggled to meet these expectations, as they were required to engage in academic presentations and produce pieces of writing for which they lacked practice.

This finding aligns with Richards' (2010) focus on learner-focused teaching, which emphasizes addressing the communicative needs of learners, instead of providing them with mere grammar instruction. The struggles experienced by the participants emphasize the gap between the traditional grammar-based language learning they receive and the communicative competencies they need to utilize in higher education. The participants have also noted the valuable role the current preparatory school plays in their accommodation to their departments. Those who have studied in the preparatory school highlighted the communicative focus it adopts, especially when compared to their previous language education. Although they have benefited from the practice, some expressed that it was not enough to fully prepare them for their departmental studies, especially presentations. As some participants deem that the current preparatory school is not enough to bridge this gap, the implementation of ELT-S+ classes can better equip ELT students to overcome it with a more tailored approach.

While discussing their departmental studies, the majority of the participants shared that they experienced speaking anxiety due to their lack of practice, and for a minor group, this level of anxiety induced by presentations was immense. Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy may offer an explanation, suggesting that insufficient practice can lead to low self-efficacy, as experiences of success in a task reinforce, and failures undermine individuals' self-efficacy. Without the opportunity to practice and try their productive skills in a less intimidating context, such as primary or high school, the participants experienced anxiety as they lacked the experience to build their self-efficacy. The participants who did not report any speaking anxiety or struggle acted as outliers in this regard, as they had this valuable experience with speaking, one through video games, another through communicative lessons her school provided. Possibly

owing to these previous experiences, they expressed significantly less problems with speaking compared to the other participants.

Despite their initial struggles, many participants have also shared the value of their courses in the department, mainly the oral communication course which focuses on academic presentations. Majority of the participants that reported initial struggles have also expressed the improvement of their speaking and presentation skills throughout the department. As they engaged in their courses, they were required to use the language actively to participate and succeed, which provided them with the practice they had lacked in their prior education and offered an opportunity to socialize into academic English. These findings echo those of Kobayashi's (2016) longitudinal study following Otome, a university student learning academic presentation. Kobayashi (2016) found that Otome's engagement and active participation in the course provided her with chances to reflect on and prepare her presentations, collaborate with her classmates, and observe her peers'. This facilitated her socialization into academic discourse. Furthermore, in academic discourse socialization, Ho (2011), Morita (2004), and Duff and Oliver (2008) expressed the importance of oral discussions, a notion which coincides with the findings of the present study. The current ELT students expressed that even though they do not actively participate in every discussion, attentively listening to their peers and lecturers affects them as well, which again functions as a socializing agent into academic discourse. The ELT-S+ class could facilitate this socialization earlier for the students, as the current preparatory school was commented on the lack of emphasis on presentations and discussions.

With academic writing, another significant field where the participants struggled initially, the current preparatory school played a bigger role compared to presentations. For many participants, preparatory school was their introduction to academic writing. They expressed its agency in their preparation for the department; however, they also noted its limitations. Currie (1993) emphasized the importance of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes in providing students with opportunities to research and analyze information. Although for some participants preparatory school was enough to be ready to learn the intricacies of academic writing in their department, some felt that more could have been taught to them, suggesting the content of academic writing instruction in the preparatory school to be underwhelming. As the

ELT department demanded many reflection papers, assignments, and essays from them, they struggled to create these pieces of academic writing initially. One student expressed that she utilized the help of an artificial intelligence writing tool to create some of her assignments, along with her classmates. This coincides with the findings of Currie's (1998) study, where she found that difficulty the student experienced in academic writing resulted in her plagiarizing. The participants' difficulties in producing pieces of academic writing in the department indicate that while the current preparatory school provides exposure to academic writing, it may fall short in equipping students with the necessary skills.

Similar to their struggles with speaking, their courses in the department helped them socialize into the academic discourse, and through practice and experience, they experienced an improvement in their ability to meet these demands. Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) sheds light on this process, as participants became active members of an academic community during their courses, learning with and from their classmates. In an ELT-S+ classroom, an earlier CoP might be created, with specific focus on the ELT department allowing for better preparation for the department via more demanding tasks and activities.

Another finding regarding academic writing was the lack of instruction on citation and plagiarism, two key aspects of academic writing conventions, in the preparatory school. Deckert (1993) and Gu and Brooks (2008) found that students who were more familiar with the concept of plagiarism avoided committing it, whereas those who were less familiar were more inclined to do so. Gu and Brooks (2008) suggested that conceptual knowledge of plagiarism could be provided to the students to raise their awareness, something the current preparatory school was stated to not have.

The participants have also experienced difficulties in understanding their lectures when they began their departments. Some expressed that they felt lost as they could not comprehend the flow of their lecturers. Their struggles were intensified by the lecturers' pace, lack of terminology knowledge, and unfamiliarity with peers. Participants' difficulty in following the lecture due to inadequate knowledge of field-specific vocabulary resonates with Friedman's (2023) notion that learners need to be socialized into the discourse of their academic context. This does not only include

comprehension of the course content but also acquiring the field-specific conventions required to engage with it. Due to their struggles in following the content, they felt intimidated to participate and voice their questions and comments. This aligned with Özer and Bayram's (2019) findings that students' engagement during the lectures and their academic achievement being affected by their language proficiency. Furthermore, Özer (2020) also found that the lecturers in Turkish universities struggled with the learners' lack of field-specific English. As participants who attended the current preparatory school expressed difficulties with academic vocabulary in their departments, an ELT-S+ class could support them in acquiring the necessary terminology. This could equip them with a better understanding of the discourse and be better prepared for their courses. Furthermore, this underscores the preparatory programs' role in bridging the gap between the students' general and academic English. Future considerations could include adjusting the ELT-S+ classes agency in addressing these specific terminology and discourse requirements, preventing or lowering the initial struggles students experience in their departments.

Another challenge stated by the participants was the lack of a standard proficiency level in their department. Several participants stressed that peers with a lower proficiency level held them back in their courses, as lecturers had to adjust their instruction accordingly. This finding aligns with Özer's (2020) study, which similarly highlighted the lecturers' struggles when adapting their lectures for students with varying proficiency levels. However, professors in this study had a different perspective. Professors stated that low proficiency rarely hinders their lecture and emphasized that these differences should be considered during the creation of the ELT program.

The varying proficiency levels especially affected group work, as one participant shared that the students generally grouped together with peers close to their level. This separation in grouping, with a focus on lower and higher proficiency levels, created more limited CoP for the students. These groups continued to work together on various assignments, which limited the collaboration and engagement students had with others. While ELT-S+ classes cannot eliminate the grouping of learners as students have their social and academic preferences; however, it can provide these groups to be more flexible by fostering a broader CoP created during the students' preparatory year.

5.1.2 Perceived advantages and disadvantages of ELT specific preparatory classes. The participants viewed the concept of ELT-S+ classes in a positive light, highlighting its potential benefits. They emphasized improved proficiency, better preparation for the ELT department, and more collaborative classroom environment as advantages.

The participants mostly shared the belief that ELT students in the preparatory school possessed a higher proficiency level compared to students from other departments. Therefore, they believed that an ELT-S+ classroom can be more standard with a less dividing gap in the students' proficiency levels. They believed that this would help both instructors and students as it would provide a more standard instruction that is suitable for all students. They also said that it could provide more intensive instruction, preparing ELT students better for their department.

As the ELT-S+ classes would consist exclusively of ELT students, their instruction could be tailored to address the needs of the department. The participants suggested that an ELT-S+ class could place greater emphasis on presentations, an aspect the participants deemed more prevalent in the ELT department compared to other departments. They stated that with a bigger focus on academic presentations in the preparatory school through more in-class activities and tasks, students could be better prepared for the numerous presentations they will need to prepare and perform in the department. This aligns with Yang's (2010) study, which focused on five students in a commerce course and found that these students were socialized into the academic discourse, especially presentations, through practice, observation, and collaboration with their peers. With the commencement of more practice of academic presentations, the ELT students could experience a smoother transition to their department, and practice further to refine their skills in the oral communication course.

Participants believed the ELT-S+ class could prove beneficial for improving students' academic writing skills. Similar to their views on presentations, they suggested that more intensive and detailed academic writing instruction could be implemented in these classrooms to ease the students' transition to their departments. Some participants believed that the current preparatory school cannot fully prepare the students for the high demands the department has regarding writing. While they acknowledged that the current instruction may suffice for other departments, they felt

that it does not fully coincide with the department's expectations. Furthermore, they noted that the current preparatory school does not include key aspects of academic writing, such as citation and plagiarism. The introduction of these missing aspects along with a more comprehensive writing education could enhance ELT students' preparedness for their departmental studies.

The participants also mentioned the motivational factors the ELT-S+ classes could provide. Those who had preparatory school experience, whether as a student or a teacher, mainly viewed students from other departments as less motivated to learn and participate compared to ELT students. Therefore, they highlighted the possibility of heightened participation and motivation in an ELT classroom. They believed that along with having a higher passing grade than other departments, having a classroom which they share with people united with the same goal of proceeding to the department would help them foster more motivation. As these students are believed to share the same goals, it could be suggested that they create a meaning CoP. This can be explained by Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of CoP. According to Wenger-Trainer and Wenger-Trainer (2015), three essential components are required to form a CoP: the domain, the community, and the practice. The domain is defined by shared interests within a group, the community is characterized by interaction among its members, and the practice involves the shared knowledge, tools, and processes that the members utilize together. As Wenger (1998) suggests, a community does not guarantee the existence of a CoP. However, in an ELT classroom, the participants believe that the students would be united with the same goal and collaborate to achieve that goal, creating a meaningful CoP.

In addition to motivational factors, participants emphasized the importance of ELT-S+ classes' agency in fostering early familiarity among ELT students, even before the department. This was one of the most commonly suggested benefits of ELT-S+ classes by the participants. They argued that becoming acquainted with their classmates starting from the preparatory year would provide a more comfortable environment and improve their collaboration. The participants who mentioned their increased anxiety due to not knowing anyone in their class would have benefited from ELT-S+ classes, as it would eliminate that problem. Furthermore, building connections in the preparatory school could foster a more cohesive and engaging CoP, extending its benefits beyond the preparatory year and into the department. Current ELT students

among the participants shared that they would greatly benefit from such a situation as they struggle to connect and interact extensively with their peers. ELT-S+ classes can function as it brings these students together and help them create stronger bonds with each other.

Another benefit the participants have mentioned extensively is the role of the teacher in an ELT-S+ class. Participants who are currently teaching mentioned that they would place greater emphasis on their instruction, carefully adopting and utilizing appropriate teaching methods and strategies. They acknowledged the importance of serving as a role model for future teachers of English. To this end, a participant suggested further teacher training for teachers selected for the ELT-S+ classes. They have also stated that they would share insights on their teaching with their students in the ELT-S+ classes, highlighting the methods they utilize and explain their reasoning behind them, providing students with a glimpse of the background of teaching. For students of ELT, participants stated that it could provide valuable opportunities for observation.

Lortie's (2002) theory of apprenticeship of observation explains the relationship between teachers' teaching practices and their experiences as learners. According to this theory, students' classroom experiences during their education can play a significant role in shaping their ideas and attitudes about their future teaching. However, these experiences can also lead to an uninformed or superficial perspective on teaching, which can limit the teachers' future professional growth and development. One significant reason behind this negative effect is the students' limited observation of their teachers' practice. Lortie (2002) suggests that as they are not aware of the numerous decisions their teachers make before and during the lessons and their reasoning, they possess a superficial understanding of teaching. Therefore, apprenticeship of observation creates a hinderance for future teaching practices. However, Mewborn and Tyminski (2006) challenge this notion, arguing that these experiences do not necessarily manifest negatively in teaching. Instead, they suggest that future teachers learn from inefficient teaching they experience and reflect on what not to do in their own teaching. The findings of the present study coincide with this idea, as participants who criticized their language teachers' practices, particularly their attitudes and grammar-focused instruction, stated that they actively strive to avoid following in those teachers' footsteps. The participants' experiences align Moodie's

(2016) notion of anti-apprenticeship of observation, as he echoes Mewborn and Tyminski's (2006) suggestion.

The participants also suggested the inclusion of materials focused on teaching and education to provide an introduction to key concepts and influential figures in the ELT field. Some current ELT students stated that this early exposure, whether through reading texts or discussions, could significantly help with their comprehension of course content when they begin their departmental studies. Additionally, such materials, which raise awareness about pedagogical aspects of teaching, may prove to be instrumental in limiting the negative effects of the apprenticeship of observation. Lortie (2002) argues that a primary reason of these negative effects is the lack of pedagogical knowledge students have when they are observing their lessons and teachers. In an ELT-S+ class, these materials could help students establish an initial understanding of key concepts and methods, granting them a more informed perspective to view and reflect on their experiences. Feiman-Nemser (2001) explains that reflective practices have a significant role in pre-service teacher education. By combining tailored instructional materials with the guidance of their instructors, ELT-S+ classes could alleviate the potential limitations posed by students' previous learning experiences.

Although the overall perception of ELT-S+ classes was positive, the participants also highlighted sound criticisms and drawbacks of the concept. Professors approached the idea with caution, with a focus on the values the mixed classes carry in the preparatory school. They suggested that the current preparatory program brings students from various departments with diverse backgrounds and perspectives on life, providing a rich supply of differences. They believed that these differences might create more social engagement and rich discussions on various topics.

Some participants who have studied in an ELT-S+ classroom also criticized its implementation by their institution, noting that their classes were created regardless of the students' proficiency levels. Since the only criterion for placement was being an ELT student, they ended up with classmates with varying proficiency levels. This created the same problem participants associated with mixed classes, where lower proficiency levels hindered the progress of those with higher proficiency. This could

be linked together with another limitation of ELT-S+ classes pointed out by the participants, the limited number of ELT students enrolling into the preparatory school.

The participants believed that students who choose to study ELT have a certain level of familiarity with the language before university. Therefore, they can skip preparatory school altogether and commence their departmental studies. They suggest that the number of students in the preparatory school is a big limitation in these ELT classes implementation, as there may not be enough students to create level-based classes to avoid the aforementioned problem due to a lack of homogeneity. With the low number of students enrolling in the program, establishing ELT-S+ classes for ELT students for each level might prove impractical. As the participants believe these students have a degree of familiarity with the language, those who are in A2 level could be too low in number to justify creating a separate class. On the other hand, those in B1 levels could still be just enough to justify establishing a separate classroom, but still too low to be feasible. Additionally, participants also noted logistical difficulties, such as scheduling, attribution of resources, and the availability of instructors, highlighting the difficulties administrations might face in implementing ELT-S+ classes. Despite these limitations, participants stressed the importance of addressing the proficiency differences appropriately in creating ELT-S+ classes, advocating for a more standardized classroom.

Another drawback mentioned by a professor and a graduate student was about the purpose of the preparatory school. They suggested that the preparatory school provided valuable opportunities to socialize with people from diverse backgrounds and prepare for the overall academic life of the university. They proposed that creating an ELT-S+ classroom would tunnel the focus of both the program and the students to solely ELT department, depriving students from the original purposes of preparatory schools. They believed that the preparatory school should operate independently and maintain their original identity, rather than being overshadowed by the ELT department.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study highlight the necessity of ELT-S+ classes to better prepare students for the unique demands of the ELT department. By the establishment of these classes, institutions can improve the readiness of future teachers for their

department, contributing to their comprehension and engagement in their courses. ELT-S+ classes can also aid the students' gap in productive language skills, created in their foundational language learning experiences. It can also inform their understanding of teaching, with a focus on pedagogy and their instructors acting as role models who have heightened awareness of their impact. Overall, these classes may improve the overall language teaching practices of these students as they can lead to better equipped students who have a better understanding of their subject matter, as well as pedagogy, as they can meet the demands of their courses with more ease and have fewer hindrances to their learning. The limitations observed can inform policy makers and institutions in the implementation of these classes, increasing their practicality.

5.3 Conclusions

This study strived to explore how stakeholders from various stages of the ELT department considered the necessity of ELT-S+ classes, as well as the advantages and disadvantages it could carry. The findings revealed that the majority of the participants suffered from a severe lack of productive skill focus in their foundational language learning experiences. Thus, they have struggled in their initiation to the academic setting of their department. Although those who attended the preparatory school in place had highlighted the importance it had in their adaptation, they have also suggested that their preparatory year experience had not fully prepared them for the demands of ELT. Participants stated that the implementation of an ELT-S+ class can help ELT students prepare better for these demands as it could provide a more tailored introduction and include content, materials, and activities more suited for the department. As most participants stated that they would have studied in an ELT-S+ class if they had been given the chance, it can be reached to the conclusion that they viewed the notion in a positive light.

A number of participants, however, had more appreciation for the current system in place. Although they have acknowledged that ELT-S+ classes could prove advantageous for ELT students' preparation, they suggested that the different perspectives of a mixed class would be lost, and students would suffer socially. Furthermore, the most essential problems with ELT-S+ classes proved to be logistical, as several participants stated the inconvenience the limited number of ELT students would provide the institution in its implementation.

In conclusion, these findings revealed that the base concept of ELT-S+ classes were favored by the participants owing to their potential in aiding the students productive and academic skills, modelling future teaching, and providing a more tailored instruction.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to observe the effect ELT-S+ programs have on students' academic achievement and their teaching practices. Further research could explore the effectiveness of these classes by observing students of ELT-S+ classes and those of mixed classes. Through their comparison, a more informed result could be obtained about the effectiveness of ELT-S+ classes.

Furthermore, future research could focus on the structural possibilities of ELT-S+ classes, exploring a practical way to benefit both the students and the institution, with the limitations of resources and logistics taken into account.

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