# EXPLORING LEARNER AUTONOMY THROUGH THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO (ELP) IN TURKISH CONTEXT

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Exploring Learner Autonomy Through The European Language Portfolio (ELP) in Turkish Context

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Thesis Abstract

Sinem Yılmaz, "Exploring Learner Autonomy Through the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in Turkish Context"

The present study aimed to explore learner autonomy through the implementation of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in the fourth and fifth grades of a private school in Turkey. It also sought to investigate the implementation of the ELP in that research context by referring to the general structure of the ELP implementation together with the particular practices related to the ELP. The data for the study were collected through on-site observations in one fourth grade and one fifth grade class throughout twelve weeks, interviews with the English teachers of these classes, focus group interviews with students, audio recordings of two self-assessment sessions and artifacts collected in the research site. After writing up the observation reports and transcribing the interviews together with the audio-recordings of the self-assessment sessions, a qualitative research analysis software -N Vivo 8- was used to analyse the data.

The findings of the study showed that the ELP contributed to learner autonomy in four aspects; namely in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating learning. It was also found that the ELP was implemented through five common practices; namely awareness raising, goal tracking, choosing content and creating materials, reflection and self-assessment practices. Throughout these practices, learners become aware of the goals in language learning with the help of the ELP descriptors, track their goals both in production and reception based tasks, choose the content of the oral or written materials they want to produce and create them using their own preferences, reflect on their language learning process and assess themselves with the help of descriptors in the form of ELP checklists. It has been found out that these practices lead learners towards learner autonomy by helping learners plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their learning. It has been concluded that although the implementation of the ELP can be ameliorated to allow more room for choices and decision making on the part of the learners, in that particular context implementing the ELP helped learners become more aware of their own language learning process and take active roles towards getting more involved in their own learning. The results of the study were discussed by referring to the relevant literature, and pedagogical implications were drawn.

Tez Özeti

Sinem Yılmaz, "Öğrenen Özerkliğini Avrupa Dil Portfolyosu Aracılığı ile Türkiye Bağlamında İnceleme"

Bu araştırma Türkiye'de bir özel okuldaki dördüncü ve beşinci sınıf öğrencilerinin öğrenen özerkliğini Avrupa Dil Portfolyosu uygulaması aracılığı ile araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Araştırma aynı zamanda Avrupa Dil Portfolyosu'nun araştırma bağlamındaki genel uygulanma yapısını ve belirli portfolyo bağlantılı uygulama yöntemlerini bulmayı hedeflemiştir. Araştırma verileri bir dördüncü ve bir beşinci sınıfın 12 haftalık gözlemleri, İngilizce öğretmenleriyle görüşmeler, öğrencilerle odak grup görüşmeleri, iki öz değerlendirme toplantısının ses kaydı ve araştırma alanında toplanan yazılı materyaller yoluyla elde edilmiştir. Gözlem raporlarını yazdıktan ve görüşmeleri yazıya döktükten sonra verileri analiz etmek için bir nitel araştırma analizi yazılım programı N Vivo 8 adlı program kullanılmıştır.

Araştırmanın sonuçları, Avrupa Dil Portfolyosu'nun öğrenen özerkliğine öğrenmeyi planlama, gerçekleştirme, izleme ve değerlendirme yönlerinden katkısı olduğunu göstermiştir. Avrupa Dil Portfolyosu'nun beş ana uygulama yönteminin olduğu da bulunmuştur. Bu uygulama yöntemleri farkındalık yaratma, hedef takibi, içerik seçme ve materyal geliştirme, yansıtma ve öz değerlendirmedir. Bu uygulamalar boyunca öğrencilerin Avrupa Dil Portfolyosu açıklayıcı hedef tanımları ile İngilizce öğrenmedeki hedeflerinin farkına vardığı, etkinliklerin hedeflerini takip edebildiği, üretmek istediği sözel ve yazılı materyallerin içeriğini seçebildiği, kendi tercihleri doğrultusunda materyaller üretebildiği, kendi öğrenme süreçleri üzerinde düşünüp Avrupa Dil Portfolyosu kriterleri ile kendilerini değerlendirebildikleri bulunmuştur. Bu uygulamaların, öğrencilerin kendi öğrenmelerini planlamaları, gerçekleştirmeleri, izlemeleri ve değerlendirmeleri üzerinde etki ederek özerk olmalarına yardımcı olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Ayrıca uygulamanın iyileştirilmesi gereken yönleri olmasına rağmen, Avrupa Dil Portfolyosu'nun araştırma bağlamında öğrencilerin farkındalıklarını geliştirip kendi öğrenme süreçlerine dahil olmalarını sağladığı sonucuna varılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları ilgili literature bağlı olarak tartışılmış ve eğitimsel çıkarımlar ve öneriler sunulmuştur.

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To my students,

from whom I have much to learn…

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## Background of the study

Most language teachers have come across learners who are too reluctant to do their homework, take part in group work tasks, use target language, or even to use any opportunities to learn outside the classroom. Such behavior may stem from students' relying too much on the teacher (Scharle and Szabo, 2000). In educational contexts where teacher-led English language instruction is predominant, learners are seen as passive receivers of new information and are unlikely to develop the skills necessary to learn how to assess and control their own progress, thus it becomes impossible for the learners to become autonomous and responsible language learners. In language teaching, although teachers may provide learners with rich information, learning can take place only learners volunteer to contribute to it. To take active part in their learning, learners should first accept that learning depends on shouldering responsibility on their own learning (Scharle & Szabo, 2000). However, Dickinson (1987) states that autonomy is not achieved by telling learners that they are responsible for their own learning or by avoiding conventional class teaching. Instead, autonomy is achieved slowly and with struggle and careful preparation.

Although there is a general agreement on the value of autonomy in education, there is little consensus as to its definition. While some definitions

focus on situations in which learners study on their own, some others define autonomy in terms of skills that can be applied in self-directed learning. In addition, some others regard autonomy as an inborn capacity which is repressed by institutional education; on the other hand, some put it under the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning. There is also a category of definitions which see autonomy as the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning (Benson & Voller, 1997). As Kohonen (2001) points out "autonomy is an elusive notion that is somewhat difficult to get hold of" (p.6). The most widely-used definition of autonomy is that of Holec (1981), who defines it as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" in terms of "determining the objectives, defining the contents and progresses; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition; evaluating what has been acquired" (p.3).

Autonomy takes its roots from the constructivist learning theories. Barnes (1976) makes a difference between "school knowledge" and "action knowledge" (p.81); the former being the knowledge which somebody else presents to us and is likely to be forgotten if it is not used; and the latter being the knowledge that we incorporate into our view of the world by using the knowledge presented to us at school for our own purposes. He argues that when the school knowledge becomes the action knowledge, this action knowledge can be manipulated consciously and explicitly to be used out of the classroom. In order to achieve this, pedagogical practices should enable learners to explore and interpret the process of learning. Bruner (1996) also argues on the same lines and maintains that learners should be led to participate, collaborate and reflect during their process of learning. What he calls 'reflective intervention' (p.132) is a

characteristic of an autonomous learner. He states that if learners can get involved in the process of learning reflectively, they can control and select the knowledge they would need; otherwise the learner will be bound to be operated from the outside. Little (2007) also argues that if pedagogical procedures allow room for participation, exploration, collaboration and interpretation in a social context, then learners will take over new autonomous roles that traditional procedures deny them. In line with the concepts of internalization and zone of proximal development put forward by Vygotsky (1978), Little (2007) argues that learners should be required both to take initiative in determining their objectives and selecting their activities; and also to reflect on their process using the target language. He states that autonomy can be defined in terms of "reflective involvement in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating learning" (p.153), which also forms as the conceptual framework of this study.

Little (2007) argues that learners can use journals or logbooks to capture the process and progress of their learning and emphasizes that Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio (ELP hereafter) is also a functional tool to serve this need. The ELP is linked with the *Common European Framework* (Council of Europe, 2001) as a language learning and reporting instrument. It enables learners to keep a record of their formal and informal language learning experiences. It is also reported to be an effective tool for reflection and self-assessment (Scharer, 2008).

## Purpose of the Study

Autonomy and autonomous language learning are vague concepts in the minds of many teachers, institutions and learners. What being autonomous refers to in a specific context is a confusing issue and many people have misconceptions or conflicting ideas about what it entails. Some regard it as self-instruction and think that autonomous learning can be carried out in the absence of a teacher. Some others consider it as an all or nothing concept, and disregard different degrees autonomy can take. There are conflicting ideas as to the degree of control the learners should be given as well. While some people think that children should be responsible for all the decisions needed for her/his learning process, some consider learners autonomous enough when they take initiatives to carry out the goals set by the teacher or the curriculum. Teachers and institutions have difficulty in adopting autonomous learning processes without clearly knowing what it really means and entails, and how they can integrate autonomous language learning in their current teaching philosophy. It becomes harder when it comes to taking into consideration various factors such as learners' age, the type of the institution, learners' immediate needs, and so on. As Little (1991) argues, autonomous behavior can take many different forms depending on many contextual factors.

The ELP has been implemented in many European countries since 2001 and its pedagogical significance and effectiveness as a learning tool for learner autonomy have been researched in intensive pilot studies (Scharer, 2004). A

large amount of feedback including reports, studies and dissertations provides evidence that the ELP is a useful tool which can make a difference in educational practice if used appropriately (Scharer, 2008). “If used appropriately” is generally added in reports when it is maintained that the ELP works and that it produces desirable effects. “Appropriately” however, can have different connotations for different people and institutions in different contexts, as Scharer (2008) reports. It is emphasized that it is possible to explore different ways for developing portfolios considering the age groups, target audiences and various educational and cultural contexts (Council of Europe, 2006). As well as in Europe, pilot projects, additional research projects and dissertations have been carried out on the implementation of the ELP and especially its role on learner autonomy in Turkey as well (see Demirel (2003), Egel (2003), Glover, Mirici and Aksu (2005), Koyuncu (2006), Ceylan (2006), Güneyli and Demirel (2006),Karagöl (2008)). Although these studies shed light onto different usages and reported effects of it on learning, the implementation process and practices of the ELP in Turkish context and the direct relation between these practices and autonomous learning have not fully been accounted for in these studies. Administrators, teachers, parents and learners are not also that knowledgeable about how to make use of the language learning function of the ELP; and most of them regard it as a pile of checklists to put some ticks on. In order to comprehend and make use of the role of the ELP as a tool for life-long learning, goal-setting, self-assessment and autonomous learning;  appropriate ways, practices and processes in congruence with the type of the context in which the ELP is aimed to be used need to be found;  so that experiences in one context can be a springboard to be used in another similar context, which would eventually lead to

the integration of the ELP in the curriculum in every sector of schooling, from primary to adult education with a view to spread the ideas and practices of autonomous language learning.

The study firstly aims to explore learner autonomy in the context of fourth and fifth grades using the ELP throughout their studies. It is also aims to investigate the general structure of the implementation of the ELP and the particular practices related to it in the fourth  and fifth grades of this private school. seeks out how the ELP practices affect learners' involving themselves in the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating processes in their own language learning.

## Statement of the Problem

In this study, the ELP is integrated in the English lessons of fourth Grade and fifth Grade of a private primary school. It is vital to explore learner autonomy in the context it is aimed to be fostered, thus this study will address the problem of how the ELP is implemented in Turkish context to contribute to learner autonomy in terms of learners' planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating their learning.

## Research Questions

The research questions concerning this study are as follows:

1. What is the general structure of the ELP implementation in this research context like?

2. What are the ELP related practices used in the language learning process in the fourth and fifth grade EFL classrooms in this research school?

3. In what ways do these ELP practices contribute to learners' becoming more autonomous in terms of their involvement in a) planning, b) implementing, c) monitoring and d) evaluating their own language learning?

## Significance of the Study

The ELP is a tool designed to mediate to learners, teachers and schools a set of principles, like plurilingualism, learner ownership, learner autonomy and self assessment (Scharer, 2008). The way to reach these aims is surely a difficult one for teachers, learners and institutions since it challenges the established educational practices and the traditional roles of learners and teachers. Scharer (2008) argues that this is the reason why the overall level of implementation and satisfaction of the use of the ELP is still low in many countries. Many schools and institutions abandon or do not even start the use of the ELP because of the changes the implementation of the ELP in the educational process call for. As change is rarely regarded as comfortable; institutions and teachers usually lack energy and sustained effort that are needed to produce lasting results. One other reason why institutions or teachers tend to shy away from the ELP is that they cannot simply figure out how they can integrate and use the ELP in their own

contexts, with what aims, practices and with what results. Therefore, this study will be crucial in showing the real classroom practices of the ELP in a private school in Turkish context, with its pros and cons, through on-site observations; and being totally qualitative in design, it will reflect the real ideas of the learners and teachers on the implementation of the ELP. It will be also valuable in shedding light on whether the ELP promotes learner autonomy, as argued; and if it does, what kind of ELP related practices lead learners to feel more responsible for their language learning process and act more autonomously. In local level, the findings of the research may be useful for teachers and institutions to have an insight into both the use of the ELP in the classroom context and the ways to help learners become more autonomous. The findings will also be valuable in the European level in that it will add up to the findings of the ELP projects carried out in Europe since it will demonstrate the implementation of the ELP and the feedback received about it in Turkish context. In addition, it will make clear the extent to which the notion of learner autonomy is tenable in Turkish context.

## Conceptual Framework

In this study, some concepts were explored around specific definitions. These are:

Autonomy: "reflective involvement in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating learning" (Little, 2009; p.153).

European Language Portfolio (ELP): It is a tool that was improved by the Council of Europe (CoE) to enhance language learning, teaching and assessment. It has three obligatory components: a language passport, which describes an

individual's proficiency and competences in different languages;  a language biography, which is designed to facilitate learner's involvement in planning, reflecting upon and assessing his or her learning process and a dossier, in which the owner collects evidence of his or her developing proficiency in second and foreign languages (Council of Europe, 2000).

ELP-related practices: In this context, ELP-related practices are defined as any kind of classroom procedures and routines carried out related to any component of the European Language Portfolio.

The thesis is organized as follows: The second chapter is a review of literature on learner autonomy and the ELP. The third chapter provides information about the methodological procedures of the present study as well as the data analysis process of the study. The findings of the study will be reported in the fourth chapter. Finally, the fifth chapter presents the discussion and conclusion of the study.

# CHAPTER II

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Learner Autonomy

Over the last three decades, there has been a growing concern on the importance of learner autonomy; however despite this concern there is still a great deal of uncertainty about its meanings, versions, levels and applications for language learning. Benson (2009) states that although the context for discussion of autonomy has changed, what is exactly meant by autonomy and how we see its value to the individual and society are still the issues discussed today. Benson (2001) argues that it is important to describe autonomy; because, first of all, for a research to be effective, construct validity is very important; and the construct 'autonomy' can only be researchable if it can be described in terms of observable behavior. The second reason he presents is that any program designed to promote learner autonomy will be more effective if the behavioral changes it aims to foster is clearly understood. Shortly, he states that we need to make clear what we mean when we talk about autonomy. He also adds that autonomy may be recognized in different forms in a variety of different contexts, so we need to decide on the form we choose to recognize it in the context of our own research and practice. Little (1991) also argues that since learner autonomy has a wide ranging sources and implications, it is hard to define it in a few paragraphs; but it is also highly necessary to set a framework. In this section, various definitions of autonomy provided by different people will be explored followed by a theoretical

framework which autonomy takes its roots from and research on learner autonomy.

## Definitions of Autonomy

Being a vague concept, autonomy has been defined in many ways by different people. Although the definitions seem to differ in their wordings, most of them also share some concepts like awareness raising, goal setting, choosing content, involvement, monitoring, reflection and self-assessment.

Holec's (1981) definition of autonomy is one of the earliest and the most cited definitions of autonomy. In his report to the Council of Europe (CoE) , he describes autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (p.3). Then he elaborates on the definition as:

> To take charge of one's own learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for
> all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e.:
> - determining the objectives;
> - defining the contents and progressions;
> - selecting methods and techniques to be used;
> - monitoring the procedure of acquisition;
> - evaluating what has been acquired. (p.3)

Holec (1981) points out that the autonomous learner is himself capable of making all the decisions concerning the learning with which he is involved. He states that determining and defining objectives are done by learners taking into consideration their own needs and motivations. He also adds that in defining the contents and progressions in autonomous learning, it is important that the contents are not brought in from outside, i.e a teacher, but they are created by the learners who discover these contents by observing the sources available to them.

As regards the selection of methods and techniques, he argues that learners will select the methods according to the objectives they set and selecting them will be much more useful than only defining them. Learners are also capable of monitoring the procedure of acquisition in autonomous language learning since they decide for themselves when and how long to study; so that they can control their learning process. In the step of evaluating what has been acquired, learners do not evaluate their linguistic ability in mastering a course content, but they evaluate to what extent the results they accomplished are in accordance with the objectives set. For Holec these stages are all interdependent. Holec (1981) also maintains that there may be different degrees of self-direction in autonomous learning and they may be because of either different degrees of autonomy or different degrees of exercise of autonomy. Degrees of self-direction can be in terms of the help learners receive from the teachers while acquiring responsibility; but he asserts that learners must in any way assume responsibility for the whole of his learning although they may get help from the teacher. In this kind of autonomous learning, teachers assume new roles as well. The role of the teacher in autonomous learning is to help learners define their objectives, contents and progressions, choose their methods and techniques, monitor the procedure of learning and evaluate what has been acquired. He also argues that teachers should be trained to serve these needs.

Benson (2001) states that although Holec (1981) covers the main areas of autonomous learning in that the learner is capable of making all the significant decisions about the management and organization of his or her learning, he argues that the definition is problematic since it describes the decision making abilities in autonomous learning in technical terms and undermines the cognitive

capacities underlying the self-management abilities. Little (1991) also argues that 'autonomy is not exclusively or even primarily a matter of how learning is organized" (p.3), it requires underlying cognitive and psychological abilities and processes. Little (1991) gives a provisional definition of autonomy:

> Essentially, autonomy is a capacity- for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. It presupposes but also entails, that learners will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts. (p.4)

In this definition, he emphasizes critical reflection, decision making and independent action, all of which enable learners to develop a psychological relation to how and what they are learning and transfer what has been learned to wider contexts. He also adds that his definition covers both the process and content of learning (Little, 1991).

Although this definition implies that autonomy gives a high degree of freedom to learners, Little (2007) states that this freedom is never absolute; one can never detach himself totally from others since we are social beings; so autonomy is closely related to interdependence. Therefore, the autonomy conferred in his definition is always conditional and constrained. Little (2007) emphasizes that autonomy is learners' doing things not necessarily on their own, but for themselves. Kohonen (1992) also argues on the same point stating that autonomy includes the notion of interdependence since learners are responsible for their own behavior in the social context through cooperating with others and solving conflicts in constructive ways.

Little (1991) states that there are many wrong assumptions about what autonomy is and is not. He gives five main misconceptions.

1. The first misconception is that people regard autonomy synonymous with self-instruction and deciding to learn without a teacher. Little (1991) states that autonomous learning does not make the teacher redundant and autonomy is not only about how learning is organized.
2. Another misconception is that in the classroom the teacher is required to give all control to the students. Little (1991) rejects this assumption putting forward the claim that the intervention on the part of the teacher does not destroy the autonomy students have gained, since learning in autonomous language classrooms proceeds by negotiation, interaction and problem-solving.
3. The third false assumption related to autonomous learning in classroom context is that autonomy is a new methodology that teachers apply to their learners. Little states that although this assumption is true to some extent since learners would not probably become autonomous without the teacher encouraging them actively, the development of learner autonomy cannot be programmed in a series of lesson plans.
4. A fourth misconception is that autonomy is a single behavior which can be easily described. Little states that autonomous behavior can take many different forms depending on the learners' age, their progress in language learning and their immediate learning needs, etc.
5. The last misconception Little (1991) argues is that autonomy is seen as a steady unchanging state which is achieved by certain learners. He rejects this assumption stating that autonomy of students cannot be guaranteed and learners may manifest different degrees of autonomy in different areas.

Little (2000, 2005, 2007) also proposes three pedagogical principles derived from his earlier characterization of autonomous language learner: learner involvement, learner reflection and target language use. The principle of learner involvement involves teacher's drawing her students into the process of language learning and making them share responsibility in setting learning targets, selecting learning activities and materials, participating in the classroom interaction and determining how successful the learning has been. Little states that although in some contexts it is possible for the teacher to negotiate and shape the curriculum based on the needs of students, in many contexts teachers have to shape their syllabus according to the official curriculum guidelines. Little states that this does not mean that learner involvement is undermined in such a situation; because each teacher has his or her own understanding of the curriculum and he or she may employ his or her own approach in teaching the components of the curriculum. The principle of learner reflection is an indispensable part of the principle learner involvement; because learners should be able to think about what they are doing before and while setting objectives, choosing learning activities or evaluating themselves. Little (2007) also states that as well as this kind of incidental reflection, learners also need to use 'reflective intervention', which enables learners to reflect on the process and content of their learning explicitly, in a detached manner. By reflection, he means students having a reflective dialogue with their teachers or other learners and gradually developing an inner speech. The last principle is the principle of target language use which entails that the target language is used in all classroom activities, including both communicative and reflective activities. He believes that the development of learner autonomy and target language proficiency are

mutually integrated with each other. Little (2009b) wraps up these principles to define autonomy as ‘reflective involvement in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating learning’ (p.153). This definition has formed the conceptual framework of this study.

Similar to Little (1991), Benson (2001) also argues that autonomy is not only to do with managing and organizing some aspects of language learning. He argues that an adequate description of autonomy in language learning should cover these three areas at which learner control may be exercised: learning management, cognitive processes and learning content; so he defines autonomy as the capacity to take control over learning at these three levels. He states that these three areas of control over learning are interdependent. In explaining what forms the scope of these levels, Benson tells that learners taking control over learning is most directly observable at the level of learning management. At this level, learners usually use learning strategies. Metacognitive strategies are especially described to be involved in self-management of learning, since learners plan, monitor and evaluate their progress using these strategies. Benson states that the level of control over cognitive process is not directly observable since it includes attention, reflection and metacognitive knowledge, as psychological factors underpinning control over learning behavior. He argues that control over learning begins from learners’ conscious direction and continues with reflection on and knowledge of the language learning process. He further maintains that control over cognitive processes is a very crucial part of autonomy because learners may perform actions involved in self-management but they may not possess cognitive capacities to make these actions systematic or effective. The third level of control which is the control over content involves

learners developing their capacity to participate in social interactions and negotiating learning goals, tasks and the curriculum (Benson, 2001).

Broady and Kenning (1996) also present a model of learner autonomy in language learning. Building on Holec's definition (1981), they put forward three components of learner autonomy which influence each other, namely learning management skills, awareness and attitudes towards language learning. First of all, to become autonomous, the learner needs to know a number of "Learning Management Skills" to increase their ability to take responsibility for their learning. These learning management skills include defining the objectives, selecting materials and activities, determining the pace, time and place of learning, monitoring learning and evaluating the process and the product. These skills in turn presuppose some 'awareness' of the language and how it is used. For instance, for the learners to define their objectives, they need to know how to divide up the target language. This kind of an awareness is called metalinguistic awareness, through which learners have an understanding of how language is organised, used and learned. Learners also need to have an understanding of how a second language is learned, which is called as metacognitive awareness. This kind of an awareness enables learners to have an understanding of how to use different resources, environments, strategies and techniques for language learning and it provides learners with insight into one's learning style. The last component of the model of learner autonomy is "attitudes". Learners need to have willingness and confidence to take responsibility for their own learning. Wenden (1991) also states that autonomous learners are willing to take on responsibility and they have confidence in their ability as learners. She argues that learners' attitudes towards learner autonomy may change because of lack of

metacognitive knowledge. If learners do not know about their mental processes they may manifest lack of willingness and self-confidence for taking responsibility. These three components all influence each other since, for example, awareness of how languages are learned may bring about a positive or negative attitude towards learning it and this in turn may enable or disable a particular learning management skill. Similarly, practicing a particular skill may help build a new area of metacognitive/metalinguistic awareness and this awareness may in turn bring about willingness or confidence on the part of the learner (Broady & Kenning, 1996).

Benson (2001) argues that if autonomy is describable, then the extent to which learners become autonomous should be able to be measured as well. He states that in the literature there are researchers talking of learners becoming more autonomous or acquiring autonomy. Nunan (1997: 192) also argues that autonomy is not an 'all-or-nothing concept' and it has some degrees. The first level in developing autonomy is awareness. He states that learners should be made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the materials they are using. It is important to make the goals and contents transparent to the learner. The second level in the implementation of autonomy is involvement. Learners select their own goals, contents and tasks from a wide range of alternatives. The third level in Nunan's definition is intervention. In this level learners modify and adapt learning goals and the content of the learning program. The next level is creation. In this level learners create their own goals and tasks. For instance they may be asked to write comprehension questions for a written text or create their own discussion tasks. In the transcendence level learners apply their autonomous

behaviour beyond the classroom. They make connections between the content of the classroom and the world beyond it.

Nunan (1997) adds that factors such as the personality and the goals of the learner, the philosophy of the institution and the cultural context where the education takes place determine to what extent learners may embrace autonomy. Little (1991) also argues on the same lines. He asserts that autonomous learners may manifest a variety of behaviour depending on their age, their progress in language learning and their immediate learning needs, etc. These arguments go in line with Benson's (2001:51) claim that autonomy is a 'multidimensional construct'. He says that learners who are able to assess their learning themselves, reflect on their work or design new materials would be thought to be more autonomous; however it is necessary that we take account of the learning context while coming into conclusions about learners' degree of autonomy.

Littlewood (1999) is another name who explained autonomy in different levels. He states that different definitions made by various researchers share two things in common: the first one is that in these definitions students should be able to take responsibility for their own learning themselves in order to continue learning after the formal education system. The second common feature is that learners partially or totally take ownership of many processes like decision making and evaluating, which traditionally belonged to the teacher. He states that these definitions may not be appropriate in all contexts and cultures. He attempted to construct a broad definition which can be applied in all contexts regardless of the culture. He believes that there is a strong connection between autonomy and interdependence and support. He considers autonomy in two levels. The first one is the level that is mostly counted on in the West as in the

definitions of Holec (1981) and Little (1991). Learners take charge of their own learning by setting their own targets, methods, techniques and evaluate themselves, by which they set the directions to take part in creating their own worlds. Littlewood calls this kind of autonomy proactive autonomy. In the second level and kind of autonomy, which is reactive autonomy, students do not create their own directions, but once the goals are set by somebody, they organize their resources in order to achieve these goals. Benson (2001) resembles reactive autonomy to control over method at the management and cognitive levels without control over content.

Scharle and Szabo (2000) state that people do not suddenly find out that they are autonomous. They present some stages through acquiring autonomy. The first step is raising awareness. The teacher may present some activities to help students reconsider their learning habits and discover new ways to contribute to their learning. They present awareness-raising activities on finding out about oneself, motivation, learning strategies and self-monitoring. The next step is changing attitudes, in which students practice the skills introduced in the first stage. They consciously practice new roles, habits and learning strategies in this level. These activities leave room for learner initiative as well. The next level is transferring roles. In this level learners take over the roles of the teacher and get involved in the process of language learning and community building.

Beeching (1996) also talks about semi-autonomy, in which the learners do not set their own objectives, but once the objectives are set by the institution, a part of the course is negotiated according to the learners' own objectives. Learners do not choose or find their own materials as well, but they choose which materials provided suit them with the help of a tutor. In semi-autonomy

learners do not assess themselves as well. The institution gives a common type of assessment, but learners begin to learn how to evaluate their own progress gradually.

Kumaravadivelu (2003) argue that all the researchers considering the issue of autonomy in terms of degrees advocate a gradual staging where firstly the focus is on raising the learner's awareness of the reasons behind the teacher's choice of goals, tasks and materials. At the intermediary stage, the learner is allowed to choose from a range of options given by the teacher. Finally, the emphasis is on learner determination of his or her own goals, tasks and materials.

Table 1 summarizes the principal definitions of learner autonomy in literature

Table 1. Definitions of autonomy

| Researchers | Definitions of autonomy |
|---|---|
| Holec (1981,p.3) | To take charge of one's own learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning: - determining the objectives;<br>- defining the contents and progressions;<br>- selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition evaluating what has been acquired. |
| Little (1991; p. 4)<br><br>Little (2000; 2005; 2007)<br><br>Little (2009b:p.153) | "autonomy is a *capacity*- for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action."<br><br>three pedagogical principles of autonomous learning:<br>learner involvement, learner reflection and target language use.<br><br>"reflective involvement in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating learning" |
| Benson (2001) | Autonomy is a capacity to take control over learning in the areas of learning management , cognitive processes and learning content. |
| Broady and Kenning (1996) | The components of the model of learner autonomy in language learning are:<br>1. awareness (metacognitive and metalinguistic),<br>2.learning management skills (defining objectives, selecting materials and activities, monitoring learning, evaluating the process and the product) and<br>3. attitudes towards roles and abilities in learning. |
| Nunan (1997) | Five levels of implementing autonomy:<br>1. awareness (of pedagogical goals and content of the materials)<br>2. involvement (selecting their own goals, contents and tasks)<br>3. intervention (modifying and adapting learning goals and the content)<br>4. creation (create their own goals and tasks)<br>5. transcendence (applying their autonomous behaviour beyond the classroom) |
| Littlewood (1999) | Proactive autonomy: Learners take charge of their own learning by setting their own targets, methods, techniques and evaluate themselves, by which they set the directions to take part in creating their own worlds.<br>Reactive autonomy: students do not create their own directions, but once the goals are set by somebody, they organize their resources in order to achieve these goals |
| Scharle and Szabo (2000) | Stages of autonomous learning are awareness raising, changing attitudes and transferring roles. |

## Theoretical Framework of Autonomy

Learner-centeredness and learner autonomy derived mainly from constructivist theories. Little (2007) states that there are many varieties of constructivism; however all make a similar claim: "that we construct our knowledge by bringing what we already know into interaction with the new information, ideas and experiences we encounter" (p.18). Rüschoff (1999) states that language learning is an interactive and dynamic process, in which new knowledge is acquired through exploring sources and resources rather than only in a context of formal education and it is combined with the previous factual knowledge through a process oriented approach to learning. Rüschoff (1999) presents some principles of constructivist theory and in these principles he states that learning must be considered as an active and collaborative process of constructing knowledge and it must be seen as an autonomous process which is regulated by the learners' expectations, goals, background and intentions. He also indicates that learning also comprises experimentation which is based on previous knowledge and experience; and that it is a process in which knowledge is constructed through social negotiation and which must be supported by a rich learning environment rooted in real life.

The works of Vygotsky and Kelly have especially been influential in research in the field of autonomy. The social-interactive view of language development Vygotsky (1978) adopts is influential in accounting for the issues related to learner autonomy. One of the principles put forward by Vygotsky (1978) is that learning is the product of supported performance. This principle is made clear in the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as :

> the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult-guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978: p.86)

It is clear from this definition that Vygotsky (1978) defines problem solving (autonomy) as the goal of learning and persists in the view that it grows out of dependence on others. It is implied in this view that each time a learning goal is achieved, it forms the basis from which to launch into the next ZPD (Little, 2007). This paves the way to the idea that autonomy is integral to the process of learning both as an immediate and ultimate goal since learners need to achieve autonomy at one level in order to be able to seek dependence on another level, where learners need to achieve autonomy in turn to move on (Little, 1998). Vygotsky (1978) maintains that an important aspect of creating the zone of proximal development is that it awakens a multitude of internal development processes in the learner, which can only operate when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in collaboration with her/his peers. He asserts that "once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement" (p.90)

Vygotsky (1978) also argues that verbalization allows children to solve problems and to plan future actions. He maintains that two higher mental capacities, thought and speech, allow learners to develop intellectually. By speaking about what they are doing, children work towards solving the problems in their social context. The experiments he carried out demonstrated that:

> A child's speech is as important as the role of action in attaining the goal. Children not only speak about what they are doing; their speech and action are part of one and the same complex psychological function, directed towards the solution of the problem at hand. (p.25)

He concluded that “children solve practical tasks with the help of their speech, as well as their eyes and hands” (p.26). He also argues that problem-solving is socially rooted; because the learner learns in a social context in which ‘external’ voice is a central element in cognitive development. He also maintains that the external voice which creates dynamic learning patterns is then transformed into an internal voice through the child’s assimilating the capacity to carry out the tasks being learned. In this way, social speech (speaking with others) is internalized first as ‘egocentric speech’ (speaking aloud to and for oneself) and then as inner speech (speaking internally to and for oneself) (Vygotsky, 1987). Vygotsky (1978) states that the internalization of social speech starts when children find that they are unable to solve a problem by themselves and thus turn to an adult using a socialized speech by addressing the adult and describing the method that they cannot carry out by themselves. The biggest change in children’s capacity to use language as a problem solving tool takes place ‘when socialized speech (which has previously been used to address an adult) is turned inward. Instead of appealing to the adult, children appeal to themselves; language thus takes on an intrapersonal function in addition to its interpersonal use’ (p.27). By turning this socialized speech into themselves, they organize their own activities according to a social form of behavior and apply a social attitude to themselves.

Following that argument, Vygotsky (1978) states that at early stage of child’s development, speech accompanies child’s actions; but then it starts to precede the action. When speech is moved to the starting point of an activity, it guides and determines the action (like naming a drawing before drawing it by deciding what to draw in advance). Thus, words allow for the shaping of

activities and planning of future actions. This is how the language becomes a tool for self-regulated problem-solving. In terms of foreign language learning, the social speech that is used in group work activities supports the development of learner's capacity for egocentric and inner speech (Little, 1998). Inner speech is used in various ways in foreign language development as well; for instance in reading and extensive listening or in preparing for an interview by trying to anticipate the questions and answers we would give and so forth. This kind of an inner speech can be fostered in language classrooms through, as Little (2007) argues, requiring learners to take the initiative in determining their goals and selecting their activities and materials in the target language; and furthermore, by using the target language for reflection on what they have learned. When learners use the target language not only in performing the task , but also in metacognitive and metalinguistic reflection, learners' developing proficiency would become an integral part of their independent problem-solving, namely autonomy.

Teachers, in this process, can support learners' acquisition of knowledge both through external scaffolding by breaking down tasks into comprehensible components, coaching and providing feedback; and through internal scaffolding by engaging the learner in reflection and self-monitoring of their language learning process. They can also identify students' zone of proximal development and design appropriate and authentic materials to scaffold them into the construction of higher levels of understanding (Kaufman, 2004).

Little (1991) argues that in order for the promotion of learner autonomy to be justified, a general psychology that is related to the developmental psychology of Piaget and Bruner is also required, which can be provided by

psychology of personal constructs elaborated by George Kelly. Kelly (1955) sees man as a scientist with a theory, hypothesis and reconstructions. A person tries to make sense of the world around her/him by hypothesis-testing and theory revision. He put it as follows in his book Psychology of Personal Constructs:

> The constructions one places upon events are working hypotheses, which are about to be put to the test of experience. As one's anticipations and hypotheses are successfully revised in the light of the unfolding sequence of events, the construction system undergoes a progressive evolution. The person reconstrues. This is experience. (Kelly, 1955: I, p.51)

Kelly puts forward the idea that people construct their own interpretations of the world themselves; and this construction is always open to reconstruction. These personal constructs are unique since they are shaped through a person's attempts to understand the experiences that are uniquely one's own (1955).

In his approach to psychotherapy, Kelly (1955) aims at helping the patient develop a capacity for conscious autonomy by helping her/him become more aware of her/his own personal constructs, identify areas of conflict and gradually assume conscious control of the process. Applied to learning, personal construct theory holds that each learner brings her/his own systems of constructs when engaging with learning tasks (Benson, 2001). As Little (1991) makes clear, these learning tasks require the learner to add new knowledge to her/his current system of constructs. This process proceeds without difficulty when the new knowledge is in harmony with the current constructs; however if the new information contradicts the existing construct system, learning could be difficult. Under that condition, resistance to learning may occur. Benson (2001) claims that learners should be made more aware of their existing personal construct system and directed towards taking control of their own learning process. Such

an awareness and direction enables the learner to identify areas that pose difficulty and assume responsibility for their learning.

It is an essential claim of personal construct psychology that learning will be facilitated by bringing learners to an understanding of their own personal construct systems. This could be accomplished through making learners conscious of the demands of a learner task and the techniques they may use to approach it. It is also claimed since teachers and learners have different constructs, teachers should find ways to accommodate their teaching to the personal constructs of her learners and also allow for her own system of personal constructs to be included in the process. During this process, in order to engage learners' personal constructs, continuous negotiation should be carried out in every task. This does not mean that the teacher is not in control; on the other hand learners are expected to determine what they want to do, what materials to use in order to achieve their aim and negotiate with each other  explore and make explicit their own personal constructs. In that way learners can achieve both psychological and social autonomy (Little, 1991).

## Research on Learner Autonomy

One of the most cited examples of autonomous learning classroom research is by Dam and Legenhausen (1996) who carried out a research project called LAALE (Language Acquisition in an Autonomous Learning Environment) in which the language development of a class of 21 twelve-year-old students who learn in an autonomous way is compared with the development of classes with a more traditional, text-based way of learning. The vocabulary acquisition in

autonomous classrooms was provided through learners' choosing the words they would like to know or remember in the dictionary, writing them to their diaries and then sharing them with their partners. The vocabulary is also reinforced by the teacher through songs, fairy-tales and nursery rhymes. Learners produce language output in the form of simple word cards , stories and games. Learners are helped by their peers and teachers in this process. All the words were written down in a form which all the learners could access and entered in a databank. A spontaneous recall test was administered as the first test after 7.5 weeks of learning. A second test, receptive vocabulary knowledge/spelling test was also administered after 15 weeks. The results of the two vocabulary tests demonstrate that vocabulary acquisition in the autonomous approach is very successful compared with the results of more traditional text-based approaches. It has been concluded that the result that the number of words that emerged in the first few months and that were mastered exceeds the requirements of official syllabus guidelines can be traced to the autonomous learning approach's making learners aware of the English language surrounding them in their native language environment and leading them to integrate this knowledge into their developing L2 competence.

Dam and Legenhausen (1999) also carried out a research project in which they compared students' ability to self-evaluate their language proficiency with teacher evaluations and external assessments. The project aimed at evaluating the success of autonomous learning facilities in the fifth, 6$^{th}$ and 7$^{th}$ grades. The research focused on different language aspects over the years, namely vocabulary, structures, oral proficiency, reading and writing. The data were collected through self-evaluations and teacher's evaluations aiming to draw

conclusions as to the validity of the students' awareness of their own learning. An external assessment was also conducted in the form of vocabulary/ structure tests, structured interviews, translation and story making tasks. The researchers state that evaluation has both a retrospective and prospective function since learners both reflect on their past experiences and plan for the future while evaluating themselves. Students are asked simple questions about what they are doing, why and how they are doing it and what can it be used for, etc. These questions are used in evaluative dialogues or open discussions between teacher and learners, and then the conclusions drawn from these reflections were shown on class posters. When the correlation of self-evaluations, teacher ratings and external assessments were investigated, it was found that the results indicated striking intercorrelations. Autonomous learners were also found to be more ready to take high risks and get involved in purposeful communication.

Smith (1996) presents some of his learners' views on autonomous learning. In his research Japanese university students determine their own learning goals, plan their learning, engage in and reflect on self-directed activities in and outside class. They negotiate on their overall arrangements, including whether to go on with self-directed learning or not. Students' comments and evaluations over three years showed that they find autonomous learning quite useful and valid, in contrast to the monotonous system of English classes, where the teacher decides what to teach according to his/her aims. Students assert that they found the chance to think about their own aims and take responsibility to study voluntarily and willingly. Some students also expressed that they feel that teachers respect their independence and they learn how to learn for themselves. (as cited in Aoki & Smith, 1999).

Nunan, Lai and Keobke (1999) present the results of two relevant research studies on empowering learners with the capacity to manage their own learning. The first one is by Nunan, who carried out a research during a 12 week period with sixty undergraduate Arts students at the University of Hong Kong. They were directed to take part in the project on a voluntary base. They were asked to keep journals and given prompts as to what they studied and learned that week and what kind of difficulties they had. They reflected on their own learning in that way. They were also given different kinds of tasks to develop strategies for learning. Such a reflective, self-monitoring, self-assessing and strategy developing approach resulted in learners shifting from a linguistic to communicative focus and being more process oriented learners. It has also been found that they began to take more responsibility and control of these learning processes . The second research by Lai focused on the effects of a guided critical reflection on learners' capacity to manage their learning. Carried out over a thirteen week term with thirty undergraduate students at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the research sought to find the effects of a specific learning training on the whole language process. The learning training materials included a self-report questionnaire on learning listening skills aiming to raise awareness as to their perception of themselves as learners learning listening and their strengths and weaknesses in listening; a guided listening journal which focused on selection of learning materials and objectives, identification of problems and development of listening strategies and conducting self-assessments; and a learner diary which aimed to develop learners' reflective skills. Comparing the answers learners gave at the beginning and at the end of the project, it was evident that learner training had a considerable effect on learners' control over

learning. Students showed an increased selection of learning materials and ability in setting learning objectives that are relevant to them. They could also specify their problems and find relevant strategies to solve them. Nunan, Lai and Keobke (1999) conclude that autonomy is enhanced when learners are encouraged to monitor and assess themselves, reflect critically on their learning process, choose content and learning tasks, evaluate their own progress, create their own learning tasks, produce target language actively and learn to use appropriate strategies in their learning process.

Hoffman (1999) investigated the effects of goal setting on motivating learners to expand their second language writing strategies and become more independent and self-regulated writers. The data were collected from three volunteering students who were carrying out the usual demands of their writing course. The dialogues of the teacher and student conferences were tape recorded. Writing development goals were formulated by the students and feedback as to the writings of the students were given by the teacher. It was found out that each student had a different focus to set aims on. While one of them wanted to dwell on sentence-based goals, the other two wanted to attend to discourse level aims. The study made also clear that some learners may not feel themselves self-confident and proficient enough in their second language to take step towards self-regulation. The dialogue between the student and the teacher is also of great importance to motivate and encourage learners to regulate their learning.

## The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

The ELP and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) were first proposed at a Council of Europe symposium in 1991 and intended to complement each other to provide a way of teaching and assessing all languages in Europe (Sharer, 2008). The ELP is based on Common European Framework of Reference by making explicit reference to the common levels of competence. The common reference levels in the form of checklists in the ELPs help learners assess their language competences. Both these instruments promote goals that underpin the concerns of the Council of Europe: deepening the mutual understanding and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity among citizens in Europe, promoting plurilinguilism as a life-long process, developing the capacity for independent language learning and providing transparency and coherence in language learning programs in order to facilitate mobility (Council of Europe, 2004).

The CEFR is a framework of reference which 'provides a common basis for the elaboration and critical evaluation of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, and so on across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively' (Council of Europe, 2001; p.1). It is also reported that the CEFR also deals with the cultural context in which the language is set and it also gives definitions for levels of proficiency which enable

the learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning. It aims to overcome the barriers that are caused by different educational systems in Europe. It also enables educational administrators, course designers, teachers, teacher trainers, and so forth to reflect on their practices and make sure that they fulfill the real needs of learners. It is further argued that the framework provides transparency in courses, syllabuses and qualifications by allowing for explicit description of objectives, content and methods. It stresses that if objective criteria are provided in describing language proficiency, this will improve the mutual recognition of qualifications gained in different contexts. The CEFR focuses on enhancing mutual understanding and tolerance, respect for other cultures and identities.

The CEFR is a comprehensive, coherent and transparent framework that is aimed to be used for the development of language curricula, teaching and learning programs, learning materials and assessment instruments. By being comprehensive, it is meant that the CEFR should be able to specify a full range of language knowledge, skills and use. By being transparent, it is meant that information in it should be explicit and comprehensible to users; and being coherent means that the descriptions are free from contradictions. The CEFR does not imply a single method, but aims to present the linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic components and strategies in a more general communicative approach (Council of Europe, 2001).

As one of the aims of the CEFR is to provide users with levels of proficiency required by existing standards, tests and examinations, it provides users with illustrative descriptors that are developed and validated for the CEFR. The descriptors are arranged in six 'common reference levels' which range from

A1 (very limited proficiency) to C2 (near native-speaker proficiency). Each reverence level has a ‘global description’ (Table. 2)  and a second more detailed one called the self-assessment grid (Table.3) in which the five language skills; namely listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing are separated from each other. The descriptors refer to communicative activities, strategies and communicative language competences. ‘Can do’ statements are provided for reception, interaction and production in communicative activities, for strategies to be used in these activities and for linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences. There are different illustrative scales provided for each skill and most sub-skills as well as for different aspects of communicative competence (Council of Europe, 2001). Table 2 below shows the common reference levels as a global scale and Table 3 shows the self assessment grid for all skills.

Table 2. Common Reference Levels: Global Scale

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Proficient User | C2 | Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations. |
| | C1 | Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices. |
| Independent User | B2 | Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. |
| | B1 | Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. |
| Basic User | A2 | Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need. |
| | A1 | Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help. |

(Council of Europe, 2001; p.24)

Table 3. Common Reference Levels: self-assessment grid

| | | A1 | A2 | B1 | B2 | C1 | C2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UNDERSTANDING | Listening | I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly. | I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements. | I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear. | I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect. | I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort. | I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided. I have some time to get familiar with the accent. |
| | Reading | I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues. | I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters. | I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters. | I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose. | I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field. | I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works. |

Table 3. Continued.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S<br>P<br>E<br>A | Spoken Interaction | I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics. | I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself. | I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events). | I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views. | I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers. | I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it. |

Table 3. Continued.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K I N G | Spoken Production | I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know. | I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job. | I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions. | I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. | I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion. | I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. |

Table 3. Continued.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| W R IT I N G | Writing | I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form. | I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate needs. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something. | I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions. | I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences. | I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind. | I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works. |

(Council of Europe, 2001; p:26-27)

The CEFR adopts an action oriented approach, which is aimed at involving learners into tasks that they would encounter in the society. Thus the tasks designed around the CEFR are not necessarily language related. In the tasks denoted by the CEFR, learners perform actions strategically using their own competences to achieve an aim. The communicative competence of the learners is activated through language activities which involve reception, production, interaction or mediation (interpreting or translating a text.). Reception and production are primary processes, since they are both necessary for interaction or mediation. Receptive activities involve activities like silent reading or watching a video. In production activities, learners are engaged in activities like oral presentations, written studies and so on. In interaction-based activities, learners participate in a written or oral exchange with each other by listening to each other, speaking and turn-taking. The activities of mediation involve activities in which learners are unable to communicate with each other directly, thus requires a third party to interpret, translate, paraphrase or summary an oral or written text (Council of Europe, 2001). The CEFR also implies the use of tasks and strategies in communication and learning. The tasks do not have to be language related tasks, but could involve any activities which make demands on the communicative competence of the individuals in the social life. These tasks entail the use of strategies as well. ‘Can do’ statements are provided for some of the strategies used in communicative activities. These strategies mobilize learners’ resources and activate their skills in order to cope with the communicative task. The strategies include “pre-planning, execution, monitoring and repair action”(Council of Europe, 2001; p. 57). In production based activities (oral or written production), learners may use strategies like ‘rehearsing, locating resources, considering audience, task

adjustment and message adjustment' for planning; 'compensating, building on previous knowledge and trying out' for executing; 'monitoring success' for evaluating and 'self-correction' for repairing their own learning (Council of Europe,pp.63-64). In reception based activities (aural, visual or audio-visual reception), they can use 'selecting mental set, activating schemata, setting up expectations' for planning; 'identifying cues and inferring from them' for executing; 'hypothesis testing, matching cues to schemata' for evaluating and 'revising hypothesis' for repairing learning (Council of Europe, 2001; p.72). In interactive activities (spoken or written), learners can be led to use strategies like 'activating schemata, identifying information gap, planning moves' for planning; 'taking the floor, co-operating, dealing with unexpected and asking for help' for executing; 'monitoring' for evaluating and 'asking for clarification' for repairing learning (Council fo Europe, 2001;p.85). Learners play an active role in this planning, executing, evaluating and repairing processes of communication through the CEFR related tasks.

## The European Language Portfolio (ELP)

The ELP is a tool that is based on some principles, which are mentioned in the 'ELP Principles and Guidelines' (Council of Europe, 2004). One of the principles is that the ELP is designed to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism through including learners' all language and intercultural learning in a number of languages. It is also stressed as a principle that the learner is the owner of his ELP and s/he takes the responsibility both for the physical ownership of the ELP and all the processes of

the ELP use like responsibility for self-assessment. A third principle is that the ELP fosters competence in languages learned both within and outside the formal education system. The ELP is also reported to involve learners in the process of planning, monitoring and evaluating the learning in order to promote learner autonomy. The ELP also encourages self-assessment which is independent of the teacher assessment (Council of Europe, 2004).

Components of the ELP

The ELP has three main sections, the language passport, language biography and the dossier, all of which show students' language learning processes.

The Principles and Guidelines approved by the Council of Europe (2004) define the three components of the ELP as follows:

The Language Passport section provides an overview of the individual's proficiency in different languages at a given point in time. The overview is defined in terms of skills and the common reference levels in the Common European Framework. It records formal qualifications and describes language competencies and significant language and intercultural learning experiences. The skills referred to in the language passport are understanding (listening and reading), speaking (spoken interaction and spoken production), and writing; while the levels, derived from the Council of Europe's Common European Framework, are basic user (A1: Breakthrough and A2: Waystage), independent user (B1: Threshold and B2: Vantage), and proficient user (C1: Effective Operational Proficiency and C2: Mastery). The language passport also includes information on partial and specific

competence and it allows for self-assessment, teacher assessment and assessment by educational institutions and examinations boards. It requires that information entered in the Passport states on what basis, when and by whom the assessment was carried out. The learner is expected to assess his/her own language proficiency and update the language passport at regular intervals to reflect his/her language learning process and intercultural learning experiences, which show the ownership of the learner. To facilitate pan-European recognition and mobility a standard presentation of a Passport Summary is also promoted by the Council of Europe for ELPs aimed at adults.

The Language Biography facilitates the learner's involvement in planning, reflecting upon and assessing his or her learning process and progress through goal-setting and self-assessment checklists. It encourages the learner to state what s/he can do in each language and to include information on linguistic and cultural experiences gained in and outside formal educational contexts. The language biography is also organized to promote plurilingualism, i.e. the development of competencies in a number of languages.

The Dossier offers the learner the opportunity to select materials to document and illustrate achievements or experiences recorded in the Language Biography or Passport. This section usually consists of simply a title and table of contents, in which students collect the materials that support their learning. Learners may demonstrate evidence of their achievements or experiences in the language passport. They can include letters, project works, memoranda, brief reports, and audio or visual cassettes which show their proficiency in the language in the ELP (Council of Europe, 2004).

## Functions of the ELP

The ELP has two functions; namely pedagogical and reporting functions and these functions are interdependent (Council of Europe, 2004).

The pedagogical function of the ELP is that it helps the language learning process to become more transparent and the learners to become more aware of the language learning process, develop capacity for reflection and self-assessment and enable them to take more control of their own learning; thus become autonomous and responsible language learners. This function overlaps the interest of Council of Europe in promoting learner autonomy and promoting lifelong learning (Little & Perclova, 2001).

As regards its reporting function, Little and Perclova (2001) resembles the ELP to an artist's portfolio and explains that the ELP gives the learners the opportunity to display their own abilities and experiences in the language learning process. Kohonen (2000) also emphasizes that the reporting function of the ELP provides a record of the linguistic and cultural skills the students have acquired. He states that the reporting function can take place in each section of the ELP: in the Passport, the Biography and in the Dossier section. He adds that students' self-assessments comprises a significant element in the reporting and that kind of a reporting helps learners realize their own roles as responsible learners. The Dossier section also encourages learners to select relevant learning documents of their own and illustrate their language skills or experiences through documents.

The European Language Portfolio Project (1998-2009)

Before its launch in 2001, the ELP was piloted in 16 European countries and more than 30000 learners took part in it. The pilot project was documented in the Final Report on the pilot project phase (1998-2000) of a European Language Portfolio, by the project's General Rapporteur, Rolf Scharer. Both qualitative and quantitative feedback were gathered from learners, teachers and coordinators. Quantitative feedback was gathered through questionnaires and the results indicated that the ELPs generally worked satisfactorily under pilot conditions. The qualitative feedback was gathered through structured formal and informal class and learner observations and structured and unstructured interviews with learners, teachers, parents and project leaders. Results in general showed that 68 % of learners felt the time spent on keeping an ELP was time well-spent, 70 % of teachers find the ELP is a useful tool for the learners and 78 % of teachers find the ELP is a useful tool for the teachers. Learner self-assessment is also considered to be a motivating and innovative strategy since it enabled learners to assess their competence on the background of a European level system. The ELP is also seen sufficient to foster the declared aims of the Council of Europe (Scharer, 2000).

After the pilot phase of the ELP (1998-2000), the ELP has been officially launched in 2001 and since then an intergovernmental Council of Europe (CoE) seminar on the ELP is organized regularly every year, which documents and consolidates developments and insights, offers help to developers, and monitors ELP-related research. The insights on the ELP across Europe are gathered and

summarized in interim and final consolidated reports. In the consolidated report entitled A European Language Portfolio: From piloting to implementation (2001-2004), it is reported that over 1,250.000 ELPs had been disseminated across Europe by 2004 and 64 ELP models were validated. The feedback from them was predominantly positive. The report outlined not only the benefits but also challenges to successful ELP implementation. It is reported that some teachers and learners are still unwilling to start using the ELP because of its lack of a declared status. There is also a general agreement that teacher education is needed for successful widespread implementation and dissemination of the ELP. And that the experience gained through pilot projects should be collected, analysed, consolidated and transferred in order to build up a source of inspiration through collection of examples of good practice for the increasing number of follow-up projects (Scharer, 2004).

In the European Language Portfolio: From piloting to implementation 2001-2007, Interim Report, based on reported activities, developments and outcomes it has been concluded that the ELP contributes significantly to the dissemination of European goals, values, concepts and principles, it makes a difference in educational practice and it performs as a catalyst for change at European, national and local levels (Scharer, 2008). The table below shows the reported number of ELPs produced, distributed and used from 2001-2007 (Scharer, 2008,p.3).

Table 4. Reported numbers of ELPs produced, distributed, used

| School/academic year | Cumulative total of individual ELPs produced/distributed * 1 | Learners using an ELP as reported by school/academic year * 2 | Number of ELP models validated during the calendar year - cumulative * 3 | Average number of copies in use for all validated ELP models * 4 | Number of multipliers formed during the design and pilot phase * 5 cumulative |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Up to 2000 | ~ | ~ 30.000 | 6 | 5000 | 300 300 |
| 2001-2002 | ~ | ~ 135.000 | 19 - 25 | 5400 | 950 1250 |
| 2002-2003 | ~ | ~ 220.000 | 16 - 41 | 5400 | 800 2250 |
| 2003-2004 | ~ | ~ 315.000 | 17 - 58 | 5400 | 850 3100 |
| 2004-2005 | ~ 1.250.000 | ~ 514.000 | 11 - 69 | 7500 | 550 3650 |
| 2005-2006 | ~ 2.000.000 | ~ 504.000 rev. | 4 - 73 | 6900 | 200 3850 |
| 2006-2007 | ~ 2.500.000 | ~ 584.000 | 15 - 88 | 6600 | 750 4600 |
| 2007-2008 | ~ 3.000.000 | ~ ? | 11 - 99 | ? | 550 5150 |

In interpreting the reported numbers above it is important to note that they indicate approximate numbers of ELPs reported to be produced, distributed or used in 47 member states of Council of Europe. It should also be heeded that not all the ELPs produced are distributed and not all the ELPs distributed are being used (Scharer, 2008).

It has been reported that in the implementation process of the ELP from 2001 to 2007, the ELP is an effective learning and reporting tool in a wide variety of contexts and fosters dialogue and cooperation in the language learning process. It is

also concluded that it fosters learner autonomy and affects motivation positively. In addition, it is an effective tool of reflection and self-assessment. Besides its positive effects, some concerns as to its implementation have also been reported. It is stated that the ELP cannot be an efficient tool if it is only used mechanically to check progress. The ELP should also provide teachers and learners with tangible benefits if it is to maintain its effect and attractiveness. It is also highlighted that the gap between the demands of the curriculum and the ELP principles should not be too wide in order to be able to make use of the ELP efficiently. The status of the ELP also needs to be defined on the broad educational level as well as in the local context and teacher and learner support should be provided to achieve the desirable long-term effects (Scharer, 2008).

In the 8th European Language Portfolio Seminar (2009), it was reported that the ELP has developed into a unique personal learning and reporting tool. It was further argued that language learning is no longer limited to the language classroom and the "can do" approach is very motivating for the students (Little, 2009a)

The Finnish European Language Portfolio Piloting Project

As part of the large research and development project carried out under the auspices of the Council of Europe, Finland undertook a national pilot project (1998-2001) in Tampere, Finland. It was coordinated by the Department of Teacher Education in Tampere University under the leadership of Viljo Kohonen and Ulla Pajukanta. The project carried out in 8 schools (4 lower secondary, 2 upper secondary and 2 vocational schools) included a total of 360 students and 22 language teachers. It was

extended over three school years. The project aimed at promoting self-directed socially responsible language learning,  developing reflective learning and self-assessment, developing the pedagogic and reporting functions of the language portfolio, fostering language teachers' professional growth, supporting negotiated learning and examining the practicality and feasibility of the language portfolio for the students, teachers and educational institutions(Kohonen, 2003). The project particularly focused on the role of the dossier as a both pedagogical and reporting instrument. As a pedagogical instrument, it was used in negotiating the tasks, deadlines and ways of working; setting aims for their projects, making action plans and monitoring the learning process. It was also used to comment on each other's learning processes and assignments. The reporting function of the Dossier included learners' making a selection of their portfolio assignments by collecting written or spoken records of authentic documents of their learning. This kind of a reporting on language learning was carried out at the end of the school year for summative evaluation. Learners evaluated their assignments using the self-assessment sheets. This dual function of the dossier helped learners gradually take charge of their language learning through a negotiated teaching learning process. That's how they broadened the term 'portfolio assessment' to 'portfolio- oriented pedagogy'. This pedagogy was characterised by giving students opportunities to introduce themselves in their own personal ways, giving them a range of evidence of quality learning, carrying a number of learning tasks, with an action plan negotiated with the teacher, reflecting on the contents and processes of language learning, involving peer assessment and teacher comments and demonstrating what the students can do with her/his language skills in relation to the proficiency level descriptors (Kohonen,

2004).

The data of the study were gathered from the teachers' developmental essays at the end of the project, student questionnaires and interviews, discussions and reporting at the end of the evaluation seminars. The findings in the Finnish ELP Project showed that the ELP is an effective tool for promoting learner autonomy in the foreign language education since it provided flexibility in terms of the language skills by allowing students to work at their levels of proficiency , broadened students' views of language and communication through the use of descriptors and checklists which helped them to gradually develop a metacognitive understanding of language , enhanced students' self-understanding and ownership of learning by allowing them to make their own choices, helped students to monitor the progress of their learning over time through continuous reflections on the assignments and gave teachers new ways of fostering student learning (Kohonen, 2004). Kohonen (2004) states that negotiating the aims, contents and processes of the course with students helps them to gradually take more responsibility for their own learning.

The Irish Post-primary ELP Evaluation Project

ELP in Irish post-primary schools project was coordinated by the Centre for Language and Communication Studies (CLCS), Trinity College, Dublin. This project was the springboard for the implementation of the ELP in this research context. The project is based on the principle of learner autonomy as its pedagogical approach. In order to apply this principle into the classroom practice , the use of the target language in the classroom is enhanced, teachers are helped more to develop

their planning skills and learners are encouraged to accept responsibility for their own learning. To facilitate this process, the ELP was used during 18 months in Irish post-primary schools. The design of the ELP was shaped in checklists for goal-setting and self-assessment, which helped them to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning and become reflective learners. The ELP also aimed to foster the development of learners' linguistic awareness as well as their awareness concerning the language learning process by engaging them in regular reflection on their learning. It also focuses on developing the intercultural awareness by allowing them space to document and reflect on their intercultural experiences (Ushioda & Ridley, 2002).

15 teachers were engaged in the classroom evaluation of the ELP. Participating teachers were asked to choose one or more pedagogical focuses, like understanding the curriculum, negotiating the homework tasks, developing reading and writing skills, developing speaking skills or doing project work. The teachers were free to integrate one or more of these focuses into their ELP practices. Learners were asked to hand in monthly reports which asked them to reflect on their implementation process of the ELP and their classroom experiences. Monthly group discussions and meetings were held during the implementation phase as well. At the end of the phase teachers were required to write a final report on their opinions about implementing the ELP. Samples of learner produced ELP documents and materials, samples of learner reflections from pages in the Language Biography, written learner reflections from one ELP project class and field notes from the classroom visits were other forms of the data gathered throughout the project.

Learners reported that the ELP helped them set targets and monitor their

progress. They also stated that it helped them record their work from which they could revise what they had learned. They also found it fun and motivating; their drawings and writings helped them learn through the activities. Creating documents was the most liked elements of working with the ELP. While some of the students reported they liked setting targets, some were reserved towards it. They also stated that setting goals made them feel more in control of their learning and that it made the learning easier.

One of the teachers in the project reported that she had a greater awareness of modifying the textbook materials to suit the levels and aims of the students. She said that it motivates learners to learn with a plan in their minds rather than just going through the activities. She also pointed that she became more aware of the needs of the learners and she can look at teaching from the learners' point of view. Another teacher who prioritized writing skills commented that learners produced much more using the ELP than they would by using the textbook. She argued that it is important for learners to have knowledge about the syllabus to set their own targets and the focus on production skills increase learners' motivation as well as leading to the development of their target language skills. Other teachers also emphasized that especially the ELP competition raised the motivation of the learners. Some other teachers reported the contributions of reflections on learners' gaining autonomy. Although all teachers took a different approach in using the ELP, they all reported having benefited from integrating it to their lessons (Ushioda & Ridley, 2002).

## The Turkish European Language Portfolio Piloting Project

After the Council of Europe (CoE) declared 2001 'European Year of Languages (EYL)' , Turkey contributed to the events of EYL by organising and taking part in the seminars, conferences and meetings. As the European Language Portfolio was also presented to all European Languages in the same year, almost all members of the CoE got involved in ELP projects to improve language learning, including the Ministry of Turkish National Education. As a first step the Ministry of Turkish National Education accepted to pilot the ELP project in some selected schools in Turkey. 14 secondary schools in Ankara and 10 secondary schools in Antalya, with a total number of 506 students and 36 teachers were chosen for the piloting project and one teacher from each school was invited to participate in an in-service training program with an ELP seminar in October 2001. In the seminar, the ELP project was presented to the teachers, the ELP models of other countries were studied, the language descriptors in these models were analysed and the stages and process of the implementation of the ELP in Turkey were discussed. It was decided to design the ELP model for Turkish high schools for the ages of fifteen and over at the end of the seminar. Before starting the implementation phase of the project, a number seminars were organised to train teachers in the use of the CEFR and the ELP. An expert was also invited from the CoE to check the non-validated Turkish ELP model and to give a seminar on the use of the ELP. The implementation of the piloting project started at the beginning of the 2002-2003 academic year. Through the end of the implementation phase, a feedback seminar was held in March 2003 to evaluate the teaching-learning process in the piloting schools (Demirel, 2003).

After being piloted in 24 schools in 2002-2003 academic year, the Turkish ELP model for students aged 15 + was sent to the Council of Europe Secretariat of the Language Policy Division for validation and in 2003 the first Turkish ELP model for students aged 15+ (numbered 47.2003) were validated and distributed to the piloting schools in Turkey (Demirel, 2003). In 2004, the number of the piloting schools were increased to 30 with a total participation of 60 teachers and 1,357 students (as shown in Table 5.) (Demirel, 2005: p.6)

Table 5. Numerical Distribution of the European Language Portfolio Piloting Groups in Turkey

| City | Schools | Teachers | Students |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ankara | 12 | 24 | 486 |
| Antalya | 7 | 14 | 224 |
| İstanbul | 5 | 10 | 285 |
| İzmir | 1 | 2 | 76 |
| Adana | 1 | 2 | 80 |
| Gaziantep | 1 | 2 | 72 |
| Bursa | 1 | 2 | 48 |
| Edirne | 1 | 2 | 46 |
| Düzce | 1 | 2 | 40 |
| Total | 30 | 60 | 1,357 |

In the 2004-2005 academic year, two commissions were set up to advance the studies regarding the use of the ELP. The first commission dealt with preparing activities, tasks and testing items for the levels of B1 and B2 to be used at secondary schools. The second commission was involved in developing a new ELP model for the ages of 05-09 and 10-14 (Demirel, 2005). The Turkish ELP model for learners aged from 10 to 14 was validated by the Council of Europe in 2006 with the validation number of 80.2006. It is possible for every citizen in Turkey to download an ELP model for ages 10-14 or 15-18 frım the website of Ministry of National Education (www.meb.gov.tr). Ankara University also developed and implement an ELP model

for adult learners. This model gained validation by the Council of Europe in 2004 and at present is the only validated ELP model for adults in Turkey (www.coe.int)

In Turkey a well-known private educational institution also developed its own ELP models , first for learners aged from 10 to14 and then for learners aged from 05 to 09. Mirici, the coordinator of the ELP Project in the school, states that the development of the ELP took over a year and underwent the stages of training, drafting, trialing and validation. The ELP model for learners aged from 10 to 14 was validated in 2006 and the one for the ages of 05 to 09 was accredited in 2007 (Mirici, 2008).

According to the European Language Portfolio: Interim Report 2006, the estimated number of learners using the ELP in Turkey was 13500. This number comprised the ELP models of Ministry of Education for ages 10-14 and 15-18, ELP models of the well-known private school for ages 5-9 and 10-11 and the adult ELP model of Ankara University (Scharer, 2007).

## The European Language Portfolio and Learner Autonomy

The Council of Europe's educational projects have always emphasized the importance of learner autonomy (Little, 2002). In the Principles and Guidelines, it is explicitly mentioned that the ELP is a tool for learner autonomy and it develops the capacity for independent language learning. It is also insisted that it is the property of the learner, all of which imply that learners aim to gain autonomy by exercising their ownership by using the ELP to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning (Council of Europe, 2004). Kohonen (2001) states that students can have an idea of what they

can do with the language in concrete situations and tasks; so the functional ‘can do’ statements can help them understand and assess what they can do with their language in specific contexts. Being the core elements of learner autonomy, planning, monitoring and evaluating learning help students to develop metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness by enabling reflection on the learning processes and target language (Ushioda & Ridley, 2002).

In terms of goal setting through the ELP to advance learner autonomy, the descriptors and self-assessment checklists in the ELP promote meta-cognitive awareness of different skills, linguistic forms and strategies of learning. In this way students see the aims of their language learning in a more specific way. As they gradually understand the descriptors, they use them to set their aims by using the ‘I can…’ statements (Kohonen, 2004). There are different ways to use the descriptors and checklists to help learners set learning objectives. Some teachers get their learners to set short-term objectives to focus their leaning on for a few weeks and then set new goals by reflecting on ‘I can do’ objectives; some teachers get their learners to establish their own long-term learning goals at the beginning of the course; and some enables their learners to achieve their aims by writing the descriptors of a certain level on a poster and asking students to put their names on it as they achieve a particular descriptor (Little & Perclova, 2001).

Choosing and/or activities and materials is also an indispensable aspect of learner autonomy that can be facilitated through the ELP. Kohonen (2004) states that seeing options, making choices, reflecting on the processes and outcomes and making new action plans help students develop more autonomy on their learning. The teachers in the Finnish project found that independent student learning is

enhanced when students are not given ready made materials, activities or tasks, but when they are given assignments that were open enough to leave space for their own choices and to create their own materials. Little and Perclova (2001) also suggest building up a bank of home-made learning activities if the learners regularly create exercises in this way.

Regarding reflection fostered through the ELP, learners can reflect before they take an active role in a learning activity or communicative task by setting learning goals in the biography (planning), while they are performing the activity or task (monitoring), and after they have completed it (evaluation) by choosing the materials to include in the dossier, reviewing the learning goals set in the biography and adding more information on their profile of language skills in the passport (Little & Perclova, 2001). In developing the Finnish ELP Project, Kohonen (2004) focuses on the pedagogical significance of the ELP as a tool for reflective learning and he explores reflection based on students' self understanding as language learners in the learning process. In this project, to introduce reflection, the teachers begin with the students themselves as language learners. They develop questions to guide students through reflecting on their learning in general as students and their language learning processes and aims in particular. The questions explore what students see as their strengths and weaknesses as a student and as a language learner; what goals they wish to set for the course and what they will be doing to reach these goals; how they might improve their working habits and improve their participation in groups, and so forth. Kohonen (2001) states that facilitating students to reflect on their learning processes and outcomes increases the visibility of the language learning since the goals, processes and the outcomes of language learning become

more transparent to the students and they can see their progress of learning over time in terms of their linguistic abilities and study skills. Kohonen (2004) suggests that before using the self assessment grid right away, students should be taught to be more reflective on their learning processes.

Another crucial aspect of learner autonomy, carrying out self-assessment, can be carried out in all 3 components of the ELP. The passport entails learners to assess their proficiency using the scales and descriptors derived from the Common European Framework. This kind of an assessment forms as a summative assessment. The biography provides regular goal setting, which learners can do only if they regularly assess their own learning progress. When learners review their learning targets, they can write a short self-assessment on whether they have achieved their objectives, if so with what degree, etc. Lastly, the dossier also requires self-assessment while the learners select the material to include in the dossier. The self-assessment that is carried out in the biography and dossier components has a formative assessment function (Little & Perclova, 2001).

Little and Perclova (2001) make distinctions between three kinds of focus for self-assessment. The first focus for self-assessment is the learning process itself based on learners' perceptions and feelings. Learners need to assess how well they are progressing overall or at a particular stage, and how successful they are in performing individual learning tasks and meeting specific learning goals. Self-assessment with this focus is an integral part of the reflective approach to learning. The second focus for self-assessment is the learner's communicative proficiency in terms of the Council of Europe's scales and descriptors. In this phase, language learners may easily fall into the trap of thinking that they have a wider range of oral

proficiency than is actually the case. But this is dealt with by requiring learners to demonstrate that they do indeed possess the skills they claim to possess. The third focus for self-assessment is the learner's linguistic proficiency – the words and the structures he knows and uses, the sounds he can articulate. Learners monitor, correct and refine their linguistic output in assessing their linguistic proficiency. In order to help learners to assess their own linguistic proficiency, teachers may give them tasks that they can correct for themselves or they can get learners to correct one another's work. Self-assessment of three types can be introduced gradually by discussing learning goals with the whole class, getting learners to assess their own or each other's work in pairs, talking to learners individually about their progress, getting learners to write individual reflections and write their self-assessment (Little & Perclova, 2001).

## Research on the European Language Portfolio and Learner Autonomy in Turkey

Based on the piloting project carried out in some selected schools in 2002-2003 academic year, Demirel (2003) conducted a study in the piloting schools by collecting data through questionnaires and interviews with learners and teachers. The sampling group of this research consisted of 18 schools in Ankara and Antalya, with 24 teachers and 127 students. The questionnaire and the interviews aimed at taking the general opinions about the ELP and the practical recommendations for future practices. The learning and teaching activities used included creating activities for the language descriptors, making group projects for oral discussion, preparing daily news, keeping a diary and writing on some selected topics. The teachers reported

that using the ELP contributed to the language learning and teaching process positively and motivated students to a large extent. They stated that their students gained more responsibility and the ability to assess themselves. They also suggested that a resource book and supplementary materials which include activities that correspond to the descriptors in the portfolio be prepared and in-service teacher training seminars be held nation-wide regularly. Demirel (2003) argues that a new curricula or the restatement of the current curricula through the reference levels of the Common European Framework are necessary for implementing the ELP in Turkey. He argues that this will help learners and teachers to adopt a more communicative orientation towards language learning and teaching. Since the statement of objectives in the ELPs is related to the four language skills, Demirel (2003) recommends that a skill-based approach be put into practice. Textbooks should also be redesigned in accordance with the objectives made clear in the descriptors. He adds to his argument that the ELP promotes learner autonomy since it fosters in and out of school learning, in which learners are independent in determining their learning objectives and in shouldering more responsibility. He also maintains that a communicative approach needs to be adopted by the teachers in order to make efficient use of the ELP. He adds to his argument to assert that like many other pedagogical inventions, the effective implementation of the ELP will necessitate some time and commitment on the part of the teachers, students and administrators.

Egel (2003) researched the development and implementation of an ELP junior model for Turkish primary school students and also investigated the impact of the ELP on the learner autonomy of the students. The fourth and the fifth grades of

two primary schools, one being a public and the other one a private school, were chosen as the participants of the study and were divided into control and experimental groups. A Learner Autonomy Questionnaire was distributed to the students before and after the experimental treatment and 'Learner Anchor Questions' designed by the Council of Europe were administered at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the implementation. After implementing the ELP in the experimental group classes, it was found that ELP was an influential tool in promoting learner autonomy of the students in the experimental group, especially those in the state public school.

Glover, Mirici and Aksu (2005) implemented the ELP with two classes in a university preparatory school in Mugla and the study aimed to find how the ELP worked in that context and how the teachers and students responded to it. After the piloting was carried out for 6 months, the data were collected through questionnaires administered to 25 students out of the 50 who had used the portfolio and group interviews with teachers and students. The results showed a positive attitude towards the ELP and most of the students reported that they became more interested in their own learning with the help of the ELP. The teachers agreed that the ELP contributed to the motivation of students and that the attendance in the ELP user class remained high to the end of the year. Not all the answers to the questionnaires were positive though. Students were not that positive in answering the question of to what extent they took responsibility for their own learning with new materials and techniques. Their answers also clustered on the negative side for the question of how much they participated in group work. Another criticism of the ELP was that it was bulky, so it was difficult to bring it in every lesson. Teachers also expressed

uncertainty as to the status and purpose of the ELP.

Koyuncu (2006) investigated the effect of the European Language Portfolio on learner autonomy for young learners. The study was conducted with seventeen 6th grade students in a private school over a term. The data was collected through questionnaires, observations and interviews with the students. The study revealed that students liked working with the ELP and thought that the studying process for the ELP was helpful. Majority of the students thought that the ELP showed them what they can do in English and that the 'can do' parts made them aware of their improvement in language process. It was also concluded that the ELP had a great role in assessing their language skills and that it gave them the opportunity to compare their own assessments with the teacher's. The ELP was also considered to be helpful by 60 percent of the students in taking more responsibility of their own learning.

Ceylan (2006) investigated the role of the ELP on self-directed learning in a school of foreign languages in Turkey. It also examined the attitudes of students, teachers and administrators towards the implementation of the ELP. 26 volunteer upper-intermediate level students studying in the school of languages of a public university, 3 teachers and 2 administrators participated in the study. Interviews with students, the teacher and administrators were carried out and questionnaires were conducted with the students. Besides these, student learning diaries and the ELPs formed as other data collection instruments. The results revealed that most of the students had positive attitudes towards the ELP; however they were also reported to have difficulty in setting their own targets and assessing themselves. They also reported that the ELP required extra time, so it needs to be implemented on a

voluntary basis. The teachers also agreed that the ELP was a useful tool to promote self-directed learning; but that it could be hard to implement it in that context due to the workload of both the students and teachers. The administrators felt positive towards the ELP and suggested conducting pilot projects before implementing it into the curriculum.

Güneyli and Demirel (2006) conducted a study in TOMER ( the language center of Ankara University) with a sample of 20 students in the control and 20 students in the experimental group aiming to adapt the ELP to the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language. In this study students' proficiency level of Turkish related to four basic language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and their attitude towards ELP application were examined. It was found out that after a month's implementation of the ELP, learners reported having positive attitudes towards using the ELP in learning Turkish as a foreign language since they have been given the chance to monitor their own learning process and assess themselves.

Karagöl (2008) also investigated the effects of involving learners in the learning and decision-making process through the use of the ELP on learner autonomy and its contributions to the intrinsic motivation of the learners. Thirty three six grade students at a public primary school participated in the study. The data was collected through questionnaires about autonomy and motivation; and observations. It was found that self-assessment checklists and learners' taking active role in choosing their tasks fostered their autonomy and this in turn raised their intrinsic motivation towards language learning.

In this chapter, firstly the scope of learner autonomy and then that of the ELP in literature have been explored. It has been found out that the ELP can serve as a

useful tool to foster learner autonomy if used appropriately. Many studies in literature addressed the issue of learner autonomy; however studies concerning exploring autonomy with reference to a European framework is rare. In addition to that, the ones on the European Language Portfolio are usually in the context of immersion programs. This study will be vital in both exploring learner autonomy around the European Language Portfolio in EFL context and also in showing particular and clear implementation practices related to it.  It also aims to be different from other relevant studies in that it will give rich accounts of the implementation of the ELP in Turkish context and shed light onto the potential of these practices to lead to learner autonomy.

# CHAPTER III

# METHODOLOGY

The study aims to explore learner autonomy in the context of the fourth and fifth grades of a private school implementing the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in Turkish context. The research questions concerning this study are as follows:

1. What is the general structure of the ELP implementation in this research context like?

2. What are the ELP related practices used in the language learning process in the fourth and fifth grade EFL classrooms in this research school?

3. In what ways do these ELP practices contribute to learners' becoming more autonomous in terms of their involvement in a) planning, b) implementing, c) monitoring and d) evaluating their own language learning?

## Research Context

The study was conducted at a primary school of a private institution consisting of 26 schools around Istanbul. These schools include 16 kindergartens, 6 primary schools and 4 high schools. It educates around 5000 students. All schools coordinate with each other and they administer the same educational system and curriculum across the same grades. The primary school chosen for research purposes has 29 English teachers for Grades 1 to 8. Ten of these English teachers teach only fourth and fifth grades. The system of education in the schools is stated to be based on encouraging

research and independent learning to enable students to enquire information, develop and make use of it. The mission of the school is to provide education that is firmly rooted in learning through experience. In terms of English language teaching, students start learning English at nursery school and the common approach to language teaching is to enable learners to use their creativity and imagination while learning to communicate in English. Students are encouraged to devise projects both in English lessons and also for multicultural activities. The lessons are planned to be student-centered, where students have opportunities to get involved in the language learning process through various kinds of communicative activities, role-plays, presentations and projects. Students are encouraged to have active roles throughout the English lessons and take initiatives to take responsibility over their learning.

## Development And Validation Process of the ELP Model For 10-14 age groups

This private school is the first school in Turkey to develop and get validation for its own European Language Portfolio for ages 5-9 and 10-14. These two portfolios aim to support students in private schools which implement intensive foreign language programs. Mirici (2008), the coordinator of the ELP project of the school, states that the ELP prepared with a group of teachers, academic and managers attempts to support learning languages by developing students' awareness of self-assessment, autonomy and cultural diversity. The European Language Portfolio Model used in that particular school was adapted from Bolzano-Alto Adige model (no 69.2005). Mirici (2008) states that the ELP was developed in four phases, namely training, drafting, trialing and validation.

In the training phase, the portfolio preparation team followed the stages of familiarizing with the CEFR levels and principles like plurilingualism, multiculturalism, European identity, self-assessment and autonomy; examining the ELP applications in various European countries, planning the project, focusing on the school curriculum to fit the ELP descriptors and reviewing accredited portfolios. In the drafting phase, firstly "can do" statements, that are appropriate for the age group and the level of the students were written and then they were examined to ensure that they match the cognitive level and life experiences of the students. Example situations were written under each descriptor. The descriptors were carefully devised to adapt them to the teaching situations and learning objectives of the curriculum. Weekly development meetings were held to work through the project plan. After checking the draft portfolio against the guidelines for developing ELP, it was presented to language teachers, parents and academics and their views were taken. After this trialing phase, the final version of the portfolio was prepared and submitted to the Council of Europe. After refining some statements and modifying some sections, The ELP model for learners aged from 10 to 14 was validated in 2006 (with the reference number of 79.2006) and the one for the ages of 05 to 09 was accredited in 2007 (with the reference number of 85.2007). (Mirici, 2008)

The ELP model is prepared in accordance with all the requirements of the Council of Europe and consists of three sections: The Biography section, the Language Passport section and the Dossier section. The self assessment grid includes levels between A1 and B2. It does not include C1 and C2 levels since it is not an adult portfolio. The portfolio is also backed up with a booklet of "Guide for teachers and parents". It is in three languages; Turkish, English and German in order to reflect

the language development of the students in a number of languages (See Appendix A for sample pages of ELP model for ages 10-14).

In order to train teachers as to the implementation of the ELP, many training sessions were held including ones by David Little. All the teachers are made aware of the requirements of the ELP and how it can best be exploited in the class.

The ELP model for ages 10-14 is used both in fourth and fifth grades. In the fourth grades, they go in line with the descriptors in A1 and half of A2. In the fifth grades, they complete the other half of A2 and start B1. The descriptors in congruence with the objective of the lesson and activities are put on weekly handouts, which are prepared by a group of English teachers. The ELP is aimed at supporting language learning in and outside the class.

## Participants

The participants of this study are twenty-two fourth grade and twenty-two fifth grade students and their two English teachers. The sampling of this study is purposeful sampling since the school is the only school to use a validated ELP of its own actively. Dörnyei (2007) maintains that purposeful sampling is appropriate for qualitative research since the main goal of qualitative research is to understand, describe and clarify a human experience and it is not concerned with how representative the sample is. She adds that the focus is to find individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the subject so as to maximize what we can learn. The school chosen for research was the best candidate to provide rich and varied information on how to implement the ELP in Turkish context. The sampling within

the students and teachers was also purposeful. Although the implementation of the ELP was standardized through some training and in-class procedures, the head of department for fourth and fifth grades, who was also involved in the process of developing the ELP and ensured the implementation of the ELP in fourth and fifth grades, was chosen as one of the participating teachers who could provide the richest information and insight; so one of her classes in fifth grades was selected for observation. The second teacher, who was the English teacher of a fourth grade class, was also chosen by the same teacher since she was the head of the department for fourth and fifth grades. Thus it can be said the sampling was chosen to provide me, as a primary research instrument, with varied and rich information and insight about the implementation of the ELP and its role on learner autonomy.

Both of the participating teachers were female and non-native English teachers. Both of the teachers graduated from the English language teaching departments of universities in Turkey. The English teacher of the fourth grade was 35 years old and it was her second year in the school. She had been teaching English for ten years. The English teacher of the fifth grade was 32 years old and it was her 8$^{th}$ year in teaching English. She had been teaching in that school for four years and she was the Head of Department for fourth and fifth grades. Both of the teachers are trained on the implementation of the ELP and its principles through seminars and sessions. Both of them adopt communicative techniques to engage learners in the process of language learning.

Participating students have 10 hours of English instruction in a week. Students in fourth grades started the ELP model for 10-14 years at the beginning of the first term. For the fifth grade students, it is their second year using the ELP. Most

of them have been in the same school since the first grade. They started learning English in the first grade (some even earlier). Especially the fifth grade students are quite fluent in English. At the end of the term fourth graders are expected to reach up to A2 level and fifth grades are anticipated to finish A2 and start B1 level. They are also required to pass the KET exam administered by the University of Cambridge at the end of the fifth grade. Students in both classes are generally enthusiastic to learn English and take their own initiatives to do so. They like group work projects and role-play activities.

## Ethics and Reciprocity

Permission for carrying out a research in that particular school was taken from the Istanbul Directorate of National Education (See Appendix B for the permission letter). The permission letter was presented to the school and permission to observe classes, audiotape some lessons, interview students and teachers and collect artifacts was taken from the administrators and teachers. The real names of students and teachers are not used throughout the study. The teachers are referred to as ‘the English teacher of fourth grade’ and ‘the English teacher of fifth grade’. I will submit the final version of this research to the Governorship of Istanbul and also share the findings with the participating teachers.

## Research Design

In this study, qualitative methods to construct a case-study were used in the research design. The data for this study were collected through on-site observations in two classrooms, semi-structured interviews with teachers, focus-group interviews with students and artifacts such as students' work, handouts, portfolios, teaching materials and lesson plans collected with the permission of school administration and teachers. The rationale determining the type of this study can be understood by having a look at the characteristics of qualitative research, which Merriam (1998) puts forward as follows: Firstly, qualitative researchers are concerned with understanding how people make sense of their world and construct meanings. This study as well aims to make clear the experiences teachers and learners have undergone through the ELP, and how they perceive its implementation and whether they consider it as an effective tool for learner autonomy. A second characteristic of qualitative research, as Merriam (1998) maintains, is that the instrument for data collection and analysis is the researcher her/himself. In this study as well, the data are mediated through the researcher. I, as a researcher, have been active in all stages of the research; in processing, summarizing, reducing and analyzing the data. As a third feature, a qualitative research involves fieldwork (Merriam, 1998). As Miles and Huberman (1994) also state, the qualitative research focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings. For 12 weeks, I have been a participant-observer in the school context in order to observe behavior in its natural context. Observation was valuable since it enabled me to collect and process rich amount and quality of data about the ELP- related classroom practices and to understand how the concept of

autonomy is understood in its unique context. I would not be able to get such thorough understanding without fieldwork or only through a questionnaire. As Merriam (1998) also emphasizes, qualitative research does not employ deductive strategies to test a theory; in contrast it builds abstractions, hypotheses and theories. This research does not aim to match a theory, either. Through observations, interviews and intuitive understandings gained in the field, I started to figure out some themes and concepts about the kinds of the ELP-related practices and how these practices relate to autonomous behavior of the students. I had an understanding of how the autonomy is viewed in that specific context and then I tried to form a framework that consisted of categories and concepts about autonomy. Thus, my categories and patterns were derived from the study itself. Merriam (1998) also states that qualitative study is richly descriptive; as in the current study, words and pictures rather than numbers show what the researcher has understood from the context and the data at hand. Miles and Huberman (1994) also make clear that qualitative research data provide thick descriptions of events and the context; which makes the research powerful. In the study, participants' own words, direct citations, excerpts from audiotapes, real visual documents will be used to support the findings of the study. As well as these main characteristics, this study also matches the features of a qualitative research design in that its design has been flexible and emergent. One third grade class as well as the fourth and fifth grades was being observed through the first three weeks; but then it had to be cancelled since the teacher did not want to cooperate. Likewise, open-ended questionnaires for the teachers other than the teachers being observed, were prepared; however the study had to be limited to the teachers whose classes were observed because of some administrative reasons. Miles

and Huberman (1994) state that the flexibility of the qualitative research in terms of the data collection times or methods that need to be changed as the study proceeds shows that the researcher has understood what has been going on in the study.

As a way of carrying out a qualitative research, case study application was chosen for the study. Miles and Huberman (1994) describes a case as "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (p.25). He also adds that a case is the unit of analysis and the setting, concepts, sampling and so on form the boundaries. Merriam (1998) states that qualitative case studies are generally chosen because researchers are interested in insight, discovery and interpretation. He also emphasizes that it is especially suitable for researchers who are interested in process. In this study, the process of the implementation of the ELP and that of how autonomous behavior is constructed through these practices are being explored. Merriam (1998) also mentions that a case study can be chosen "for its very uniqueness, for what it can reveal about a phenomenon, knowledge we would not otherwise have access to" (p.33). Dörnyei (2007) also states that case study method is effective in exploring undiscovered areas; similar to the current research area in which the relation between the ELP practices and autonomous behavior could not be discovered and understood in depth in any way other that case study design.

## Data Collection Procedures

Data collection for the study began in March 2009 and it was carried out till the end of the May. As stated previously, the data for this study came from (a) on-site observations, (b) semi-structured interviews with teachers, (c) focus group interviews

with students, (d) audio-recording of two self-assessment sessions and (e) artifacts. My role in the classroom was that of an observer. I collected my data from one fourth and one fifth grade class in the school. The research timeline of the study is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Research Timeline

| Dates | Research activity |
|---|---|
| December 2008 | Visiting the school, getting permission from the Istanbul Directorate of National Education and from the principals of the school to conduct the research at their school providing information about the research proposal. |
| January 2009 | Presentation of the proposal. |
| February 2009 | Piloting the study, observing a few classes, gaining more insight about the implementation of the European Language Portfolio; arranging the classes to be observed, establishing rapport with the teachers to work with, arranging the days and hours for classroom observation. |
| March- June 2009 | Data collection<br>(observations, interviews with teachers and students; collecting the written documents, such as lesson plans, handouts and samples of the student's work) |
| July- September 2009 | Transcription of the interviews and early analysis of the data |
| October 2009 – February 2010 | Analysing the data using N-VIVO 8 and writing the literature review. |
| February –May 2010 | Writing the thesis. |

## Observations

The observations in the fourth and fifth grade classes focused on the implementation of the ELP and its effect on the autonomy of the students. Field notes concerning how the descriptors are integrated into the materials, how they are introduced in the class, what kind of a role they have in learners' getting involved in the lesson and whether they help learners plan, monitor or evaluate their language learning are taken as part of the observation. Audio or video recordings were not able to be done because of administrative reasons. I visited the site once a week from 10 a.m to 2 p.m. I generally observed each class for two hours a week. The observations lasted for twelve weeks from early March to the end of the May. In total I had 48 hours of

observation throughout the study.  I could not observe the classes in the week of twenty-third of April and nineteenth of May, since they were national holidays and learners were busy with getting prepared for the festival and the picnic on these days. In the last two weeks of my observation, self-assessments through the ELPs were carried out throughout the lessons with one to one and group conferences with students. During the observations, I had an observation sheet on which I kept my descriptive notes explaining the context, the process and observations for the particular day and time; and reflective field notes where I recorded my reflections and comments on classroom teaching and learning experiences. I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible by not having eye contact with children and sitting at the back rows. My notes generally included reconstruction of dialogues occurring in the classroom among the students and the teacher, as well as the dialogues between me and the teachers outside the classroom; accounts of particular events and depiction of activities. As part of reflections, I took notes as to the themes that are emerging during the observation, connections between pieces of data, my own thoughts about the flow of the lesson or about a particular event or activity in the lesson, and any other thoughts and comments that pop up. Day by day emergence of the themes and how I can put them into categories for analysis were always a part of the reflective notes and memos. I also wrote down the methodological problems I have encountered and how I can deal with them. Observations of lessons and any other field-notes were written down in reports immediately after the observation that week in order not to lose any crucial points and to elaborate and reflect on the data when it is still vivid in the memory

## Interviews with teachers

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the two English teachers of the fourth and fifth grade classes at the end of the data collection process. Interviews were carried out at the beginning of June 2009 and they were conducted in Turkish. Each interview lasted for about 30 minutes. The interview excerpts used in the data display were translated to English as appropriate. In the semi-structured interviews I had with the two English teachers, I asked how the implementation of the ELP is carried out in their lessons, what they think about the implementation and how the implementation is related to the autonomy of the learners. I explored to what extent they think the practices related to the ELP lead learners to become more aware of their learning process, take initiatives to get involved in their own language learning process by setting goals, choosing the content of their works, creating materials or evaluating themselves. Interviews with the teachers lasted approximately 25-30 minutes and they were taped and transcribed. (See Appendix C for semi-structured interview questions)

## Focus group interviews

Four focus group interviews were carried out with twenty-eight fourth and fifth grade students in total. The groups consisted of seven students for each group (3 girls and 4 boys in the first fourth grade group, 4 girls and 3 boys in the second fourth grade group, 3 girls and 4 boys in the first fifth grade group; and 4 girls and 3 boys in the second fifth grade group.) Students were selected randomly from a list of students'

names; so that dissimilar people comprising the group could provide varied data that covers all angles. The groups were small enough to ease the transcribing process and large enough to allow for discussion of rich information. Each interview lasted for about 25 minutes and they were conducted in Turkish and tape-recorded to increase the accuracy of data collection and ease the process of responding to interviewee needs and cues. Semi-structured interview questions were addressed to students. Interview questions were piloted with a group of students two weeks before the real focus group interviews. A few questions were added and the wording of some questions were changed as a result of this piloting (See Appendix D for semi-structured interview questions). The role of the researcher was that of a facilitator and leader of the discussion, making sure that nobody dominated the floor and shy students can also express their views.

### Audio-recordings of self-assessment sessions

In the last two weeks of the 12 week observations, self-assessment sessions were carried out with students in group conferences and two of them were audio taped. They were then transcribed. The recordings played a crucial role in gaining an insight as to learners' understanding and assessment of their own language learning process. Audio recordings were also transcribed.

## Artifacts

Written documents containing information or insights relevant to the research questions were collected. These include weekly lesson plans, ELP-based handouts, weekly worksheets, samples of students' work, ELP checklists and self-assessment rubrics. The data in the artifacts furnished descriptive information by providing the last step of triangulation of the data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) point out that documents are useful for theory building in case study research since they are the products of the context in which they were produced; so they are grounded in the real world. As Dörnyei (2007) also expresses, document data are objective sources compared to other forms like observation and interviewing and it helps to ground the research in the context of the problem being investigated.

## Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis of this study was based on qualitative research techniques from case study research. For all the three research questions, data from observations and interview transcriptions were analyzed. As soon as the data from observations, interviews or documents began to be compiled, the data needed to be condensed and analyzed to suit the aims of the research. The early analysis of the data from observations and interviews started during data collection in this study. As more and more lessons were observed, recurrent themes became much more evident. There were not any lists of codes formed before observations; however since the literature about autonomy and ELP were read and piloting of the study was made, as a

researcher, I had a few expected codes related to the ELP practices and autonomy in my mind, which mostly changed and developed as the field experience continued. Firstly, types of practices related to the ELP were carefully observed and elaborated on to determine the most recurrent practices implemented related to the ELP. As the themes and codes started to emerge, early analysis started, too. After collecting all the data, they were loaded into a qualitative analysis software 'N Vivo 8'. Firstly, codes and categories regarding the relation between these practices and autonomous behavior started to emerge. This type of coding was referred to as 'open coding' by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and 'first-level coding' by Miles and Hubermann (1994). The software N Vivo 8 allowed me to put more than one code for a piece of data- a clause, a sentence or a paragraph; which would be quite hard to do if the analysis was made manually since the margins would be piled up with multiple codes. The field notes of different groups together with interview reports also got easier to compare and contrast for regularly occurring phrases. The software also enabled me to extend the codes I formed in early analysis, allowing me to step onto the second stage of analysis, as Miles and Hubermann (1994) calls 'pattern coding'. The codes were grouped into themes and constructs. New or previously not understood relations were also identified thanks to the easiness of compiling all related accounts under one category or code in N Vivo 8. When all the codes and categories were once more reviewed in N Vivo 8, it has been found that the recurrent themes and codes related to autonomy were very similar to the definition of autonomy put forward by Little (2009b) as 'reflective involvement in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating learning" (p.153). Thus, patterns like 'planning', 'implementing', 'monitoring' and 'evaluating learning' were formed, which match the construct

‘autonomy’. When categories were saturated and sufficient numbers of regularities emerged, coding and recoding were finished. This type of an inductive approach fits well into the ‘grounded theory’ advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), which argues for generating new theoretical insights on the basis of empirical data

In order to enhance internal validity and reliability, triangulation of the data was carried out. The data from observations, interviews and artifacts were compared and contrasted to show that independent sources and methods of data confirm the emerging finding. Member checks were also done to ensure the internal validity of the research by taking the data and some tentative interpretations back to the teachers and asking them if the results are plausible. Long term observations at the research site for twelve weeks also enabled me to find out sufficient number of regularities, which ensured the validity of the data. To check inter-rater reliability, check-coding was carried out with another researcher to expand or amend the codes. Code-recode reliability was also provided by first coding some of the interview and observation notes right away and then re-coding it again after a few days. It was interesting to see some minor changes in the codes and it was worthwhile to compare them to sharpen the codes. Thick and rich explanations were also provided to enable readers who are interested in applying the ELP in their schools to determine how close their situation is to the research situation and whether findings of this research can be applied to their context, which in turn aims to enhance the generalizability of the research. To enhance the descriptive and interpretive validity of the data, the number of references made as to a pattern was calculated with N-Vivo 8. Then the number of these references were transformed into percentages and displayed in charts. External

validity of the research was also enhanced by cross-checking the findings of the research with those of the other research studies in literature.

The table below summarizes the research questions, data collection instruments and data analysis procedures used throughout the research.

Table 7. Summary of Methodological Procedures

| Research Questions | Data Collection Instruments | Data Analysis Procedures |
|---|---|---|
| 1. What is the overall structure of the ELP implementation in the school context like?<br><br>2. What are the ELP related practices used in the language learning process in the fourth and fifth grade EFL classrooms in Turkish context?<br><br>3. To what extent do these reported ELP practices help learners become more autonomous in terms of their involvement in a) planning, b) implementing, c) monitoring and d) evaluating their own language learning? | Observations of two fourth and fifth grade classes for twelve weeks<br><br>Interviews with the two English teachers<br><br>Focus group interviews with four sets of students<br><br>Audio-recordings of two self-assessment sessions<br><br>Artifacts (lesson plans, ELP-based handouts, weekly worksheets, samples of students' work, ELP checklists and self-assessment rubrics) | First level and then pattern coding (Miles and Hubermann, 1994) of observation reports, interview transcriptions and self-assessment sessions transcriptions (using N Vivo 8)<br>Document Reviews |

At the end of my analysis, particular ELP-related practices that the teachers use to integrate the ELP in the lessons emerged. They are awareness raising, goal-tracking, choosing content and creating materials, reflection and self-assessment practices. The name of the practices were used as codes in data analysis.

As the ELP-related practices were found out, their role on learner autonomy was also explored throughout data collection and analysis process. After analyzing the relation between the practices and their potential for fostering learner autonomy, the codes for learner autonomy were reduced to four main categories, which were

planning learning, implementing learning, monitoring learning and evaluating learning. Learner autonomy was explored around these four main aspects of learner autonomy, which are also cited in Little's (2009b) definition of learner autonomy. Thus the construct 'autonomy' was explored through its own components.

This study does not aim to compare the two classes since it was not designed for this purpose. Because the implementation of the ELP does not differ across fourth and fifth levels, the main goal of the study is to present an account of ELP practices used in Turkish context and their potential for fostering learner autonomy. The findings of this study are represented in Chapter 4.

# CHAPTER IV

# RESULTS

## The General Structure of the ELP Implementation in the EFL Context

Since the implementation of the ELP changes from context to context, it is important to have a general understanding of the process of the ELP implementation in that unique context. In reference to the first research question, the overall structure of the ELP implementation will be depicted with the help of field notes, interviews and document reviews. The European Language Portfolio Model used in that particular school was adapted from Bolzano-Alto Adige model (no 69.2005) to suit the needs of the students and the aims of the foreign language teaching system in the school. Although the model has three sections, namely biography, passport and dossier sections, the passport part is not used. Only the biography section, in which the descriptors take place, and the dossier part, in which students collect the materials they have created are used. The descriptors used are aimed at being a springboard to enhance the communicative competence of the learners aged 10-14 in that context. It has been found out that the descriptors for the levels from A1 to B2 have the potential to allow for many in-class activities and practices.

The descriptors chosen for the ELP model mainly lead themselves to oral production (speaking), written production (writing), aural reception (listening), visual reception (reading), spoken interaction and written interaction activities. Descriptors for oral production are designed to allow for activities like acting out a rehearsed role, reciting songs, reporting on a topic, making presentations and so on. The

descriptor ‘I can create presentations on given topics or topics I choose myself, and explain them in such a way that the audience can understand” is an example descriptor used for the purposes of oral production. Descriptors for written production lead to activities like writing an application form, writing a personal description of a person or writing a report. “I can describe a place in short texts” can be given as an example for this category. As for aural reception (listening), the descriptors are aimed at being a basis for activities like listening for public announcements, listening to radio or TV programs and people talking to each other in everyday life. Some of these listening descriptors aim at gist understanding and some focus on specific information or detailed understanding. One of the descriptors used in one of the listening based lessons, which was ‘I can understand what is going on in the world when I watch TV, with the help of images’ can serve as an example for this group of descriptors. The descriptors for visual reception (reading) are also sources for reading for information, instructions or pleasure. The activities set with the help of the descriptors again require gist, specific information or detailed understanding. A descriptor used for the purpose of visual reception is: “I can understand simple stories and shorter texts with the help of pictures and drawings” . As for spoken interaction based descriptors, they lead to casual conversations, information exchange, formal and informal discussions. The descriptor “I can make myself understood in everyday life; sometimes I need to help myself with gestures” basically leads itself to learners’ engaging in activities that are concerned with interacting in casual conversations. Lastly, written interaction descriptors include activities like writing letters, e-mails or postcards. The descriptor used in one of the

lessons, which was “I can write a formal complaint letter” forms the basis for an activity in which parts interact with each other through written texts.

Having explained the scope of descriptors used in the ELP Model used in the school and their potential for leading to various kinds of activities, it is worth mentioning how these descriptors are integrated into the lessons. The descriptors are not used as an integral part of the curriculum. They are only put on the lesson plans and handouts weekly. As the field notes taken at the research site indicates, the implementation of the ELP starts with planning and distributing duties of preparing handouts within the group of fourth and fifth grade English teachers. Each week one group is responsible for preparing handouts in accordance with the subjects and topics of the week. The handouts mainly include listening, reading and writing related activities. As the handouts are prepared, appropriate descriptors taken from the ELP are also matched with the aims of the handouts by the teachers and these descriptors are put on one corner of the handout. Apart from putting the descriptors on the handouts, teachers also write them on the board especially in speaking activities and if the corresponding activity handouts lack descriptors. After the handouts are prepared, all the English teachers in the fourth and fifth grades use the same handouts with the ELP descriptors on them in their classes.

In order to provide a general understanding of the implementation of the ELP in that context, four typical observed lessons (each focusing on one skill) related to the ELP are depicted below.

A Sample ELP-related written production activity with fifth Graders

The teacher gives students a reading handout about a haunted house. While the students are reading it, the teacher explains them the parts of the text: the title, the introduction, body and the conclusion parts, and some cohesive devices; like “and, but, because”, so on. After introducing the parts of the text, she gives them another handout; the students are supposed to plan an essay about an interesting place they have seen. Before writing it, the teacher writes a descriptor from the orange portfolio (this is what students call the ELP) on the board. The criterion is : “I can write a text that has a beginning, course of actions/ plot and ending and use linking words like ‘first, after that, later and because.” Some of the students ask what course of actions means and the teacher explains the descriptors with reference to the parts of the reading handout they have just read. The teacher once more explains how to plan their writing. She says that they can choose any interesting place they have visited to write their essays on. Students write down some notes on the planning sheet. The teacher helps students who have difficulty in planning their essays. After they have written their plans and the teacher have checked them, students start writing the essays in the next lesson. The teacher constantly reminds them to put their essays in appropriate paragraphs and use linking words. She emphasizes that they should be as creative as possible. She limits the essay to 110 words and some students finish their essays by the end of the lesson and hand them in to the teacher. The teacher asks the students about their thoughts about the writing activity. Students make some comments like “I tried to put them in paragraphs but I don’t know whether I did it well”, “I loved the subject, it was very exciting”, “I couldn’t do the planning well”,

“I explained a very interesting place I saw when we were in Malta with my family”, “Teacher, I forgot to use ‘firstly, after that, because’” and so on. After the lesson the teacher reads the essays, writes her reflections on their essays and makes any necessary corrections (See Appendix E for the sample handout).

A Sample ELP-related Visual Reception (Reading) activity with fourth Graders

Students have been reading the book ‘The magic finger’ for a month. The aim of the lesson is for the students to comprehend both the gist and some details of a similar but a shorter story. The teacher starts with a power point story, called ‘The magic pencil’. The story talks about a boy who has found a magic pencil to make his wishes come true. The teacher writes the criterion on the board: “I can understand simple stories and shorter texts with the help of pictures and drawings”. The teacher reads the story with the students and the slides have many illustrations for the students to understand the story and the unknown words in it. When there is a new word to learn in the story, there is a corresponding picture of it on the slide page. Having read the story by making some new words clear with the help of pictures and drawings, she asks the students whether they think they have understood the story. The students firstly all agree. Then, she wants them to remember the pictures on the power point and the book. She asks whether they think the pictures have helped them. One of the students says that they do not need to read the text again because they can remember it with the help of the pictures. “So let’s try to answer the questions”, the teacher says. She gives the reading handout on which the same descriptor is written to the class, and says “now you can understand whether you have really understood the text

with the help of pictures. If you do not have mistakes it means that you have really understood it well." Students answer the questions. First they put the events in order and then match the description in column A with a character in column B. After they have finished the exercises, they have a pair check followed with a whole-class feedback. The teacher asks to the students 'what do you think about your answers? Do you think you could understand the text with the help of pictures? One of the students answers ' I can see that I haven't understood it very well, because I can't remember what 'vanish' means. So I put the sentences in the wrong order." The teacher asks a few more students about their reflections on the activity. Then she asks the class to take their portfolios and open page 33. Students go to their cupboards and take their orange portfolios. The teacher reads the descriptor: "I can understand simple stories and shorter texts with the help of pictures and drawings". "Think about all the activities we did about the magic pencil; we read the story with the help of pictures, we ordered the events and matched some descriptions with the characters. If you believe you have fully understood, please put two pluses. If you have understood it to a certain extent, put only one plus. And if you could not understand it at all put a minus. Be honest please." Students first put pluses in the corresponding part themselves, then show it to their teacher for her assessment. The teacher also puts one plus or two pluses on the corresponding part of the students' portfolios. Learners compare their assessments with the teachers. It is seen that the assessment of the students and the teacher usually match, except for a few who underrated or overrated themselves (See Appendix F for the sample handout).

A Sample ELP-related Spoken Interaction Activity with fifth Graders

The teacher starts the lesson by asking the students what 'gesture' means. After listening to a few explanations, she asks them to try to explain something to their partners with gestures. After they talk it with their partners, some students share their examples with the class. After that the teacher writes the aim of the lesson on the board, which is 'I can make myself understood in everyday life; sometimes I need to help myself with gestures.' She explains to the students that while they are speaking in English, there may be some times when they have difficulty making themselves clear. She says that they can use some gestures in those circumstances. In accordance with the aim on the board, she tells the class that they are going to have a speaking activity in which they will try to make themselves clear with gestures. She adds that the topic of the lesson is 'Danger'. Firstly, she asks students to think for a few minutes about the most dangerous thing they think in life is and then exchange their ideas with their partners. Students start talking about it and ask and answer questions to each other. The teacher reminds them to use some gestures to make themselves clear. After the students share their ideas with each other, the teacher asks the students to write the thing they have chosen as the most dangerous thing in life on a piece of paper. After the students write it, the teacher collects the pieces of paper in a box and choose one from it. The student who has written the selected paper comes to the board to support his/her idea, and other students ask her/him questions. Some of the topics the students have chosen are pollution, speed-driving, dinosaurs, nuclear weapons, terrorist attacks and wars. They try to support their ideas and other students ask them questions. The teacher always reminds them to use

gestures and mimics to make themselves understood. She always draws learners' attention to the aim written on the board. Students support their ideas very well, when they have difficulty finding the right word they make use of gestures and mimics. At the end of the lesson, the teacher asks whether it has helped students to use gestures in communicating what they mean, and the students all agree that it has made the act of talking easier and more real-like. One of the students also tells that he feels more confident in talking in English now since he knows that he can make use of gestures if he has difficulty expressing himself. A few more students agrees with him.

A Sample ELP-related Aural Reception (Listening) activity with fourth grades

First the teacher starts the lesson with a brainstorming activity on carnivals and festivals. Students talk about what they know about festivals and carnivals. They name some of them and describe what people usually wear at festivals. Then the teacher tells them that they will be watching a video and asks students what they expect to see in it. After a few guesses, she gives out the handout, and brought their attention to the box on it. It reads: "I can understand what is going on in the world when I watch TV, with the help of images." She says that they may not understand each and every word in the video but the images will help them understand what is going on in it. Then she asks them to have a look at the questions on the handout. She reads them one by one and asks students to answer these questions while watching the video. Students answer the questions while watching it. Just after watching the video, one of the students says "Can we watch it again? I couldn't

understand some parts." Some other students repeat the same thing. Then they watch the video again. After that the teacher tells them to check their answers with their friends and then asks how they think about the video. One student says, "I think it was easy", the other one says "I couldn't answer question two." Then they check the answers together (See Appendix G for the sample handout).

As can be seen in the sample lesson accounts, regardless of the skill focused on, or the type of activities being carried out, the implementation of the ELP shares similar practices. Generally, the lessons start with raising learners' awareness on the aim of the lesson through the descriptor. The aims are not set or explored by the learners; however once they are set and introduced by the teachers through the descriptors, these descriptors serve as a springboard for the learners to track their objectives by choosing to pay attention to the requirements of the activity or the material, by engaging in the lesson through interaction, choosing their own contents for the assignments, creating their own materials, reflecting on the tasks or/and assessing themselves. In each lesson, some or all of these practices were carried out by the students.

## Practices Related to the ELP

The first research question regarding the overall structure of the ELP implementation having been addressed, the second research question which deals with the particular practices used in the implementation process can be examined. It has been found out through the observations and interviews that whatever the activity or the skill focused on is, there are five common practices employed throughout the

implementation process of the ELP inside the classroom, which are namely awareness-raising through the descriptors, goal-tracking, choosing content and creating materials, reflection and self-assessment practices.

## Awareness-raising Practice

Awareness-raising practice includes learners' being made of the goals of the tasks and the competence they are required to reach before, during and after the tasks. This kind of an awareness is carried out by showing the descriptors explicitly to the students through the handouts and on the board; and attracting their attention to the goal to be achieved. This kind of an awareness raising is practiced in both production and reception based lessons. How the descriptors serve as awareness raising tools will be depicted below.

The descriptors chosen in line with the aim of each lesson serve as awareness-raising tools throughout the lessons. As the English teacher of the fifth grade says, they write the descriptors on the handouts and/or on the board to raise learners' awareness on what they can do in learning English. She adds that they try to carry out learner centered lessons; and the ELP descriptors serve as tools to make learners conscious of the functions of the language. The ELP descriptors are in the form of 'can do' statements, like " I can understand simple texts, even if I don't know all the individual words", and these statements serve as aims and objectives for students. The scope of the descriptors differ since some of them focus on a language function or a linguistic point and some of them focus on the goal of the task. Most of the descriptors are directly taken from the portfolio, but the wording of a few of them are

adjusted according to the aim of the lesson or the task in hand. Below are the descriptors used per week during the lessons observed in fourth and fifth grades:

Table 8. fourth Grades Weekly ELP Descriptors Used

| | Skill | Descriptor |
|---|---|---|
| Week 1 | Listening | ‘ I can understand simple texts, even if I don’t know all the individual words’. |
| Week 2 | Writing | “I can write simple letters and emails to friends and communicate how I am and what I am doing.” |
| Week 3 | Writing | “I can write a short text and connect individual sentences with “and”, “but” and “then”. |
| Week 4 | Speaking | “ I can create presentations on given topics or topics I choose myself, and explain them in such a way that the audience can understand.” |
| Week 5 | Speaking | “I can describe myself, my hobbies, my feelings, etc. in short texts” |
| Week 6 | Listening | “I can understand a simple conversation about everyday topics” |
| Week 7 | Listening | “I can understand what is going on in the world when I watch TV, with the help of images.” |
| Week 8 | Reading | “I can understand simple stories and shorter texts with the help of pictures and drawings.” |
| Week 9 | Writing | “I can describe a place in short texts.” |
| Week 10 | Reading | “I can find what I need in simple informative texts.” |
| Week 11 | | Self-assessment week |
| Week 12 | | Self-assessment week |

Table 9: fifth Grades Weekly ELP Descriptors Used

| | Skill | Descriptor |
|---|---|---|
| Week 1 | Speaking | “I can make myself understood in everyday life; sometimes I need to help myself with gestures.” |
| Week 2 | Writing | “I can write a text that has a beginning, course of actions/ plot and ending and use linking words like ‘first, after that, later and because.” |
| Week 3 | Writing | “I can write a formal complaint letter.” |
| Week 4 | Reading | “I can follow short argumentative texts about topics of general interest.” |
| Week 5 | Reading | “ I can read and understand the paragraphs and put them in a coherent order to build up a meaningful story.” |
| Week 6 | Writing | “I can write short texts that have a recognizable beginning, course of actions/ plot and ending, and use linking words like ‘first’, ‘then’, ‘after that’, ‘later’ and ‘because’” |
| Week 7 | Reading | “I can understand simple fiction and non-fiction stories, and answer comprehension questions about it.” |
| Week 8 | Writing | “I can describe my dreams, hopes, goals and wishes.” |
| Week 9 | Speaking | “I can act a part in a simple play or dialogue.” |
| Week 10 | Listening | “I can understand what’s going on in the world when I watch television, with the help of images.” |
| Week 11 | | Self-assessment week |
| Week 12 | | Self-assessment week |

The teacher usually starts the lesson by writing the descriptor on the board or just reading it to the class from the handout. By this way she directs students' attention on the aim of the activity or on the competence they are required to gain. As the teacher of the fifth grade says, elaborating on these descriptors makes learners aware of the goal of the lesson or task and this practice leads learners to associate the descriptor to the activity at hand. As given in the example ELP-related lesson accounts, teachers, first of all, mention the descriptors and the objectives these descriptors set for the students. She usually writes it on the board at the beginning of the activity. Awareness-raising also continues throughout the activities by teacher's reminding students about the aim and the criterion they need to pay attention to during the task. For instance in the ELP-related speaking activity with fifth grades, during the students' talks, the teacher always reminded students of the descriptor on the board and asked them to pay attention to using gestures while talking. In another writing-related lesson, the teacher kept on telling the students to put their essays in appropriate paragraphs and use linking words. Hence, it is apparent that the descriptors come into use not only at the beginning of a task but also during it. In addition to being used before and during the tasks, the descriptors also help learners become aware of the language learning process they have gone through at the end of the activity by teachers' asking them to think whether they could achieve the goal set in the descriptor; so awareness raising continues till the end of the activity.

It is evident that awareness-raising is provided through the display of descriptors on the handouts and the board. It has also been observed that the teachers have a very deductive approach in making use of the descriptors since they make clear the objectives right away instead of creating classroom activities that aim at

learners' exploring the aim underlying the activities or the competence they are expected to reach.

## Tracking Goals Practice

Tracking goals practice refers to the practices which involve learners' getting prepared for the upcoming task, applying the strategies needed to accomplish that task and in this way carrying out the objectives set in that particular descriptor. In ELP-related activities, learners do not choose their goals themselves; but they track the goals set by the teachers. As one of the students said in the interviews: "The criterion on the handout becomes your goal, you organize yourself to achieve it by doing your best". For instance in reading or listening based lessons, students are given some goals as to understanding a reading or listening text, like 'I can understand what is going on in the world when I watch TV, with the help of images', or "I can find what I need in simple informative texts". They do not choose the content of or produce any materials; however they keep the objective in mind and act accordingly. For instance, in the fourth grades ELP-related reading activity explained in 4.1.2, students try to understand the text with the help of pictures and drawings, although there are some words students do not know. The goal of understanding the text is set by the teachers; and the students track this goal by paying attention to the descriptor, activating their background information about the task, using the strategy of inferring the meaning of the words from the pictures and thus they get prepared to reach the competence aimed at in the descriptor. The teacher of the fourth grade says "students learned not to be panic when they saw new words in the text. They knew

from the descriptor that they could understand the text with the help of pictures". Thus, when learners take into account these goals during reading and listening activities, those goals become their goals and they track these goals with the help of descriptors. It is evident that in reading and listening based lessons, learners' tracking their goals is not as observable as in production based lessons; since they do not produce their own oral or written materials. However, their carrying out the tracking goals practice is understood from both reading or listening related activities they carry out and their reflections as to what they accomplished after the tasks.

As for writing or speaking based activities, learners track their goals by choosing the content of what they are going to produce and creating an oral or written material. For instance in an ELP-related writing activity, they described their dreams, hopes, goals and wishes, choosing what to write about themselves. The practices of choosing content and creating materials as a way of tracking goals are explained in the next part in detail.

## Choosing Content and Creating Materials Practice

Choosing content and creating materials practices include learners' enjoying the freedom of having their own preferences as to a production based task. In especially speaking and writing based lessons, learners choose the content of what they will write or speak on themselves. For instance, as explained above in the accounts of an ELP-related writing activity with fifth grades, learners had the freedom to write on an interesting place they chose. Likewise, they also wrote a letter of complaint to a company (See Appendix H for the example student material). The teacher told them

that they could choose the type of complaint they wanted to make and the company they wanted to write the letter to. In a lesson with fourth graders, they also made presentations on a special day they chose themselves. Some chose to talk on mother's/father's day, some their birthdays and some chose to make presentations on festivals. They also decided on the type of presentation they wanted to make. Some used power point slides, some integrated some hands-on activities and games into their presentations. In another lesson with fifth grades, learners were required to prepare a play in which the characters of the book 'George and the marvelous medicine' took place. One of the groups acted the characters of the book in "Oprah's Show". One of the students acted Oprah. Others were the grandmother , George, and his parents. George always blamed her grandmother of being a selfish and grumpy woman and the grandmother complained about her grandson's trying to poison her with some medicines he prepared. Students chose the setting, the content and the roles in the play. They acted in accordance with the descriptor on the board, which was 'I can act a part in a simple play or dialogue'. The teacher had elaborated on the descriptor telling that they needed to act as real-like as possible without reading their part from a piece of paper. In another lesson with fourth graders, students were required to write about a special day using some linkers. Students firstly wrote the points they chose on a diagram to plan their writing. After planning it they started writing (See Appendix I for an example student material). The use of the ELP comes into use when students pay attention to the requirements of the descriptor, like trying to put their ideas in appropriate paragraphs and using linking words, while enjoying the choice of writing on a topic they want.

Shortly, in every writing or speaking based task, after being aware of the goal of the tasks or what strategy they are required to apply, learners show their choices in the selection of the content of the oral or written materials they are going to create. After choosing the content, learners set about producing their materials.

## Reflection Practice

Reflection usually takes place during or at the end of the ELP-based activities and in the self-assessment sessions in the form of expression of thoughts about the activity or their performance. For instance while the fifth grade students were writing a letter of complaint, they were heard talking to their friends about their letters. Some told that they had difficulty writing it in a formal way, and some were happy with their performance. In another reading based lesson, after the students read the story and put the events in order, the teacher asked them whether they thought they could understand the text well. One of the students said "I think I haven't understood fully, because I can't remember what 'vanish' means. So I put the sentences in the wrong order." In another lesson with fifth graders, after the students tried to write formal letters of complaint, the teacher drew learners' attention to the descriptor emphasizing once more what a formal letter should encompass. Then she wanted each of them to have a look at their essays once more and think whether they wrote it formally. Some of the students, reflecting on their essays, told that their essays were not that formal so they would need to revise some parts. In one other writing related lesson, students reflected on the process of preparing a brochure to describe a place. Students were heard talking to each other and the teacher: "I can't do it", "I can't

decide which city to describe", " I'm about to finish, it's great", "Teacher, it's easy.", "I like my drawings" etc. After the listening tasks, students also reflected on the video by asking to watch it once more telling they could not understand some parts or by telling that it was easy to understand. After watching the video, the teacher usually asked them about their feelings about understanding it. Students could express their thoughts about their listening abilities in their language learning process. "I can understand most of them but I can't understand when they use some special words" one of the students said in a lesson. These remarks served as reflections.

Reflections also took place in the self-assessment sessions in the form of students' reflecting on their language learning process throughout the second term. Students talked about what they can and cannot do with reference to the descriptors and how they feel about their performance and language learning process. For instance, in one of the self-assessment sessions, one of the students reflected on her reading ability as: "I could not understand some words in the books in the past and leave it away; but now I can understand them by guessing the meanings of some words. I look up the dictionary for only some key words". As the example excerpt shows, learners can reflect on their language learning process by going through the ELP checklists.

## Self-assessment Practice

Self-assessment through the use of the ELP checklists was carried out in two ways; one during the course of the lessons, and the other at the end of the term. Lessons

starting with awareness raising and followed with goal-tracking or creating materials did not always end in self-assessment. Only two lessons in fourth grades and one lesson in fifth grades finished with students' assessing themselves with the checklists. In those lessons after the ELP-related activity was over, students took out their portfolios from their cupboards, found the corresponding descriptor in the portfolio and assessed themselves by putting plusses or minus. For instance, as explained in the example ELP-related reading activity in 4.1.2, students started the lesson by being aware of the goal of the reading activity, tracked their goals throughout the text by trying to understand the text with the help of pictures and then assessed themselves with regard to the same criterion. They put plusses in the corresponding part of the checklist in their portfolios. After the students assess themselves, the teacher also assesses the student's performance by filling in the 'My teacher' column of the checklist. Students say that they compare their assessments with the teacher's, resulting in a better understanding of their performance and abilities. Self-assessment during the lesson was also carried out in a reading related activity with fifth grades in week 4. They assessed themselves regarding their understanding of short argumentative texts about topics of general interest (B1 reading) at the end of the activity. In other lessons, instead of checklists, reflections about the lesson mostly formed as students' oral self-assessments.

Although self-assessment practices through the ELP checklists were not performed much during the lessons, they were carried out in the last two weeks of the semester as a whole in group conferences with students. fourth grade students filled in the A1 level of all four skills and some items of the A2 level. fifth graders filled in the A2 level of all four skills and some items of the B1 level. In the group

conferences, firstly students filled in the checklists considering all the activities they had carried out during the semester. Then they went over the descriptors, reading and reflecting on them one by one. The teacher asked them to give account of their self-assessments by giving examples of practices they carried out, materials they created or any inside or outside class activities they did that correspond to the descriptor at hand; or if they felt unsure about their competence on a descriptor, they explained why they put one plus or minus. Therefore self-assessment went hand in hand with reflection and monitoring over the language learning process. For instance in A2 Spoken Interaction 'I can act a part in a simple play or dialogue' descriptor, they gave 'Oprah's Show' they performed in week 9 as an example. They said that they could plan the plot of the play and act it successfully. For the spoken production descriptor "I can create presentations on given topics or topics I choose myself, and explain them in such a way that the audience can understand", one of the students put two plusses saying that she could successfully make a presentation about a special day. For the descriptor "I can understand simple texts even if I don't know all the individual words", almost all students put plusses saying that they look up the dictionary only for the key words in a text and they can guess the meaning of the words with the help of pictures or the context. These were also the strategies emphasized during the reading and listening based lessons. For the descriptors they saw on their handouts throughout the term, like 'I can write simple postcards and e-mails to friends and communicate how I am, and what I am doing'; ' I can write a short text and connect individual sentences with "and", "but" and "then" ' ; 'I can write short texts that have a recognizable beginning, course of actions/ plot and ending, and use linking words like "first", "then", "after that", "later" and "because"

’, they were very confident in putting two plusses since they could remember the descriptors from their handouts. They did not put two plusses always, though. Quite a few of the students put only one plus or even minus for some descriptors like ‘I can gather important information from newspaper reports and from similar types of media containing names, numbers and pictures.’ One of the students said she had difficulty in understanding newspapers because there were difficult words in it. For another descriptor ‘I can make appointments with others, invite others, and apologize if something doesn’t work out’, one of the students said that she put only one plus because she knew only to say ‘sorry’ when apologizing to somebody. It was evident that the ones they were not very confident in putting two plusses were the ones that were not emphasized during the lessons. The assessments of the learners and the teacher were the same for most of the descriptors since students had to give account of their assessments by reflecting on their language learning process and giving examples from the tasks they carried out. However, there were also some students who carelessly filled in the checklists without thinking over them much. Those learners could not explain why they put two ticks for some statements, so the teacher assessed them differently. One of those students commented on his self-assessment in the interviews telling that students should be honest when they are filling in the checklists otherwise they would be disappointed to see their teachers putting only one minus for them. Another student also said that in the self-assessment sessions, they understand their weak and strong points and take their weak points as a goal to accomplish for the next time (See Appendix J for sample self-assessment checklists of students)

These five practices, namely awareness raising, goal-tracking, choosing content and creating materials, reflection and self-assessment, are the most commonly used ELP-related practices in the fourth and fifth grades. The table below shows the use of these practices per week throughout 12 weeks. The last two weeks were the self-assessment weeks so no lessons were observed during those weeks. It is evident from the table that all the lessons start with awareness-raising of the aim of the task and it continues with learners' tracking those goals. When the number of references for each code in the observation reports was calculated in N Vivo and transformed into percentages, it has also been found out that awareness-raising was the most used practice in the class with 33 percent since learners are reminded of their aim in the descriptors before, during and also after the task. Goal tracking practice follows awareness raising with 23 percent since it includes learners' tracking their goals both in receptive and production based activities. It is obvious from the table that in reading and listening based activities, students use the tracking goals practice. They track their goals by using the strategies written in the descriptor or trying to achieve the competence or skill the descriptor calls for; however in writing and speaking based activities it can be clearly seen that learners track their goals by choosing the content of or creating materials. Since choosing the content and creating materials practices are carried out in only production based tasks, its percentage of coding is 14 percent. It is also seen in the table below that reflection took place in half of the lessons observed. The percentage of coding for reflection practice is 17 percent among all the other practices; however since not all lessons finish with self-assessment and that in only self-assessment sessions learners were engaged in an

intensive evaluation of themselves; the percentage of self assessment practices coded in the observation reports is 13 percent.

Table 10. fourth Grades Weekly ELP Practices Employed

| Week | Skill | Descriptors | Practices Employed |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Listening | ‘ I can understand simple texts, even if I don’t know all the individual words’. | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>reflection |
| 2 | Writing | “I can write simple letters and emails to friends and communicate how I am and what I am doing.” | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>choosing content and creating materials |
| 3 | Writing | “I can write a short text and connect individual sentences with “and”, “but” and “then”. | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>choosing content and creating materials |
| 4 | Speaking | “I can make a presentation.” | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>choosing content and creating materials,<br>reflection,<br>self-assessment |
| 5 | Writing | I can describe myself, my hobbies, my feelings, etc. in short texts | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>choosing content and creating materials |
| 6 | Listening | I can understand a simple conversation about everyday topics | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>reflection |
| 7 | Listening | I can understand what is going on in the world when I watch TV, with the help of images.” | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>reflection |
| 8 | Reading | I can understand simple stories and shorter texts with the help of pictures and drawings | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>reflection,<br>self-assessment |
| 9 | Writing | I can describe a place in short texts | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>choosing content and creating materials,<br>reflection |
| 10 | Reading | I can find what I need in simple informative texts | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>reflection, |
| 11 & 12 | Self-assessment Weeks | | |

Table 11: fifth Grades Weekly Practices Employed

| Week | Skill | Descriptors | Practices Employed |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Speaking | "I can make myself understood in everyday life; sometimes I need to help myself with gestures." | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>choosing content and creating materials |
| 2 | Writing | "I can write a text that has a beginning, course of actions/ plot and ending and use linking words like 'first, after that, later and because." | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>choosing content and creating materials,<br>reflection |
| 3 | Writing | "I can write a formal complaint letter" | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>choosing content and creating materials |
| 4 | Reading | "I can follow short argumentative texts about topics of general interest." | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>reflection,<br>self-assessment |
| 5 | Reading | " I can read and understand the paragraphs and put them in a coherent order to build up a meaningful story." | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>reflection |
| 6 | Writing | "I can write short texts that have a recognizable beginning, course of actions/ plot and ending, and use linking words like 'first', 'then', 'after that', 'later' and 'because" | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>choosing content and creating materials |
| 7 | Listening | "I can understand simple fiction and non-fiction stories, and answer comprehension questions about it." | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>reflection |
| 8 | Writing | "I can describe my dreams, hopes, goals and wishes" | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>choosing content and creating materials |
| 9 | Speaking | "I can act a part in a simple play or dialogue" | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>choosing content and creating materials, |
| 10 | Listening | "I can understand what's going on in the world when I watch television, with the help of images" | awareness raising,<br>tracking goals,<br>reflection |
| 11 & 12 | Self-assessment Weeks | | |

## The ELP and Autonomy

The ELP-related practices depicted in the previous part show that learners become aware of their aims in language learning, learn and use some strategies to achieve these aims, select the right tools to be successful at the task, choose the content of the materials they want to produce, create pieces of work; and reflect on and assess their own performance. These practices can have a potential to direct learners towards autonomy. Teachers indicate that implementing the ELP has a direct link with becoming more responsible and autonomous learners. With the help of the ELP-related practices explained in the previous part, once the goals are made clear, students are able to direct themselves towards the goal, become aware of why the aim is necessary to achieve, blend the requirements of the task with their own imagination and creativity and at the end monitor and evaluate their learning. Learners also say that the descriptors put responsibility on them because they have to realize the aims of the handout. As reference to the third research question, the potential of these practices to contribute to learners' becoming more autonomous language learners will be investigated in four distinct aspects; namely planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating learning.

### Planning Learning

Planning learning, as an aspect of learner autonomy, refers to learners' firstly becoming aware of the objectives, making these objectives their own and preparing themselves for that aim. In receptive based lessons, they do this by tracking the goals set for them by activating their background knowledge about the task and exploring

how to use the strategy stated in the descriptor or to reach the competence aimed at. In production based lessons they plan their learning by selecting their own content for the materials they want to produce, choosing the methods they need to use or the role they will bear in the group. Awareness raising through the descriptors form the basis on which to get prepared for their own learning.

In the process of language learning related to the ELP, students do not set their own objectives themselves, that is they do not have a say on what kind of a subject or a language form/function they want to learn that day. The goals are set by the teachers, so it can be said that the ELP does not have any role on students' choosing their whole language learning goals and activities from scratch. As one of the teachers says "Learners' choosing the objectives of the lesson is not possible considering the requirements of the curriculum" However, she also adds: "Although students do not set the targets of the lesson, they show their preferences within the limits of what the descriptor directs them towards and eventually they think over their performance and even criticize themselves at the end of the task". One of the students also confirms this throughout the focus group interview saying "We see the aim of the lesson when we look at the handout and we understand that it is our goal and we do everything according to the aim". Another student explains how they internalize the goals of the lesson as their own, saying: "When you see the criteria , you get conditioned to it, you want to do it even if it is hard; it becomes your aim." Thus, it is clear that students make the objectives set by the descriptors their own.

As a first step for planning learning, awareness raising through descriptors practice sets the stage for learners to grasp what their aim will be in that task. These extracts from focus group interviews show the role of the descriptors on learners' awareness about the aim of the activities or the lesson.

> "I sometimes wonder the aim of the handout, so I see it when I have a look at the descriptor"
> "We understand what we need to do by looking at the criteria"
> "It shows our goals."
> "For example, sometimes we don't understand why we do something; we can understand it when we look at here."
> "We understand what the subject is about'
> "We understand what kind of an activity we will do"

It is clear from these statements that the ELP helps learners understand the target of the task and make it their own. Once the aims are made known by the teacher, learners start to show their preferences regarding the content of the materials they produce, the method they use, the resources they will use and the people they choose to cooperate with in order to accomplish their tasks. Basically, choosing the content practice comes into play. Here are some extracts from focus group interviews showing how students perceive the role of descriptors in helping them plan their learning:

> "We prepare ourselves for the task when we see the descriptors ."
> "I can detect and plan what I want to do by looking at the criteria"
> "First I see the aim; and then I plan and visualize what I want to do in my mind trying to put the requirements of the criterion in what I imagine to do"
> "Descriptors help us do our best in a task"
> "We produce something by paying attention to the criteria."
> "We work together and give roles to each other, especially in role-play activities. We acted in "Oprah's Show" for example; we put the characters of a book we read in the play and organized everything together. One of us acted the grumpy grandmother, and the others were George and his parents. We wrote the plot ourselves too."

Both the interviews and observations show that once learners become aware of the aim, they create whatever they want in accordance with that aim. Thus the ELP acts as a tool to prepare learners for language learning.

The conversation below also shows how the teacher of the fourth graders helps direct learners' attention on the descriptor and prepare them for writing. The teacher firstly started the lesson by asking students about some special days. They

talked about birthdays, Halloween, father's day, and so on. The teacher wrote these days on the board and asked about their dates. Then they read about Mother's Day and the Thanksgiving day on their book To the Top 3. After that, she told them that they were supposed to write a postcard about a special they wanted. She wrote the aim of the lesson on the board. It was also written on the handout: "I can write a short text and connect individual sentences with "and", "but" and "then". She asked the students to look at the board and asked:

> T (Teacher): "Who can tell me why we write these sentences on your handouts and on the board?"
> S1 (Student 1): "It is our aim"
> S2: "It shows what we will gain in the end"
> T: "Great. Then tell me: "What is our topic?"
> S3: "Celebrations."
> T:"And what about our aim?"
> S3: "Write a postcard"
> S4: "But teacher we must also use 'and, but, then'."
> S2: "Yes, if we succeed it now, we will go on using 'and, but, then' in our writings."
> T: "That's right, thank you. So now you can brainstorm some ideas on what you want to write, you can use the diagram on your handouts for brainstorming. You can choose whichever special day you like. Please pay attention to using 'and, but, then'.

As is clear in the conversation, teachers' drawing students' attention on the aim in the descriptor and eliciting the way to use the linkers in the descriptor enabled students to formulate how they will go about carrying out the task. This helped learners plan their writing. Students wrote a paragraph on whatever special day they wanted using the descriptor as a guide. In that way they chose the content of their writings themselves.

In the focus group interviews with the students, remembering the task they have carried out in the lesson explained above, some students commented on the role of the descriptor as a tool for them to plan their writing.

> "The descriptor helps us make well-formed sentences; for example we used to use only 'and' in our sentences but it reminded us to use 'because' and 'then', too."
> "When you see the aim, you think that you should use them (linkers); so you organize your writing with them."

Learners' planning their writing is also explained in the example ELP-related writing activity with fifth grades in 4.1.1. Firstly, through the descriptor (I can write a text that has a beginning, course of actions/ plot and ending and use linking words like 'first, after that, later and because) and an example essay the teacher helps learners plan what they want to produce by initially raising their awareness on the parts of an essay (introduction, body paragraphs and so on) and also on some linkers they can use in their essays and then asking them to plan their essays on a separate sheet. Students are free to choose the place they want to describe; so they can plan their writings both with the help of the descriptor and by making their preferences as to the content of the writing. Similarly, awareness raising through descriptors helped learners plan their writings when they were required to write a formal letter in week 3 (fifth grades), an essay on the importance of money in week 6(fifth grades), a description of a place in week 9 (fourth grades) and descriptions of feelings and wishes in week 8 (fifth grades).

In speaking related activities, the descriptors also help learners plan what they want to produce and how they want to produce it. They choose the content of their presentations or talks themselves. For instance in one speaking based lesson with fourth grades, the students made presentations about a special day they wanted and they also chose the method they used in presenting their topics. Some of them used power point slides and some others used colorful pictures and some integrated hands-on activities and games. As one of the students says: "I like using my creativity in the projects or assignments, and when there are aims on the handout I can understand

what I need to use or how I should do the assignment and shape it according to the criteria."

In reading and listening skills based lessons, students are also involved in planning, although it is not much observable. They gain insights as to understanding English while reading or listening a text. They do not choose the texts they want to read or listen to; but they prepare themselves for an upcoming oral or written text by activating their background knowledge and setting up expectations about the task through the descriptors. For instance in the descriptor it says : "I can understand simple stories and shorter texts with the help of pictures and drawings" or "I can understand what's going on in the world when I watch television, with the help of images". Through the descriptors, they form some expectations, which serve as planning for the upcoming text or task. The English teacher of the fourth grade says:

> When students read these descriptors, they become more aware of how best to understand the language; they learn some strategies; for example they learn how to read an English book in which there are some unknown vocabulary. When they read the descriptor, they realize that they do not have to panic when they see an unknown word.

It can be understood from this account that descriptors teach students some strategies that they can employ. One of the students also reports how the descriptors helps them set expectations as to a reading or listening text they hear out of the classroom:

> Since I learn the important points in reading or listening, I can continue learning English outside the school. For example I watch BBC at home, and try to understand some parts although I do not understand every word; and I also read a lot of books on my own because I know how to read and understand English.

Students also say that after achieving the aims in the descriptors, they want to set more aims. As one of the students says "as you understand what you are good at after every task, you also see that there are some parts you cannot do; so you want to achieve them too." This shows that the descriptors lead them to set further aims for

themselves. They also say that they apply the same goal-setting practice in other lessons:

> The descriptors set us aims and we wonder them and achieve these aims in English. I also do it in other lessons. For instance when our music teacher does not teach us a note, I wonder it, then I learn it by myself. It is the same in English.

The English teacher of the fifth grade says that the students in her class are really creative and organized. She adds:

> I cannot say that it is totally thanks to the ELP of course, since we already try to adopt learner-centered methods in the lessons; however I can say that the descriptors (aims) put on the handouts and on the board during the lesson have made students more focused on what they are learning to do in English than the times that they did not use the descriptors. Day by day, they are becoming more and more aware of what they can do, and they learn how to learn, so they also associate what they can do in class with the outside world.

When viewed from the aspect of learner autonomy, both teachers and students see this kind of planning through evident display of descriptors on the handouts as a way to reach objectives. Students report that they like seeing the descriptors on the handouts since descriptors show them the ways to realize their objectives. Awareness raising, goal tracking and choosing content practices are used to aid the process of planning learning. Although awareness raising is provided deductively and explicitly through the descriptors, the practices can be told to foster learner autonomy in terms of planning since the activities carried out especially in writing and speaking involve learners to choose the content of what they want to write or talk about.

## Implementing Learning

In terms of implementing learning, students carry out what they have planned for the task at hand with their own preferences. Implementing learning is linked to the goal-tracking and creating materials practices carried out in the lesson. Especially in the production-based lessons they use their own resources to realize the aim specified in the descriptor. For instance if the descriptor says "I can describe my dreams, hopes, goals and wishes", students choose among their wishes and dreams; and explain it choosing appropriate language. They make presentations with their own choices, prepare talk show programs, write complaint letters to a company, prepare brochures of a place they want and so on. The teacher of the fifth grade says:

> The ELP descriptors in no way restrict the students. They provide a framework within which the student is free to choose and create whatever s/he wants. They use their own creativity and imagination, we do not limit them. For instance they were asked to write a formal complaint letter; we prepared them for the task through the descriptor and through some awareness-raising on how to write a formal letter. They chose the company they wanted to complain to, the subject of the complaint, and so forth themselves. They were very creative, but they also had to write formally; so the ones who wrote quite informally had to change their letters.

One of the fifth grade students also indicates the same point saying:

> First we understand our aim and then write whatever we want using our creativity. But we also combine this creativity with the knowledge we gained in the criterion. We focus on one thing. We think over the aim and combine this aim with our imagination.

Another student reveals how the descriptors enable them to produce materials with a richer content:

> We produce texts with a richer content and more vocabulary because we first see what we can use on the handout, like 'firstly' or 'consequently', and then try to use them in our writing by using our imagination.

It is clear from these statements that students implement their own learning with the guidance of the aims in the descriptors. They make their own projects and assignments choosing the content of the material to be produced, the time and pace of the work to be done, the responsibilities they will bear on carrying out the task, and so on.

In reading and listening skills based lessons, they implement their learning by tracking the objectives regarding a reading or a listening text throughout the lesson. This sometimes includes decoding a message in a text, sometimes making inferences or predictions. However implementation of learning do not only manifest itself during the lessons; both learners and teachers say that descriptors come into use outside the class, too. One of the teachers says:

> They associate the descriptors with the outside world. For example, they use the strategies they have learned about reading or listening outside the class when they are reading or listening to something.

The other English teacher also confirms this saying:

> They can apply the descriptors outside the class too. When they are interacting with their foreign friends, they remember the criteria we placed emphasis on and use them.

Students also state that they remember and use the aims in the descriptors outside the class, too:

> "I can see that I can use the descriptors in the spoken interaction part when I go abroad."
> "We can use the knowledge we gained from descriptors outside class, for example while doing shopping abroad."
> "If, for example, the criterion says 'I can communicate while I am doing shopping', it retains in our memory and we use it more confidently abroad, because we tried it in class before."

The English teacher of fifth grade says that learners' understanding that they can implement the statements written in their portfolios boosted their self-confidence;

however although the learners are good at implementing what is given as an aim on the handout, she argues that the implementation still lacks some points. She says:

> We should give them more choices during the lesson; and the descriptors should not be only on the handouts. In each and every lesson, students should be given a 'can do statement' and let free to create whatever they want and ask the teacher for help when they realize that they are not good at something. Then s/he should present what s/he has done at the end of the lesson and assess herself/himself with the criteria given. We try to do this only in handouts, but it is not enough.

One of the students comments on the same issue saying:

> Normally our teacher explains everything and we improve ourselves; but with the portfolio we can do it on our own and make this kind of an improvement a habit but it would be better if we saw the criteria more often. We could become more aware of our gains.

It has become obvious throughout the observations that learners are good at understanding the requirements of the descriptors, tracking their goals, choosing the content of the materials and creating them within the framework of the descriptor. They are creative and have organization skills to carry out the task at hand. However, it has also been observed that learners are not given any time to explore the nature and aims of the tasks in an inductive way; instead they are given the aims right away in a deductive way and expected to plan their learning according to that descriptor. It has also often been noted that learners are not encouraged to set further aims for themselves. Thus, as the teachers also indicate, it can be concluded that such an implementation of the ELP motivates and leads learners to be more autonomous language learners in terms of implementing learning since learners enjoy the freedom of choosing their own contents and creating their materials; however, it could further provide autonomy if learners are provided with more choices and let work towards their aims with their own preferences.

## Monitoring learning

As another aspect of learner autonomy, learners' monitoring learning through the ELP was explored. Monitoring learning was carried out through learners' reflections on their performance during and at the end of the tasks as well as through self-assessments. During the tasks, learners carry out the activities paying attention to the descriptor. As one of the students says: "During the activities, we check whether we go in line with the descriptor". Another students states: "For example, we see that we should use "because" or "consequently"; so we try to use them while writing". When it comes to the end of the tasks, monitoring learning takes place by teachers' asking learners about what they think they have learned and accomplished through the task. One of the learners says: "The descriptor shows us what we can do. First we read it and think whether we can do it. Then, after the activity, we again think whether we have done it correctly or not. We both understand what we can do and also notice our mistakes". The English teacher of fifth grade gives the example of writing a formal complaint letter as a springboard for a good monitoring activity.

> Students wrote letters of complaints to a company they wanted; however some of them wrote quite informally. I asked them to have a look at their essays once more considering the requirements of a formal letter. Some of them understood that they could write the formal letter successfully and some others had to change their styles. As a result, they could see whether they could write a formal letter or not.

Learners' monitoring their learning process was evident especially in the self-assessment sessions at the end of the term. Learners gave examples and supports for the 'can do statements' in the checklists. Here are some examples of how learners monitored their learning in the self-assessment sessions:

> "I put two ticks for "I can understand enough to cope with everyday life" because I can speak in English in class and also when I go abroad."

> "I can understand simple texts even if I don't understand all the words; because I can have a look at the topic and understand it in general. Sometimes I don't understand some words, I don't stop. When I read all the paragraph, I can understand what it means."
> "I put one plus for the descriptor "I can understand short notes and simple notices" last year, but I can do it now. I will put two ticks. I understand the notice boards at school now."
> "I can write a short text and connect individual sentences with "and","but","because". I remember that we had a handout with this descriptor, we wrote about our birthdays."
> "We wrote formal complaint letters and also job application forms."

In the interviews both learners and teachers emphasized the role of the ELP as a tool for monitoring learning process. As the teacher of the fifth grade says "They have become more aware of what they can do and cannot do, for example, while talking to their foreigner friends." She also says

> When they had a look at the descriptors they checked in the first term, they saw that they had a real progress. They realized that they improved themselves. When I asked them "You put one tick for this in the last term, can you do it now?", they could give me many examples about the descriptor. They could see their own improvement.

When learners were asked how the descriptors helped them see their learning process, they gave answers as follows:

> "When we put ticks on the portfolio, we see what we can do."
> " We can understand what we can do and what we cannot do."
> "When we see that we can do what the descriptor says, we realize that we have improved ourselves."
> "The portfolio shows us the aspects we are successful at in language learning."
> "One advantage of the portfolio is that I put two ticks for the descriptors which I put only one tick last year. I remember the things I have done in the past."
> "We can revise what we have done before with the help of the ELP."
> "We understand our weaknesses."
> "We can see the changes in our language from the beginning to the end of the term"
> "If I see I cannot do something, I put it as a goal for myself."

It is apparent from the observations and interviews that learners have the chance to monitor their own learning and understand what they can do and cannot do. The

descriptors especially help them to shape their learning by providing them with a route to follow. Students, both during and after the tasks, can monitor what they have done in terms of their own language learning through the descriptors on the handouts and the checklists in the portfolio.

## Evaluating learning

Through the implementation of the ELP, learners also had the chance to evaluate their learning. Learners could evaluate their own learning through self-assessments and reflections at the end of the tasks together with the self-assessment sessions carried out at the end of the term. Self-assessment practices through the ELP checklists were not carried out after each lesson throughout the observations. As one of the students says: "After the activities, we sometimes open our portfolios and put ticks on it considering how successfully we performed the activity". It is clear that few self-assessments done at the end of the tasks were not enough for students to have clear idea of their performance and language learning process. As well as the few self-assessments, reflections at the end of the lessons served as evaluations as well. At the end of the lessons, teachers asked learners their thoughts about the task and their performance. For example after a speaking based lesson, in which the students focused on using gestures and mimics, they told the teacher that they have learned the importance of using gestures and mimics when they have difficulty expressing themselves in English. In another lesson, they reflected on their usage of linkers at the end of a task. In a reading based lesson, they talked about whether they could understand the text with the help of pictures. As one of the students said in the interviews "We read "Magic Finger" and we could evaluate how much we could

understand the book with the descriptors". These oral reflections served as evaluations to some extent.

Both the learners and teachers report that the self-assessment sessions at the end of the term were useful for evaluating the language learning process. As the English teacher of the fourth grade says "While filling in the checklists, students thought whether they could carry out the descriptors. They could think over their weaknesses and strengths." The English teacher of the fifth grade also said that students realized what they could do using the language. She also said that fourth graders were not much aware of their weaknesses, so some of them filled in the checklists carelessly; however she added that the fifth grades were more conscious and that they could seriously criticize themselves. She says:

> While some students put two plusses carelessly, some really asked themselves questions and put one plus although actually they could carry out what was in the descriptor. When I was assessing them, I asked those students to think over their assessments once more and I put two plusses on their checklists. This made them more aware of their strengths and boosted their self-confidence.

When learners were asked about their thoughts about the use of ELP, assessment was the first thing they all mentioned.

> "The portfolio prepares us for self-assessment."
> "It enables us to evaluate ourselves, otherwise only the teachers would do it."
> "We assess ourselves and understand what our mistakes are."
> "When there is a box on the handouts, it helps us assess ourselves."
> "There are criteria on the handouts and they show what we can do. We evaluate ourselves and understand whether we can do them by looking at the criteira."
> "The descriptors in the portfolio help us see how we evaluate ourselves. First we assess ourselves, then the teacher does."
> "We evaluate our abilities by putting ticks on the portfolio. We understand our level."

This shows that learners mostly see the ELP as a tool for self-assessment.

Concerning their own assessments, they reported that assessing themselves allowed

them to see what they can do in learning English. As for comparing their assessments with the teachers, one of them said that comparing their assessments with the teacher's allowed them to see their strengths and weaknesses. Another student said that if the teacher's assessment was similar to his own self-assessment, this boosted his self-confidence. Another student says: "We can see whether we are right in our assessments. Our teacher encourages us to assess ourselves, so we see that she trusts us". One other student said: "If the teacher puts only one tick, we think that we should study more, so we set more targets." A few more students talked about setting targets after the self-assessments saying:

> "I put new targets for myself after the assessments because you can see what you are good at and what you are not."
> "If you don't assess yourself honestly, the teacher understands it and puts one tick. Then you want to go over and study it more."
> "We want to study more when we understand that we cannot do something well."

One of the students mentions that the self-assessments carried out are not enough saying:

> "It could be better if we did the assessments more often, so that we could set more targets."

The teacher of the fifth grade also says that it could be better if self-assessments were done after each lesson. When considered in terms of learner autonomy, it could be maintained that although the self-assessments were not carried much throughout the lessons, it is evident that even doing it at the end of the semester have made learners aware of their strengths and led them to think over their language learning process. Thus, it could be said that the self-assessments and reflections through the descriptors helped learners evaluate their own learning.

In the third research question, the potential of the ELP-related practices to lead to more autonomous behavior was investigated. Autonomy was examined in

four aspects; namely planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating learning. Figure 1 below shows the percentages of codes put in the observation reports and interview transcripts in terms of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating learning.

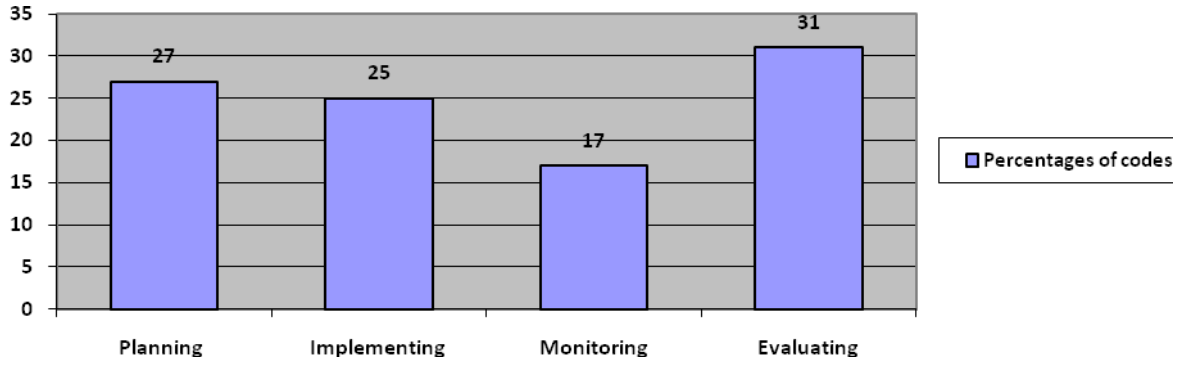



Figure 1. Frequency of codes regarding learner autonomy

When these four aspects of learner autonomy are explored through analyzing the observations of lessons and self-assessment sessions, interviews with teachers and focus group interviews with students, it has been found that evaluating learning was the most cited aspect of learner autonomy in the coding. The percentages were calculated by first counting the number of coding for each pattern, like planning learning, implementing learning and so on in N Vivo. Then the numbers were transformed to percentages in a bar chart. The chart shows that the ELP is mostly seen as a tool to assess one's learning through the checklists although actually it has been found out to be the least employed practice in the lessons. This shows that learners are not as much aware of the other uses of the ELP in the lessons as its use as a self-assessment tool. However, it also shows that the self-assessment sessions at

the end of the term were effective in shaping learners' understanding of their language learning process. Planning learning follows evaluating learning with 27 percent, which shows that the ELP practices helped learners become aware of their aims and plan their learning. As awareness raising practice was also the most cited practice, followed by goal tracking and choosing content, it is evident that the learners and teachers also placed emphasis on the role of these practices over planning learning. In planning learning, students did not choose their aims, or they were not made aware of the aims in an inductive way, but again learners, tracking the goals set by the teachers, were given choices as to the content of the oral or written materials they want to produce. Therefore they could plan their learning to some extent with the awareness they gained and the choices they made especially regarding the content of the materials they produce. The percentage of implementing learning is very similar to that of planning learning since learners could track the goals set and carry out what they aimed. Implementing learning was observable especially in production-based activities, since learners produced materials with their own preferences. Monitoring learning follows the other aspects with a 17 percent of coding. Learners and teachers mentioned that the ELP serves as a tool for the learners to understand their weakness and strength and see their progress in language learning.

In this chapter, first the overall ELP implementation process was depicted to help understand the specific practices employed related to the ELP, which was aimed at in the second research question. There emerged five different practices used related to the ELP, namely awareness raising, goal tracking, choosing content and creating materials, reflection and self-assessment practices. These practices were, by and large, used in the lessons in which the ELP descriptors were focused on. The

implementation of these practices were quite deductive, initiated and prompted by the teacher. However, in that context, that kind of an approach helped learners take initiatives since learners' ideas and preferences were paid attention to by the teachers. As reference to the third research question, autonomy as being composed of planning, implementing, monitoring and implementing learning were explored in relation to the ELP related practices adopted. When the concept of learner autonomy is dealt with, it is clear that the ELP implementation helps learners to become more autonomous in the context it is being implemented. Learners become aware of their aims, take initiatives to fulfill the requirements of the descriptors with their own preferences, choose the content of what they want to produce, create their own oral or written materials, monitor their learning through the descriptors and assess their own progress. It cannot be alleged, however, that learners have become fully autonomous. They are not given much chance to become aware of the process inductively, explore some aspects of the language or their learning of that language and set their own aims or the materials they want to work on. Reflections and self-assessments are not carried out systematically either. Thus it can be said that the ELP practices make a change in learners' approaching the language learning process autonomously.

# CHAPTER V

# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Throughout the research, the implementation of the ELP in the fourth and fifth grades in a private primary school setting and its role as a tool for helping learners become more autonomous have been investigated. The main results of the study are as follows:

- The ELP is integrated into the lessons only through the use of descriptors with the handouts. The ELP and thus CEFR levels are not integrated into the curriculum.

- Students do not set their own objectives from the portfolio.

- The descriptors, in the form of ‘can do’ statements, specify the aims of the task, the strategies learners need to use, or the competence they are required to reach in each level. These descriptors are put on the handouts to draw the attention of the learners explicitly on the objective to be accomplished, which forms as an awareness raising practice.

- Descriptors are brought to students’ attention before, during and after the tasks. After being aware of what needs to be accomplished, learners make these objectives their own and track these objectives.

- Students can choose the content of the materials they produce, the methods they use or the roles they will have in the group and in this way they plan their own learning. The descriptors form as a framework within which the learner is free to have their own preferences, use their imagination and combine it with the requirements of the descriptor.

- Students can implement their own learning in production based activities by creating their own oral or written materials in a creative way with their own preferences.

- In reception based activities, they track the objectives specified by the descriptors by activating their background, setting up expectations as to the reading or listening text or using the reading or listening strategies focused on in the descriptor.

- Reflection practice takes place during and at the end of the tasks. Teachers usually ask questions to students as regards their thoughts about their performance throughout the task and about what they have learned; however it is not carried in each lesson.

- A great amount of reflection on the language learning process takes place in self-assessment sessions. Learners monitor their own learning and relate the descriptors to the tasks they have carried out in class and to their own out of class learning activities.

- Self-assessment with the descriptors is not carried out after each lesson; but it is apparent that learners even benefited from the few self-assessments and the self-assessment sessions held at the end of the term.

- Learners could see their strengths and weaknesses as to their own language learning. They wanted to set new objectives for themselves when they saw that they cannot do something well, which shows that self-assessment would naturally be followed by goal- setting if carried out regularly.

- Learners carried out the skills and strategies they have learned through descriptors out of class, too. In self-assessment sessions, they gave examples of their out-of class language learning activities for each descriptor.

## Discussion

After summarizing the main and significant results, it is crucial to see the relevance of these results to the literature on the ELP and autonomy; and discuss their strong and weak points.

As the studies concerning the implementation of the ELP all over the Europe show (Little & Simpson, 2003), the implementation of the ELP changes from country to country and from one context to another. Likewise, the degree and extent to which learners embrace autonomy can also change, as Nunan (1997) argues, according to the philosophy of the institution, the cultural context where the education takes place and the personality and the goals of the learner. As Benson (2001) also states, one of the best ways to assess the control of learners over various aspects of their learning is to observe and measure it in natural contexts of learning. Therefore, it has been attempted in this research to give a thick description of the overall implementation of the ELP in that particular context to convey the research context, types of instruction of the teachers, teaching philosophy of the institution and the approaches of learners towards language learning. It has been explored that learner centeredness is given much priority in the lessons. Learners are encouraged to take roles in projects and assignments in which they actively participate. The ELP implementation is integrated into the lessons through the display of descriptors on the handouts. The descriptors are not integrated into the curriculum, which at times brings about problems as to choosing which descriptor to match with each activity. However within the context of the implementation of the ELP in that particular school, even that kind of an application makes changes in the attitudes of the learners

towards language learning. Similar to the feedback received from teachers taking part in piloting projects from 1997-2000 (Scharer, 2000), the ELP exerts a positive influence on language learning.

In many definitions of autonomy, it has been found out that setting objectives is a component of learner autonomy (like in Holec, 1981; Little, 1999;2001; Broady and Kenning, 1996). Little and Percolva (2001) also suggest different ways in using descriptors to set goals in 'The European Language Portfolio: A guide for teachers and teacher trainers". They say that teachers can use descriptors to set whole-class goals or ask learners to choose their individual goals. In the current research context, learners do not determine their own curricular objectives. However, they track these goals once they are set by the teachers. This kind of an understanding of autonomy is well accounted for in Littlewood's (1999) definition of reactive autonomy, in which students do not create their own directions, but once the goals are set by somebody, they organize their resources in order to achieve these goals. As Benson (2001) also states, autonomous behaviour does not have to be self-generated, it would be enough if it is self-initiated in response to a task in which some observable behaviour is required. In this context as well, the nature of learner autonomy can be understood in line with the definition of Littlewood (1999). Learners, after becoming aware of the objectives, set about realizing these goals determining their own resources, content, pace, methods and the people they want to cooperate with.

The practices employed throughout the lessons are in essence conducive to the promotion of learner autonomy. When the relationship between the practices related to the ELP and the autonomous behavior they lead to was explored, it became apparent that some practices were conducive to the realization of some aspects of learner autonomy. For instance, awareness raising, goal-tracking and

choosing content practices were contributive to learners' planning their learning. Learners were made aware of the objective of the lesson through the descriptors, prepared themselves for the upcoming task, tracked the goals of tasks and showed their preferences as to the content of the materials they produce. After planning and getting prepared for the task, creating materials and tracking goals practices again helped learners implement their own learning. Awareness raising in the form of teachers' reminding the students of the aims also continued throughout the implementation of learning. They tried to realize the aims of the task with their own preferences with the help of these practices. Lastly, reflection and self-assessment practices helped learners monitor and evaluate their learning. For the reflection and self-assessment to take place, awareness raising was a pre-requisite. These two practices were also reported to lead learners to plan their further learning to some degree by making them understand their weaknesses and set further aims. The table below shows the practices and the aspects of learner autonomy they are conducive to foster:

Table 12. ELP-related Practices Leading to Autonomy

| Aspect of learner autonomy | Related ELP practices employed |
|---|---|
| Planning learning | awareness-raising practice, goal-tracking practice, choosing content practice |
| Implementing learning | awareness raising practice, goal tracking practice, creating materials practice |
| Monitoring learning | awareness raising practice, reflection practice, self-assessment practice |
| Evaluating learning | awareness raising practice, reflection practice, self-assessment practice |

After having a general understanding of the relationship between the ELP-related practices and autonomy, it is crucial to discuss those practices one by one to see their relation to literature and the strong and weak points of these practices. One of these

practices is awareness raising practices. Nunan (1997: 192) argues that autonomy is not an 'all-or-nothing concept' and it has some degrees. He maintains that the first level in developing autonomy is awareness, as also Scharle and Szabo (2000) and Kumaravadivelu (2003) argue. Kohonen (2005) also states that explicit awareness and understanding of what it is that needs to be learned in the language (metalinguistic awareness) and how it could be learned and why such learning is necessary (metacognitive awareness) are necessary for language learning. Benson (2001) adds to the argument by maintaining that control over learning starts with conscious attention and direction by the learner. In the research context, this kind of an attention and direction was provided with the introduction of descriptors before the activities for the students to become aware of the communicative skills they need to gain, the strategies they need to use or aims they need to realize to carry out the task. Learners were made aware of the aims in the form of 'can do statements' by teachers' drawing their attention to the descriptors through the handouts. Some of the 'can do statements' lead learners towards 'metalinguistic awareness' like the descriptor "I can write short texts that have a recognizable beginning, course of actions/ plot and ending, and use linking words like 'first', 'then', 'after that', 'later' and 'because'". In that way, they become aware of what language to use in linking different parts of a text. Little (1999a) maintains that metalinguistic awareness is the cornerstone of learner autonomy and that teachers can exploit learners' metalinguistic function by helping them to engage in reflection through the target language. In the current research context, learners' being aware of what needs to be learned in the language helped them reflect on their language learning. They could remember the descriptors while talking about what they can do and cannot do. For instance they were aware that they could use linkers like 'and, but, then, because,

etc.' when creating a written product. There are also other descriptors, which help to foster 'task awareness', like ' I can act a part in a simple play or dialogue'. With the help of these descriptors, learners are directed towards how to go about accomplishing the task. Kohonen (2001) gives 'task awareness' as a component of experiential learning approach in which the learner is seen as a self-directed person who can be led to develop his or her competences. Wenden (1991) also emphasizes that it is important for an autonomous learning that learners know or be aware of the purpose and the nature of the task, the time when the task needs conscious learning, what resources are necessary to complete the task, how to go about doing the task and whether the task is hard or easy. It is apparent that the ELP descriptors raise learners' task awareness since they could give many examples of the tasks they carried out during the term which match the descriptor they reflected on in the self-assessment sessions. In addition to metalinguistic and task awareness, descriptors also facilitate learners' becoming aware of their language learning process. Kohonen (2001) argues that awareness of the learning process enables learners to monitor their learning towards self-directed and negotiated language learning together with self-assessment. He states that this kind of awareness includes knowledge about strategies of language learning and language use. Many of the ELP descriptors comprise strategies for learners to use while reading, listening, writing or speaking. For instance descriptors like "I can make myself understood in everyday life; sometimes I need to help myself with gestures". Kohonen (2001) adds that this kind of a metacognitive knowledge of learning assists students in fostering their ways of planning and organizing their learning, tasks and processes. It was evident throughout the research that the awareness raising practice helped learners to have insights about their language learning process, monitor and evaluate it. They also

helped learners in shaping their learning, getting prepared for the task and thus planning their own learning. Wenden (1991) emphasizes that awareness is very crucial in autonomous and reflective learning since without becoming aware of when and why to use certain strategies, learners will use the strategies mechanically without any conscious and deliberate awareness and attempt. It is, therefore, safe to claim that learners' becoming aware of what they need to pay attention to in order to carry out a task or reach a competence plays a crucial role in learners' taking further steps for their own learning. As Sinclair (2000) also emphasizes, conscious awareness of the learning process is crucial in developing autonomy since without it learners will not be able to make decisions about their own learning. However, there is a point to mention in the way awareness-raising practices are performed. In the fourth and fifth grades, although learners' being made aware of the descriptors helped them reflect on and monitor their own language learning process, the awareness-raising practices were carried out in a very explicit and deductive way since learners were given the descriptors straight away on the handouts, without allowing them the chance and time to explore the topic and nature of the descriptor. As Jarvinen (2004) warns, the descriptors may trigger a behavioristic approach, instead of an action-oriented and task centered one. To avoid this, teachers need to plan beforehand how they will present the strategy, skill or the aim in the descriptor in an inductive way. For instance instead of directly giving the descriptor "I can understand simple stories and shorter texts with the help of pictures and drawings" on the handout and attracting students' attention on it, the teacher may first ask the learners to read a text with some difficult words in it, but without any pictures or images to help them understand the words. After that she would give the same text with images and pictures of the unknown vocabulary and ask learners to read it. Then

she would elicit from the students why it was easier to understand the second text; and in that way she would lead learners to discover the nature and importance of what skill, strategy or aim the descriptor requires them to have a command on. This kind of an approach would stimulate learners' curiosity and in return learners would make the aim of the descriptor their own, since they themselves discovered it. A similar inductive approach to raise the consciousness of students in all lessons would also make the lessons more learner-centered and contribute to learners' taking more responsibility on their own learning.

It is safe to argue that awareness raising practices, either carried out in a deductive or an inductive way, are the first step in learners' getting involved in the process of language learning. As Kohonen (2000) argues, when teachers make the goals more concrete and emphasize their importance for life-long learning, they can motivate their students towards developing a commitment for their own learning. Learners in the research context also stated that they benefited from the descriptors since the descriptors led them towards accomplishing the task at hand. After understanding their aims of the task, learners set about planning what they need to do in order to carry out the task successfully and reach the competence the descriptor calls for. This kind of an involvement in the language learning process is well depicted by Little (1991), who gives the example of a class determining the content of their learning in group work tasks, deciding how they should go about the tasks and accepting responsibility collectively and individually for reviewing their progress. He maintains that everything is done by negotiation in that kind of an autonomous classroom, which encourage learners to explore their own personal constructs (see Kelly (1955)for personal constructs theory). In that kind of an involvement learners determine in general what they want to do, specify the end

product (written or oral), choose the materials they need to use to accomplish the task and contribute to the task or project by shouldering roles they are given in the group work. This kind of a depiction of an autonomous class matches well with the procedures carried out in most of the production based lessons with fourth and fifth grades. For instance they could prepare a show with the characters of the book they have been reading, they prepared presentations and games, wrote formal and informal letters, prepared brochures, and so on. All of these activities were either individually or collectively prepared with the preferences of the students. They chose the content of their materials, the techniques they want to employ, the language they will use, the roles they will bear and so on. All those steps towards involvement into the language learning process was accompanied and directed by the descriptors. Therefore goal-tracking and creating materials practices helped learners implement their own learning. In production based tasks, that kind of an implementation was observable since learners took initiatives to create oral or written materials. In reception based tasks, learners also implemented their own learning since they tracked the goals set by the descriptors, which helped them activate their background knowledge, gain some listening or reading strategies and thus prepare themselves for the task.

Reflection practice was also one of the practices aiding to the promotion of learner autonomy by leading learners towards monitoring their own learning. As Scharle and Szabo (2000) point out when the teacher encourages the students to focus on the process of learning rather than the outcome of it, they can have the opportunity to go through their own contribution to their own learning. Throughout the lessons, learners made oral reflections during and after the tasks. Most of them were in the form of learners' thoughts about their performance in the task they

carried out, whether it was easy or difficult and which aspects of it they could accomplish. Reflections were also seen in the self-assessment sessions at the end of the term. Learners reflected on their competence as to the descriptors on their portfolios referring to the tasks they carried out throughout the term. Kohonen (2001) states that especially young learners have little experience and knowledge about language learning to use it for reflection. He adds that students have difficulty in understanding what the learning goals mean and require them to do in concrete tasks and situations; thus it becomes hard for them to reflect on their goals. As Little (1999b) also argues, especially when criterion-referenced descriptors are used for reflection and self-assessment, students need to have some degree of linguistic knowledge in order to understand the abstract language used in the descriptors and undertake the reflection or assessment task effectively. It was obvious in the current research that learners benefited from the awareness raising carried out through descriptors since in the self-assessment sessions they could understand "can-do statements", comment on their competence as to the descriptor and relate them to in-class and out-of-class language learning activities they carried out. However, as Little (2000) argues, writing can also be used to support reflection in order to develop both learners' metacognitive control of the learning process and also their conscious awareness of the target language and its grammar. Thus, written reflection could be fostered at the end of each activity so that learners would reflect on their weaknesses and strengths as to the descriptor. Learners would also be led to set new goals according to their evaluations of themselves. Therefore, it is advisable that both oral and written reflections be carried out more systematically to enhance monitoring over learning.

As regards self-assessment practices, it was evident that learners benefited from the self-assessment sessions; since they mostly referred to the ELP as a tool for them to evaluate themselves and see their progress. While assessing themselves, they could remember most of the descriptors from the lessons; so they did not have much difficulty understanding and reflecting on them. As Little (1999b) states, students can have an idea of what they can do with the language in concrete situations and tasks; so the 'can do' statements can help them understand and assess what they can do with their language in specific contexts. Learners in the research context gave ample examples of tasks they carried out in and out of class that match the descriptors. In the fourth and fifth grades, although self-assessment practices were not carried out much after each activity or lesson, one self-assessment session at the end of the term was even valuable for students to understand their standing in the language learning process. However, only one self-assessment session at the end of the term is obviously is not enough for students to judge their own success objectively and discover their strengths and weaknesses to plan their learning accordingly.

Throughout the term, self-assessment sessions with the checklists in the biography part of the ELP could be done more systematically or simply learners could be directed towards self-assessments through the boxes on their handouts by putting plusses or minus next to the descriptor on the handout. As the English teacher of the fifth grade says :

"The ELP does not mean only putting ticks on the checklists. We should allow some space on the descriptor boxes for the students to put plusses or minus while evaluating themselves." This argument is in line with Little (2009b), who states that the ELP is sometimes misunderstood as a tool for form-filling, which aims to record learning after it has taken place.

If the ELP was used systematically to allow learners to get involved in the language learning process by planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating their learning, it would not only have a reporting function in which students only record their achievements on the checklists. Although reporting is also a function of the ELP, the pilot projects (1998-2000) were mostly concerned with developing its pedagogical function (Scharer, 2001). As Little (2006) also points out the ELP does not mean much to learners unless it plays an active role in the learning process. He adds that without a strongly developed pedagogical function, students may not find much outcome to record on the checklists at the end of a term. Little (2009b) also puts forward that the ELP is a way to provide learners with various language learning activities However if students attempt to record their progress as well as the outcome of their learning, then the pedagogical function of the ELP can be made use of. In the current research, too, learners got involved in the language learning process by becoming more aware of the language learning process and developing capacity for reflection and self-assessment and thus this enabled them to take more control of their own learning, which shows that not only the reporting but also the pedagogical function of the ELP was used. However, it could foster more autonomy if the reflections and assessments were carried out more regularly and used as a springboard for further goal-setting.

In conclusion, the results of the study showed that teachers and learners reported positive attitudes towards the use of the ELP in the class and they stated that the ELP made them become more aware of the language learning process, clarify their objectives, produce materials with their own preferences and evaluate their own learning. These results are in accordance with the results of the pilot studies 1998-2001 (Scharer, 2001), other reports of the implementation from 2001 to 2008

(Scharer, 2004;2008), some published research studies in Europe like Ushioda and Ridley (2002), Sisamakis (2006), Kohonen (2000) and the research carried out in Turkey concerning the implementation of the ELP and autonomy (Demirel (2003), Egel (2003), Glover, Mirici and Aksu (2005), Koyuncu (2006), Ceylan (2006), Güneyli and Demirel (2006),Karagöl (2008). As Egel (2003) states in her research on the role of the ELP on learner autonomy in primary school children, the ELP is an innovation for language learning since it both provides a positive experience for primary school children and helps them in developing learner autonomy. Sisamakis (2006) also states as a conclusion of his thesis research on the ELP that students developed considerably in terms of their autonomous behavior and reflective skills in language learning and that became more objective in their self-assessments. Little (2009b) also supports these views stating that the ELP helps students organize their learning, make a record of their learning and empower them to take responsibility for their learning.

Taking into account the results of the observations and interviews, it appears safe to claim that although the practices related to the ELP could be enhanced so as to lead to a more systematic and autonomy-focused use of the ELP, it helped learners become more autonomous and the classroom more autonomy-focused. Nunan (1996) makes a distinction between institution-centered and autonomy-focused classrooms in that in the former, the decisions about the syllabus is made with little or no reference to the potential communicative needs of the learner; however in the latter, the selection and sequencing of the content will be made with reference to the sorts of language functions the learner will want to use outside of the classroom. In that respect, the classes observed can be said to be autonomy-focused since the tasks were geared according to the communicative needs of the learners. In

the self-assessment sessions this was plainly evident since learners constantly mentioned how the tasks they carried out in class related to their outside class use of English. They gave many examples of situations in which they used many functions of the language. With the help of the ELP descriptors and related tasks, they became aware of the ways in which they can learn and use English outside school. Learners also progressed in their ability to express and develop their creativity in their projects and assignments as evidenced by the oral and written materials they have produced.

## Implications of the Study for the Use of ELP in EFL Context

The implementation of the ELP in this context could be enhanced to promote a more effective and autonomy focused learning and teaching context. First of all as for the implementation of the ELP, the administration needs to integrate the curriculum with the ELP. In practice, the 'can do' statements are only put on the handouts, but they are not used with the activities other than the ones on the handouts. If the curriculum is reviewed and restated in CEFR terms, the curriculum would not be only something needed to be covered in terms of textbooks. A curriculum with CEFR terms would make clear the communicative tasks a learner should be able to perform in order to claim mastery of certain curricular goals. The activities and tasks would be designed according to the communicative CEFR terms, which would also be in harmony with the ELP 'can do' statements. In that way, learners would not only come across some descriptors on the handouts, but a coherent and comprehensive application of the ELP could be fostered through the integration of the descriptors in the curriculum. If that kind of an integration of the ELP is promoted in larger scale, This would make the Turkish primary education internationally transparent and comparable with other

language learning environments by means of the CEFR levels and in the long run it would have positive repercussions for Turkish language education.

The ELP model can also be optimized to better accommodate the needs of learners. First of all, the possibility of using simpler and non-academic language in the language biography should be examined. In this way, the biography part with its function of goal-setting and self-assessment could be more comprehensive to the learners. The ELP should also be ameliorated to include some aesthetically appealing graphic elements, color-schemes or even cartoon characters to attract young learners' attention. The descriptors should also make clear the communicative tasks the learners is expected to perform; therefore the provision of some indicative examples of tasks and learner work for each section , which would help teachers and learners get ideas for activities appears advisable. The ELP should also be supported with teacher's handbooks, teacher support networks among the schools who use the ELP and internet sites that provide examples for activities related to the ELP. This would contribute to the dissemination of good practice using the ELP.

The most important element conducive to successful implementation of the ELP appears to be the provision of ample methodological support to teachers through seminars and support meetings. Teachers should adopt a more inductive method to make learners aware of the objectives to be accomplished and the skills or strategies aimed to be gained through the descriptors. They should first present learners with situations and language through which learners can discover the principles or aims by themselves. Teachers should also use tasks that make clear the relationship between the descriptor and the communicative function it bestows. Communicative contexts in which learners can have an insight as to the communicative functions of the descriptors should be created. As Benson (2003) also suggests, in order to foster

autonomy, teachers should provide a range of learning options and resources; and offer more choices and decision making opportunities. Teachers should plan such choices beforehand and foster decision making throughout the lessons. There may be many teachers complaining that they cannot offer learners any preferences because of the strict curriculum. Little (1991) points out that this problem can be solved by teachers' exercising their own autonomy as to the shaping of curriculum and leaving room for negotiation of it with the students. Little states that although in some contexts it is possible for the teacher to negotiate and shape the curriculum based on the needs of students, in many contexts teachers have to shape their syllabus according to the official curriculum guidelines. He states that this does not mean that learner involvement is undermined in such a situation; because each teacher has his or her own judgments and interpretations of the curriculum and s/he may exercise her/his own autonomy by looking for areas in which s/he can transfer control to learners even within the limits of the curriculum. Therefore, teachers should avoid finding excuses for not being able to let learners free in their choices because of administrative reasons and try to leave room for negotiation and create contexts in which learners enjoy their own preferences. To foster learner autonomy, teachers should serve as the organizer of tasks, the facilitator of student-centered activities and the prompter of reflection.

In order to promote goal-setting, reflection and self-assessment, the portfolio itself can be supported with 'learning to learn' and reflection pages. Little and Simpson (2003) gives the examples of twenty-three examples of such pages derived from nine validated examples from primary level through to university (see www.coe.int/portfolio for sample pages). Such 'learning to learn', goal-setting or reflection pages could also be used along with the ELP in the research context. Some

of them can focus on learners' personal learning needs. Some inventories as to students' learning styles and strategies should be administered to support the 'how I learn languages' section in the biography part. Pages for students to write their general aims and reflections; as well as pages for setting specific weekly goals could be used to lead learners towards goal setting and reflection. Systematic use of reflection and self-assessment, which lacks in the current research context, can be fostered by encouraging learners to set their own goals, evaluate how well they achieved them and what they have learnt about themselves or about learning. This would lead learners towards taking more responsibility for identifying new learning targets. While setting their targets, they would benefit from their awareness of the knowledge they gained through the descriptors. They can also base their reflections and self-assessments on that kind of an awareness.

Apart from using extra pages for reflection, teachers can also foster learners' reflective skills throughout the lessons orally. Kohonen (2001) states that student reflection should be started with a more general reflective practice. One first learn to be reflective about oneself as a human being. He suggests asking students questions like ' What is important for you as a person?, What three things do you value about yourself? , What are your strengths as a student at school ? and so on. Then they should be required to reflect on their language learning process and aims, by answering questions like ' What aim do you wish to set for this course?, What aspects of language learning are easy for you?, etc. (p.13) In that way students can have an insight about their beliefs on language learning, their roles as language learners and the ways they can improve themselves.

As for self-assessment, firstly self-assessment sessions with the students should be held at least once a month; so that learners can gain an insight as to their

progress in learning and set aims for the upcoming month. In this way, self assessment would take a formative form, instead of a summative one at the end of the term. It is also highly recommended that the boxes on the handouts contain space for self-assessment and goal-setting. In that way, learners would firstly led by the teachers to explore and discover what they are expected to gain in that task and then after discovering it and carrying out the task, they would be directed towards assessing themselves on the handouts without taking out their portfolios. They may put smiling or sad faces on it according to their own evaluations of themselves. If they think that they need to work more on it, they can set it as the aim of the week and further their studies to achieve it. This would pave the way for systematic use of self-assessment and also foster reflection and goal-setting. They would also develop their ability to assess themselves objectively and prepare themselves for the self-assessment sessions. Below is an illustrative table that can be used on the handouts.

Table 13. An illustrative descriptor box

| | This is my goal. | I can do it very well. | I can do it. | I can't do it. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A2.Spoken Interaction (p.42)<br>I can act a part in a simple play or dialogue | | | | |

The last implication as regards the implementation of the ELP to enhance learner autonomy would be to have project classes based on the ELP. Little (2009b) gives the example of working with the ELP with a class of learners who at the beginning of the week firstly set their learning targets for the week then negotiate on

a theme to work on as a class. Then in groups they plan their projects, work on them and carry out the task, followed by self-assessment and reflection. In the current research context, at least an hour a week can be allocated for project work with the ELP; so that learners can enjoy the freedom of setting their targets, negotiating on themes and organization, work in groups, create materials and lastly reflect on their work.

In conclusion, on the basis of the results, it seems that the time is more than ripe to further actions structured by the ELP. The ELP as a tool for effective language learning, teaching and assessment should be used to its full potential both locally and globally to cater for learner autonomy.

## Suggestions for Further Research

Considering that the ELP is an innovative tool developed to facilitate language learning, teaching and assessment, there is not much research to shed light on its implementation, effect on language learning, teaching and assessment; as well as on issues like learner autonomy, motivation and student success.

First of all, the ELP was investigated in a private school context with two fourth and fifth grade classes. For a further research, the implementation of the ELP can be piloted and explored in a wider range of grades and classes, both in private and public schools. Secondly, an experimental research design could be set to compare the implementation of the ELP in private and public schools. Thirdly, qualitative research design can be supported with close or open-ended questionnaires on learners' perceptions of their level of autonomy or the practices they carry in and out of class autonomously. Apart from primary schools, the ELP can also be piloted

in tertiary education and vocational schools. Furthermore, the attitudes and beliefs of language teachers as to the implementation of the ELP can also be investigated in another research. Another point is that autonomy develops in learners over time and in various ways; so the development of learner autonomy can be explored for a longer period of time in a longitudinal study. A different research can also deal with the effect of the use of the ELP on motivation and student success. A research investigating the ways to integrate the ELP into course books could also be taken into consideration. Finally, the potential of the ELP as a tool for plurilingualism and multiculturalism can be explored as well.

## Limitations of the Study

The present study, which aims to explore the implementation of the ELP and its role on learner autonomy in a specific context has some limitations. First of all, the data were collected from an age specific group, namely young learners at fourth and fifth graders at a primary school. Since very young learners at the age of 5-9 are not taken into consideration in this study, the results can only be generalized to the young learners at the age of 10-12. Secondly, the study was carried out in one fourth and one fifth class as well as their two English teachers. The sampling of the study could be larger to ensure more regularities in the data.

Secondly, the study is limited in that it was carried out in a private school. The profile and the background of the learners in that private school are quite different from the ones in public schools. They have much more opportunities to come across and use English both in their daily lives and at school. In addition, the differences between the language teaching approach of this private school and that of

public schools are worth mentioning. Compared to the general profile of public schools, this private school adopts a learner-centered approach not only in English but also in many other lessons. They are always required to be active and participating in class and speak in English during the lessons. They take active roles in projects and engage in many learner-centered activities. This might have affected learners' and teacher' ideas regarding autonomous learning positively. Thus, this study can be generalized to the private school contexts in which the general teaching philosophy is based on learner-centeredness.

Finally, the study is limited in that the qualitative data gained through observations throughout 12 weeks were not supported with video or audio recordings due to administrative reasons. Only two self-assessment sessions could be audio recorded. It could further enhance validity of the research if the observations were video or audio recorded.

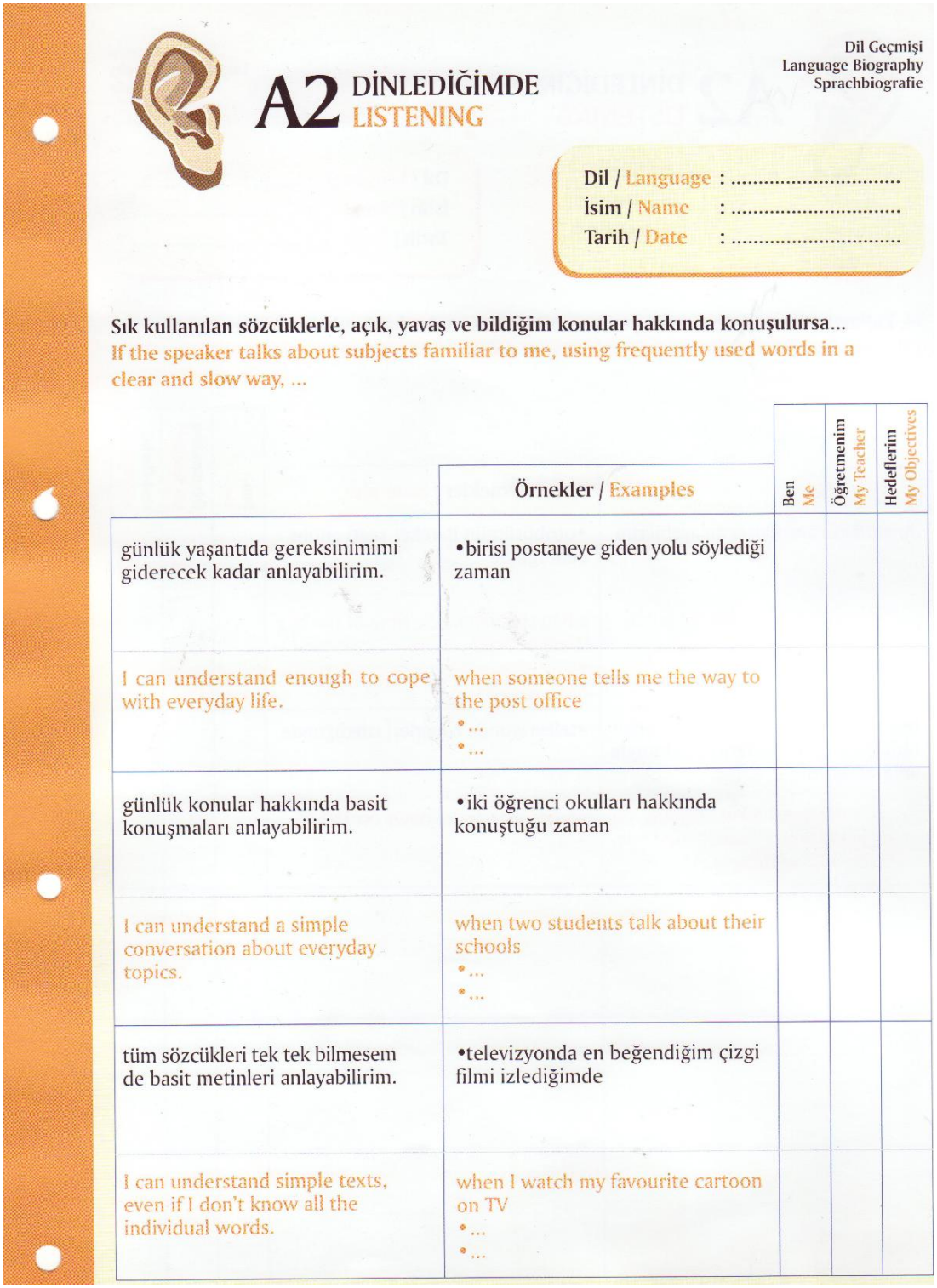
## Conclusion

As many researchers like Nunan (1997), Littlewood (1999), Scharle & Szabo (2000), Sinclair (2001) state, complete autonomy is an idealistic goal and there are degrees of autonomy. As Benson (2001) also adds, the learning context should be taken into account while coming to conclusions as to the degree of autonomy students have. Considering these points, it can be claimed that the learners in that particular context benefited from the ELP as a tool for promoting learner autonomy, since as a first degree, they became aware of both the objectives and competences the descriptors calls for and also their own language learning process. They could also use their own resources and preferences while producing materials. In addition, they

could reflect on and evaluate their learning to some extent. However, as stated above, the implementation could be enhanced to promote more autonomous behavior.

APPENDIX A

A Sample Page of the European Language Portfolio Model Used



Dil Geçmişi
Language Biography
Sprachbiografie

# A2 DİNLEDİĞİMDE LISTENING

Dil / Language : .....
İsim / Name : .....
Tarih / Date : .....

**Sık kullanılan sözcüklerle, açık, yavaş ve bildiğim konular hakkında konuşulursa...**
If the speaker talks about subjects familiar to me, using frequently used words in a clear and slow way, ...

| | Örnekler / Examples | Ben Me | Öğretmenim My Teacher | Hedeflerim My Objectives |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| günlük yaşantıda gereksinimimi giderecek kadar anlayabilirim. | • birisi postaneye giden yolu söylediği zaman | | | |
| I can understand enough to cope with everyday life. | when someone tells me the way to the post office<br>• ...<br>• ... | | | |
| günlük konular hakkında basit konuşmaları anlayabilirim. | • iki öğrenci okulları hakkında konuştuğu zaman | | | |
| I can understand a simple conversation about everyday topics. | when two students talk about their schools<br>• ...<br>• ... | | | |
| tüm sözcükleri tek tek bilmesem de basit metinleri anlayabilirim. | • televizyonda en beğendiğim çizgi filmi izlediğimde | | | |
| I can understand simple texts, even if I don't know all the individual words. | when I watch my favourite cartoon on TV<br>• ...<br>• ... | | | |

Appendix B

Permission Letter from the Istanbul Directorate of National Education

T.C.
İSTANBUL VALİLİĞİ
İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü

Sayı : B.08.4.MEM.4.34.00.18.580/ 47/871 05 Ocak 2009
Konu : **Uygulama.**
**(Sinem YILMAZ)**

**BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ**
**Eğitim Fakültesi Yabancı Diller Bölümü**

İlgi: a) Valilik Makamının 02/01/2009 tarih ve 29/519 sayılı Oluru.
b) Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Eğitim Araştırma ve Geliştirme Dairesi Başkanlığı'nın Okul ve Kurumlarda Yapılacak Araştırma ve Araştırma Desteğine Yönelik izin ve Uygulama Yönergesi.
c) 25/12/2008 tarih ve 227 sayılı yazınız.

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü Yüksek Lisans öğrencisi **Sinem YILMAZ'ın**, İlimiz Üsküdar İlçesi Özel Çamlıca Bilfen İlköğretim Okulunda uygulanmak üzere **"Avrupa Dil Gelişim Dosyası'nın Öğrenen Özerkliği Üzerine Etkisine Bir Bakış"** konulu uygulama çalışmasını yapma isteği ilgi (a) Valilik Oluru ile uygun görülmüştür.

Bilgilerinizi, gereğinin ilgi (a) Valilik Oluru doğrultusunda, gerekli duyurunun anketçi tarafından yapılmasını, işlem bittikten sonra 2(iki) hafta içinde sonuçtan Müdürlüğümüz Kültür Bölümüne rapor halinde bilgi verilmesini arz ederim.

Erdem DEMİRCİ
Müdür a.
Müdür Yardımcısı

EKLER :
Ek-1. İLGİ (a) Valilik Oluru.
2. Anket soruları.

EĞİTİME %100 DESTEK
***NOT*** *: Verilecek cevapta tarih, kayıt numarası, dosya numarası yazılması rica olunur.*
***Adres*** *: İstanbul Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü A.Blok Ankara cad. No:2 Cağaloğlu 2125261382*
***E-Mail*** *: kultur34@meb.gov.tr* ***Web*** *: http://istanbul.meb.gov.tr/bolumler/kultur*
**4440632**

Appendix C

Semi-structured Interview Questions for Teachers

1. How do you use the European Language Portfolio throughout the lessons?
2. How does seeing the descriptors on the handouts affect learners in their language learning process?
3. Do students ever get involved in setting their objectives?
4. How does the ELP affect learners in using their creativity for the tasks and projects?
5. What is your opinion about students' self-assessments?
6. Do you see a difference between your assessments and students' self-assessments?
7. If so, how do you evaluate the difference?
8. What kind of a difference does using the ELP create on the learners and on the language learning process?
9. What are the difficulties you encounter in the implementation of the ELP?
10. Does it help learners shoulder responsibility for their own learning?
11. How should the teachers be supported for a better use of the ELP?

Appendix D

Semi-structured Interviews Focus group Interview Questions for Students

1. How is the orange portfolio and the criteria in it are used in the classroom?
2. What advantage does seeing the criteria on the handouts have on your language learning?
3. How does seeing the criteria affect your creativity in your assignments and projects?
4. How does assessing yourself help you in learning English?
5. What is the advantage of comparing your assessments with the teachers'?
6. Can you use the aims in the descriptors out of class as well?
7. Does using the orange portfolio put some responsibility on you in your language learning process?

APPENDIX E

A Sample Written Activity Handout

# HANDOUT 2 GRADE 5

**A) What's the most interesting place you have ever seen?**

_____

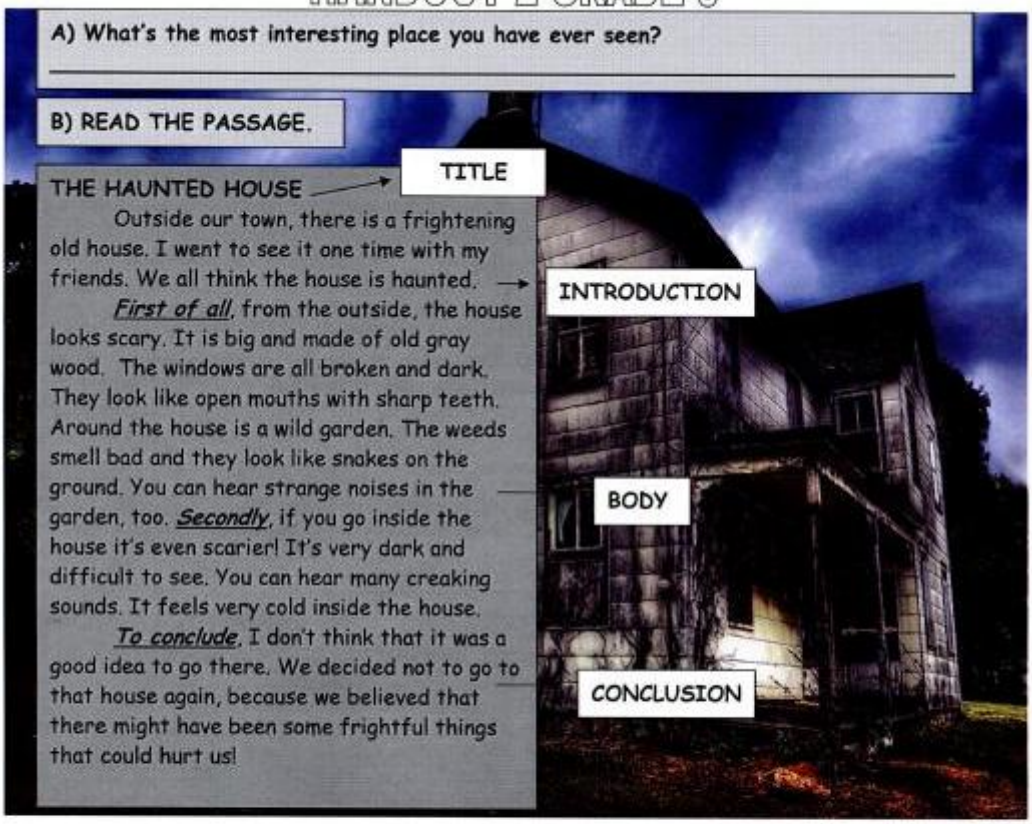
**B) READ THE PASSAGE.**

**THE HAUNTED HOUSE** → **TITLE**

Outside our town, there is a frightening old house. I went to see it one time with my friends. We all think the house is haunted. → **INTRODUCTION**

***First of all***, from the outside, the house looks scary. It is big and made of old gray wood. The windows are all broken and dark. They look like open mouths with sharp teeth. Around the house is a wild garden. The weeds smell bad and they look like snakes on the ground. You can hear strange noises in the garden, too. ***Secondly***, if you go inside the house it's even scarier! It's very dark and difficult to see. You can hear many creaking sounds. It feels very cold inside the house. — **BODY**

***To conclude***, I don't think that it was a good idea to go there. We decided not to go to that house again, because we believed that there might have been some frightful things that could hurt us! — **CONCLUSION**



**C) ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW.**

1- If there was a haunted house closer to your town, would you go and see it? Why? / Why not?

_____

2- What might be the strange noises heard in the garden?

_____

D) Plan an essay about an interesting place that you can write about in a creative way as in the text. Tell us what things look, sound, smell or feel like.

Title: _____

Introduction: _____

_____

_____

Body paragraph:

Topic sentence: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Details:

_____

_____

_____

Conclusion paragraph:

Conclusion sentence: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2

WRITING A2: "I can write a text that has a beginning, course of actions/ plot and ending and use linking words like 'first, after that, later and because."

E) WRITE THE ESSSAY YOU PLANNED IN ACTIVITY D.

Title →

Introduction →

Body →

Conclusion →

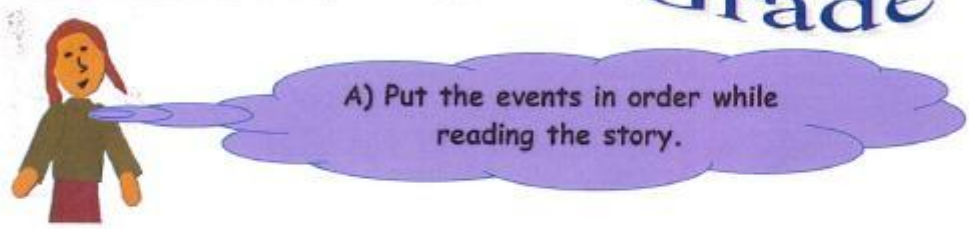
3

APPENDIX F

A Sample Reading Activity Handout

A2 READING pg 32
I can understand simple stories and shorter texts with the help of pictures and drawings.

# Handout 1
# 4th Grade




A. The king never helped anyone with his money.
B. The magic pencil vanished.
C. The king asked Torna to come to the castle.
D. The whole castle started to shake.
E. Torna helped a farmer.
F. Torna found a small wooden box under a big tree.
G. Torna helped a painter.
H. All the money in the cellar flew up in the air.

1st___ 2nd___ 3rd___ 4th___ 5th___ 6th___ 7th___ 8th___

**B) Match the description in column A with a character in column B.**

| A | B |
|---|---|
| 1. He was very mean and had a big lock in his castle. | a. Torna's mother |
| 2. She lived in the woods near the king's castle. | b. The painter |
| 3. She said, "We need food" to Torna. | c. The magic pencil |
| 4. He was delighted with his new horse. | d. The people |
| 5. He was very happy with his 12 cans of paint. | e. The king |
| 6. It was in a box under a tree. | f. The farmer |
| 7. They thought it was raining money. | g. Torna |

C) DISCUSS THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 'THE MAGIC FINGER' AND 'THE MAGIC PENCIL'.

## THE SIMILARITIES

| THE MAGIC PENCIL | THE MAGIC FINGER |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

## THE DIFFERENCES

| THE MAGIC PENCIL | THE MAGIC FINGER |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

D) DRAW THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF THE GIRL IN 'THE *MAGIC FINGER'* AND TORNA IN ' THE MAGIC PENCIL'.

THE MAGIC FINGER

THE MAGIC PENCIL

APPENDIX G

A Sample Listening Activity Handout

*A2: (Listening) I can understand what is going on in the world when I watch TV, with the help of images.*

# HANDOUT 2
# 4TH GRADE

**BEFORE WATCHING**

DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS.

- What do you know about carnivals or festivals?
- Do you wear any special costumes during your festivals?
- What do you expect to see in the video? ( **eg: What are they doing?**)

**WHILE WATCHING**

**1st PART** (7.00 / 10.32)

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

1) What are they celebrating?

_____

2) When did Clary Salandy start to design costumes?

_____

3) What are they doing to be successful at this carnival?

_____

4) What is the queen of the band wearing at the carnival?

_____

5) What is the queen of the band designing as the last part of her costume?

_____

6) How are people having fun at the carnival?

_____

**2nd PART** (10.32 / 14.11)

DECIDE IF THE STATEMENTS ARE (T) TRUE OR (F) FALSE.

1. Everybody at the carnival is working hard. (  )
2. The children at the carnival are not smiling very much. (  )
3. People don't dance when the weather is sunny. (  )
4. The woman looks pleased with her white costume. (  )
5. Lots of people are watching the carnival. (  )
6. The visitors are not taking photographs at the carnival. (  )
7. There are seventy different groups at the carnival. (  )

## AFTER YOU WATCH

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW AND DISCUSS YOUR ANSWERS IN CLASS.

- Did you like the carnival in London? Why or why not?

_____

- What was your favourite costume in the video?

_____

- Do you think designing costumes is diffucult? Why or why not?

_____

**Imagine you are creating a custome for a carnival now. Can you draw your costume in the box?**

APPENDIX H

A Sample Student Material (A Complaint Letter)

# HANDOUT 2 GRADE 5

## Letter of complaint

Fill in the blanks of this letter with these words:
store, phone, mistake, disappointed,
business, cashier, wait, prices

Alp KIRHAN
GIMA Company
Erenler Street
Istanbul

Dear Mr. Kırhan

I have been a satisfied customer with your company GAMA STORE for seven years. On my last visit on June 1, 2008 at 2 PM, I received poor service that I felt I should *bring to your attention*. ( make someone aware of something)

I was in the ___store___ to buy a small bag of chips and a small soda. When I got into the checkout lane, the ___cashier___, wearing a nametag that read "Jale", told me that I had to ___wait___ a few minutes until her *freshly painted fingernails* (have just been painted) dried before she could ring up my items She was also on the ___phone___ talking to a friend during this time. After ten minutes, she got off the phone and started to ring my items up. Imagine my surprise when my bag of chips and small drink costs $7.98. I told her that there must be a ___mistake___. She told me that she didn't set the ___prices___ and that if I didn't like the prices I should leave and shop elsewhere else. Needless to say, I went across the street to the ABC Store for shopping as soon as I left your store.

I was ___disappointed___ with the service I received that day. I would appericiate if you inform your cashier about this issue. I enjoy shopping at your store; however , if I receive this type of treatment (behaviour) again, I will take my ___business___ elsewhere.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.
Sincerely,

Sevgi ONER,
Yasemin Street
Istanbul
Phone: (530) 431 22 11

1

Burcu Magemizoglu

5-A/103

- Now, imagine you bought a plasma TV a few weeks ago and when it finally arrived, after a long delay, you discovered that it wasn't working properly. When you call the customer service to tell about the problem, they were in a very bad mood and told you that it was your mistake because you've installed the plasma TV by your own. They acted as if they weren't interested in your problem and didn't try to find a solution. As a result they told you that they won't refund you and they have nothing to do with that problem. Write a letter to the manager of the company explaining the problem.
- The questions below will help you:

➢ Do we have any chance to getting a refund ( give money back) bargain over the payment?

➢ Will they provide you a new one?

➢ Will they give you a discount because of the spoiled product?

***TO START:*** 1. Reason for writing. How often do you shop in that department store? When? Exact details of the purchase.
***DEVELOPMENT:*** 2. Details of problems.
***CONCLUSION:*** 3. What do you expect from the company?

Company Address: Bağdat Street, Number: 12

Dear Miss. Bayraci,

I come to your store six days in a week. And I was really glad to shop in your shop. But a few weeks ago I bought a plasma TV. But it come after three weeks. Then when I open it but I couldn't see the channels. But when I called the service they said that it is my mistake. And they don't provide a new one or give my money back. Please solve this problem, or I will never come to your shop again.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your address: Cadde bostan/ Istanbul.

B Magemizoglu

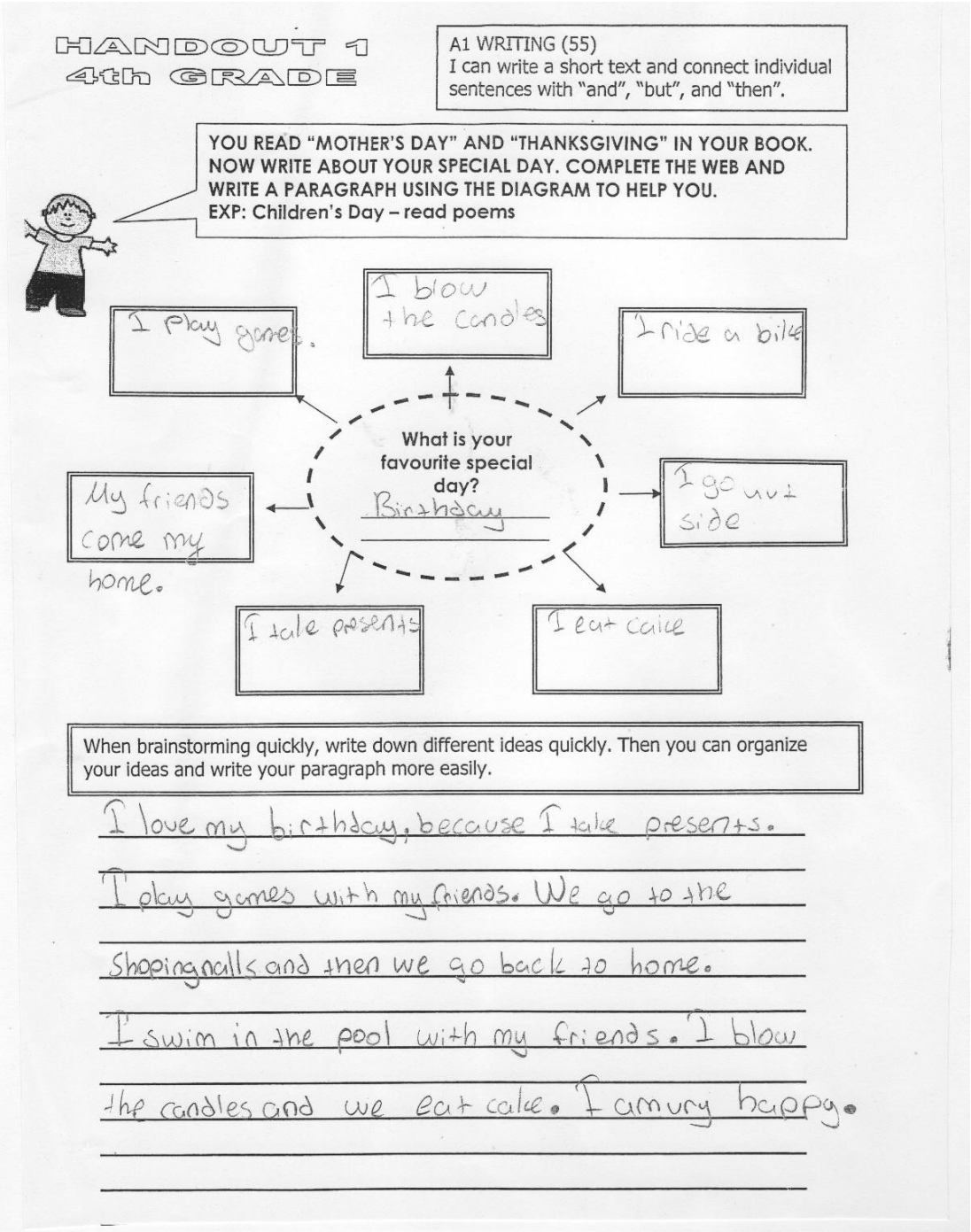
Excellent!

B1: I can write a formal complaint letter.

2

APPENDIX I

A Sample Student Material (Writing on a Special Day)



HANDOUT 1
4th GRADE

A1 WRITING (55)
I can write a short text and connect individual sentences with "and", "but", and "then".

YOU READ "MOTHER'S DAY" AND "THANKSGIVING" IN YOUR BOOK. NOW WRITE ABOUT YOUR SPECIAL DAY. COMPLETE THE WEB AND WRITE A PARAGRAPH USING THE DIAGRAM TO HELP YOU.
EXP: Children's Day – read poems

I play games.

I blow the candles

I ride a bike

What is your favourite special day?
Birthday

My friends come my home.

I go out side

I take presents

I eat cake

When brainstorming quickly, write down different ideas quickly. Then you can organize your ideas and write your paragraph more easily.

I love my birthday, because I take presents.
I play games with my friends. We go to the
Shopingmalls and then we go back to home.
I swim in the pool with my friends. I blow
the candles and we eat cake. I amvery happy.

APPENDIX J

Sample Student Self-assessment Checklists

Dil Geçmişi
Language Biography
Sprachbiografie

# A2 KONUŞTUĞUMDA SPOKEN PRODUCTION

Dil / Language : English
İsim / Name : [redacted]
Tarih / Date : 26th May 2008

**Sözcük gruplarını ve basit tümceleri kullanarak...**
**Using simple phrases and simple sentences ...**

| | Örnekler / Examples | Ben Me | Öğretmenim My Teacher | Hedeflerim My Objectives |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ailemi, evimi ve çevremi betimleyebilirim ve hobilerim ve okulum hakkında birşeyler söyleyebilirim. | • okul projesi için ailemi bir video filminde betimleme | | | |
| I can describe my family, home, my surroundings, myself, and say something about my hobbies and my school. | describing my family in a video film for a school project<br>• ...<br>• ... | +<br>+ | +<br>+ | |
| birşeyin nasıl çalıştığını ve birşeylerin nasıl yapıldığını betimleyebilirim. | • bir oyunun kurallarını açıklama ve nasıl oynanacağıyla ilgili yönergeleri verme | | | |
| I can describe how something works or how to do something. | explaining the rules of a game and give instructions on how to play it<br>• ...<br>• ... | +<br>+ | +<br>+ | |
| eğer önceden hazırlanırsam, bir olay, deneyimler ve etkinlikler hakkında kısaca konuşabilirim. | • bir başka ülkeye yaptığım en son yolculuk hakkında konuşma | | | |
| I can briefly talk about events, experiences, and activities if I am prepared. | talking about my last trip to another country<br>• ...<br>• ... | +<br>+ | +<br>+ | |

Dil Geçmişi
Language Biography
Sprachbiografie

# A1 YAZDIĞIMDA WRITING

Dil / Language : English
İsim / Name : [redacted]
Tarih / Date : 21st January

**Öğrendiğim sözcükleri, basit sözcük gruplarını ve tümce yapılarını kullanarak...**
Using words, simple expressions and sentences I have learnt, ...

| | Örnekler / Examples | Ben Me | Öğretmenim My Teacher | Hedeflerim My Objectives |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| günlük yaşamla ilgili kısa metinleri hata yapmadan kopyalayabilir ve basit formları doldurabilirim. | • bir yaz okulu için başvuru formu | | | |
| I can copy short texts about everyday life without making mistakes, and fill in simple forms. | an application form for a summer school<br>• ...<br>• ... | +<br>+ | + | |
| kısa diyalogları genel hatlarıyla doğru biçimde yazabilirim. | • bir çizgi hikayedeki konuşma balonlarını | | | |
| I can write short dialogues correctly, to a large extent. | speech balloons in a picture story<br>• ...<br>• ... | +<br>+ | +<br>+ | |
| arkadaşlarıma basit kartpostallar ve elektronik iletiler yazabilir ve nasıl olduğumu ve ne yaptığımı iletebilirim. | • bir başka ülkede yaşayan bir arkadaşıma yeni yıl için bir kartpostal | | | |
| I can write simple postcards and e-mails to friends and communicate how I am, and what I'm doing. | a postcard to my friend in another country for the new year<br>• ...<br>• ... | +<br>+ | +<br>+ | |

# A1 DİNLEDİĞİMDE LISTENING

Dil Geçmişi
Language Biography
Sprachbiografie

Dil / Language : English
İsim / Name : [redacted]
Tarih / Date : [redacted]

**Birisi çok yavaş bir şekilde konuşursa ve gerek duyduğumda tekrarlarsa...**
If somebody speaks slowly and repeats when I need,...

| | Örnekler / Examples | Ben Me | Öğretmenim My Teacher | Hedeflerim My Objectives |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| başkaları birbirleriyle konuşurken, müzik dinlerken ya da televizyon izlerken tek sözcükleri ve basit tamlamaları anlayabilirim.<br>I can understand single words and simple phrases, when people talk to each other, when listening to music, or watch TV. | • "okul", "aile", "oyuncak" sözcükleri ya da "benim kitabım", "benim evim" tamlamaları<br>the words "school", "family", "toys", or phrases "my book", "my house"<br>• ...<br>• ... | ++ | ++ | |
| başkaları birbirlerini selamladığında ve tanıştığında ya da vedalaştığında anlayabilirim.<br>I can understand when people greet and introduce each other or when they say goodbye. | • okulumda, bir otelde ya da bir dükkanda geçen konuşmalar<br>dialogues in my school, at a hotel or in a shop<br>• ...<br>• ... | ++ | ++ | |
| basit yönergeleri anlayabilirim.<br>I can follow simple instructions. | • öğretmen pencereyi açmamı istediğinde<br>when the teacher asks me to open the window<br>• ...<br>• ... | ++ | ++ | |
| sayıları, fiyatları, tarihleri ve zamanı anlayabilirim.<br>I can understand numbers, prices, dates and the time. | • görevli, bir pizzanın fiyatının ne kadar olduğunu söylediğinde<br>when the shop assistant tells me how much a pizza costs<br>• ...<br>• ... | + | + | |

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