

Building Bridges: The Effects of Having an Adult Learner in a Language Class

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Abstract: The purpose of the study is to analyse the effects of having an adult learner in a language class. The study was conducted in a university Preparatory Class (EPC) and was carried out with 4 EPC instructors, 5 EPC students and 1 adult learner (AL). The EPC instructors' ages are between 36-49 and their teaching experiences are from 10 years to 24., the EPC students' ages are between 19-21 and the adult learner is 42 and has a PhD in education. The research was designed using the convenience and purposive sampling approach. The data was collected using open-ended questions and the phenomenology technique, which is one of the qualitative research methodologies employed. The data was analysed using the qualitative content analysis approach. Based on the data analysis, noteworthy themes regarding having adult learners in a language class were discovered. The following are the themes and sub-themes: 'challenges in having an adult learner during language learning process' contains the sub-themes of bias to language learning, dominance of the adult learner in classroom interaction, the theme 'benefits of having adult learner in a language class' contains the sub-themes of motivation, raising language learning awareness, adult learner's being a role model, knowledge transfer, career planning and the theme 'the effects of having an adult learner in language learning process' contains transfer of experience, strategy training, lesson planning and material design.

Keywords: Adult Learner, Language Learning, Motivation, Class Management, In-class Interaction

Köprüler İnşa Etmek: Bir Dil Sınıfında Yetişkin Öğrenenin Etkileri

Öz: Bu çalışmanın amacı, bir dil sınıfında yetişkin bir öğrenen bulunmasının etkilerini analiz etmektir. Çalışma bir Üniversite Hazırlık Sınıfında (İHS) gerçekleştirilmiş ve 4 İHS öğretim görevlisi, 5 İHS öğrencisi ve 1 yetişkin öğrenen (YÖ) ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. İHS öğretim görevlilerinin yaşları 36 ve 49 arasındadır ve öğretmenlik deneyimleri 10 ila 24 yıl arasında değişiklik göstermektedir. İHS öğrencilerinin yaşları 19 ve 21 arasında değişmektedir. Yetişkin öğrenen 42 yaşındadır ve doktora eğitimini tamamlamıştır. Araştırma, kolay ulaşılabilir ve amaçlı örneklem yaklaşımı kullanılarak tasarlanmıştır. Veriler, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan fenomenoloji tekniği ve açık uçlu sorular kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Veriler, nitel içerik analizi yaklaşımı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Veri analizine dayalı olarak, bir dil sınıfında yetişkin öğrenen bulunmasına ilişkin dikkate değer temalar tespit edilmiştir. 'Dil öğrenme sürecinde yetişkin bir öğrenene sahip olmanın zorlukları teması', 'dil öğrenmeye yönelik önyargı', 'sınıf etkileşiminde yetişkin öğrenenin hâkimiyeti' alt temalarını, 'yetişkin öğrenene sahip olmanın faydaları' teması, 'motivasyon', 'dil öğrenme farkındalığını artırma', 'yetişkin öğrenenin rol model olması', 'bilgi aktarımı', 'kariyer planlaması' alt temalarını ve 'yetişkin bir öğrenenin dil öğrenme sürecine etkisi' teması ise 'deneyim aktarımı', 'strateji eğitimi', 'ders planlaması' ve 'materyal tasarımı' alt temalarını içerir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yetişkin Öğrenen, Dil Öğrenimi, Motivasyon, Sınıf Yönetimi, Sınıf İçi Etkileşim

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The intersection of motivation inquiry and classroom practice is where approaches for the foreign language classroom come into consideration. They are purposeful educational viewpoints used by foreign language teachers to elicit, increase, and maintain learners' motivated behaviour while also protecting it against alternative action inclinations (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Because of the changing nature of the classroom setting, no single method can always motivate each learner in every setting (Zhao, 2016). The success of a strategy is determined by the interplay of several contextual factors. Approaches to learning and teaching, educational philosophy, individual learners' and instructors' personal characteristics and mental reactions, and learner group dynamics are examples of such factors (Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998).

Various learning contexts could either improve or affect the functioning of certain procedures, but further study about the specifics of different learning environments is required. In 1998, Dörnyei and Csizer initiated a valuable line of research about motivational beliefs and practices and different components of learning environments. Even if there are few scientific studies published in that line (Guilloteaux, 2010), there is still much work needs to be done. This sort of study is crucial if academics are to offer meaningful recommendations on the design of compelling language learning atmospheres. The value of setting an effective language learning atmosphere is in its emphasis on examining different components such as motivational factors, student profile, teacher competence, interaction, materials, and classroom management. In this context, our aim in this study is to unveil the impact of having an AL in a language learning setting which represent a new paradigm for language teachers, learners and educational institutions.

The presence of an AL in a foreign language class can be beneficial or disadvantageous to the learning process. Adult learners might have some difficulties in their learning process. Because, in addition to learning, adults have life obligations such as duties or a profession, managing a house, or having a family that may occupy their concentration. Such obligations may impede their ability to prepare, learn, and analyse (Malone, 2014). Likewise, adult learners are different from typical students because the majority of them have families and professions that might interfere with their learning (Cercone, 2008). A biological hypothesis also states that "adults who become language learners have fewer chances of obtaining indigenous competence" (Zhao, 2004). In other words, it might be more difficult for adults to acquire a language.

However, the impact of age in foreign language learning has been extensively described in the literature (Nunan & Benson, 2004), since it is one of the most often stated determining elements of successfulness in language learning process (Shumin, 2002). Also, there is considerable focus in identifying the perspectives and characteristics of adult learners who are learning a new language. Harmer (2007) implies that adult learners may interact with conceptual thinking, possess learning processes and a wide spectrum of lifetime experiences to use, grasp why they are learning, and what they want to accomplish in their learning. For example, in a case study conducted by Bellingham (2004), the perspectives of five Asian adult people learning English in their late thirties and early fifties were investigated. The research indicated that language learning occurs just after age of forty and emphasizes the kind of teacher interaction, learning surroundings, materials, learning techniques, and methodologies as major factors on Asian learners' language learning.

Beside the age factor, we believe learning atmosphere is also crucial for learning to occur. The variables of the learning atmosphere, both inside and outside the classrooms, have a substantial impact. Both typical students and adult language learners require a welcoming, secure, friendly, and enjoyable atmosphere that involves them both in the society and in the classroom. To have such an atmosphere, teachers can use humor. According to Akalın and Akbarov (2015), humor reduces educational stress and provides an engaging learning environment. Furthermore, they mention, it boosts motivation, innovation, concentration, and enthusiasm. The teacher has a great role for creating such an atmosphere. Teachers should encourage students to evolve into a collaborative group by listening carefully, prompting, and inquiring. Whereas Vygotsky's (1978) emphasis on social constructivism and the complex relationship involving learners, teacher, activity, and learning setting focuses on young learners, the significance of a safe social setting is equally crucial for adult learners (Williams & Burden, 1997). Moreover, there are many factors that may affect language learning and these factors can lead learners to be autonomous. In this case, adult learners can also be called autonomous learners because their purpose is to learn a language and they can motivate themselves. Krashen (1977)

indicates that language learning is facilitated further by the competence to manage abstract linguistic categories and formulate rules and concepts so this benefit, which is tied to purposeful language learning rather than natural language learning, contributes to elucidate the first benefit for adult learners. Older learners may surpass younger learners in the early phases of language learning, particularly in production tasks, due to their awareness of language and capacity to codify linguistic norms. On the other hand, an AL in class may mentor other students in various ways. For example, in a study conducted by Nora and Crisp in 2007 showed that in the literature, mentoring has four important categories: mental or emotional support, action planning and career choices, academic subject expertise guidance, and the presence of a role model. In the light of this information, as Drake (2011) mentioned, mentoring supports students when they are in need of help and build bridges when they are disconnected.

What should be addressed here is that having an adult learner in a learning atmosphere may have a good influence on other students in an inspiring sense. Once younger students witness a fresh perspective and a motivated learner in their class, they might begin to grasp the objective why they are learning a language and that can lead them to become autonomous learners. In a recent study conducted by Mali (2017), language learning does not have an age restriction, and "age affects language learning, but mostly because it is connected with social, psychological, educational, and other aspects that might enhance language competency".

Significance and Purpose of the Study

Considering all the factors of language learning process such as learning atmosphere, interaction, student profile, teacher competence; the effect of having an adult learner in a language class may have critical outcomes and contributions to the process. The dearth of thorough research on different perspectives on having an adult learner makes it difficult to grasp the actual situation and provides serious challenges in defining the necessities that will emerge in prospective research. Considering this, the goal of the current research was to examine the effects of having an adult learner in a university English Preparatory Class and the data acquired from various groups of participants (EPC instructors, EPC students and AL) on having an adult learner in a language class.

The solid data that is available as a result of this research will provide a decent viewpoint regarding the effects of an adult learner's presence in a language class.

Method

Research Design

The research adopts qualitative paradigm as it is an interpretative and humanistic technique based on interviews, experiences, and interpretations of people's viewpoints of various activities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Neuman, 2011). Quantitative methods are surely needed to see the numbers or percentages, nevertheless, certain aspects of the human physiology are not accessible to quantitative assessment and require a different type of empirical investigation (Chamberlain, 2009).

Phenomenology research design is widely used as it emerged as a philosophical approach concerned with the essence of experience through the viewpoint of the individual experiencing the phenomena (also called as "lived experience") (Connelly, 2010). According to Patton (2002), investigators attempt to show how participants view, explain, feel about, recall, and interpret information of the common experience. Creswell (2014) highlights phenomenology as a way in which the link between philosophy and psychology, which is concerned in individual ideas, opinions, and feelings regarding the actual world, life, and phenomena, is successfully expressed. A phenomenologist investigator analyses the features or substance of an experience by conducting interviews, narratives, or observations involving individuals that are living the experience of interest to the investigator.

The researchers collect data directly from the phenomenon being studied (Creswell et al., 2007) in line with the purpose of the research which to understand the effects of having an adult learner in language class. In this present study, identifying the participants' viewpoints, experiences, and interpretation is critical in

establishing the role of having an adult learner. Providing detailed qualitative data on participants' experiences and viewpoints related to a phenomenon and using phenomenology to combine the facts with participants' experiences and viewpoints is crucial in determining study design (Patton, 2002).

Participants

Convenience sampling is a sort of non - probability sampling technique or non - random sampling in which individuals of the target group who fulfil specific practical requirements, such as easy accessibility, geographical closeness, availability at a specific time, or desire to participate, are involved in the research (Dörnyei, 2007). It would be ideal to employ the entire population in any form of study, but in certain circumstances, this is not practical since the population seems to be almost limitless. Numerous studies use sample approaches such as convenience sampling for that purpose. The primary goal of convenience sampling is to obtain data from participants who are conveniently available to the researcher (Etikan et al., 2016), such as students for academics.

Purposive sampling is extensively used in qualitative studies for the identifying and collection of data contexts connected to the phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2015) through the most beneficial use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). The method's assets (Palinkas et al., 2015) are widely acknowledged to include efficient use of limited resources (Patton, 2002), availability and desire to interact, and the competence to convey experiences and viewpoints in an eloquent, expressive, and thoughtful way (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979).

This research was carried out with 4 EPC instructors, 5 EPC students and 1 adult learner. The interviews took 8 weeks in total (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Variables of Participants

| Codes | Age | Educational Level | Teaching Experience | Department | Level in EPC |
|---------------|-----|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| AL | 42 | PhD. | 20 years | NA | Intermediate |
| Instructor 1 | 49 | BA | 23 years | NA | NA |
| Instructor 2 | 47 | MA | 24 years | NA | NA |
| Instructor 3 | 42 | BA | 20 years | NA | NA |
| Instructor 4 | 36 | BA | 10 years | NA | NA |
| EPC Student 1 | 19 | High School | NA | Business Administration | Intermediate |
| EPC Student 2 | 21 | High School | NA | English Language Teaching | Intermediate |
| EPC Student 3 | 20 | High School | NA | English Language Teaching | Intermediate |
| EPC Student 4 | 21 | High School | NA | English Language Teaching | Intermediate |
| EPC Student 5 | 20 | High School | NA | Architecture | Intermediate |

Data Collection Tool, Procedures and Data Analysis

The data collection instrument employed for the research is determined with the scope of the research design in mind, as well as which data collection and analysis procedures were relevant. Additionally, the content validity of the interview questions employed was validated by expert opinions.

The interview questions created in accordance with the purpose of the study, the participants were asked about their feelings, experiences and viewpoints about having an adult learner in their class. The feelings, experiences and the role of the adult learner was asked as interview questions.

Creswell (2007) outlined five phases in the phenomenological research application procedure. First of all, the phenomenological technique is used to identify the study problem. Second, a relevant phenomenon to the study issue is selected. Thirdly, data was gathered through in-detailed interviews and several interviews as phenomenological interviews with groups who experience the phenomena. The fourth phase is data analysis. This phase entails developing meaningful units from these utterances into themes. At the end of a phenomenological research, these themes will serve as the foundation for a description that captures the essence of the experience. That is to say, the final phase is to give a relevant phenomenological description, model, or patterns that represent the feelings, ideas, or viewpoints of the participants.

The data gathering process contains 3 interviews that take approximately 56 minutes each and totally 336 minutes. Interviews are widely renowned for their ability to uncover behaviours, feelings, and viewpoints derived from participants' opinions and experiences (Creswell, 2014; Giorgi, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). With the consent of all the participants, the interviews were recorded and the transcription process was conducted by researchers separately with recurring analyses. The present research employs qualitative content analysis, which provides an empirical and structured method of defining and measuring phenomena (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Schreier, 2012). As Elo and Kyngäs mentioned (2008), evidence can be simplified to find out the phenomena through the formation of classifications, conceptions, modelling, or a conceptual map for the effectiveness in the use of qualitative content analyses.

Validity and Reliability

In this study, various strategies have been adopted for validity and reliability. Firstly, the researchers have consulted experts regarding the research structure and content and reviewed the relevant literature to prepare the interview questions. Secondly, after the researchers compiled the data for analysis, they shared them with the participants, requested their confirmation and follow-up communication with them made the data more manageable, effective and meaningful for analysis. The researchers recycled the data many times to highlight the significant points and revisited the notes, recordings and follow-up communication.

Themes and sub-themes were independently refined and compared to attain the most appropriate codes.

Ethical Process

Both authors work in the same university and ethical permission form number 2022/14 was signed by the ethics committee of the university. In addition, informed consent forms have been collected from the participants.

Finding and Discussion

Benefits of Having an Adult Learner in a Language Learning Process

The benefits of having an AL in a language class are specified on both the teachers and other students in the classroom. The data obtained via the interviews with the teachers and the students has shown that the profile of the AL is significant in the effects he/she makes and benefits he/she brings. In this research, the AL is an academic working in the field of education and equipped with teaching skills and has a remarkable amount of experience both in tertiary level and pre-school education. Therefore, in such a case, it can be concluded that the efficacy of the AL is directly linked with the benefits of the AL's presence in the learning atmosphere.

The statements made by the teachers indicate that the AL acted as a role model for the students in learning the language. Despite the fact that the AL has a heavy workload, and many duties including teaching, research, and administrative transactions, the learner makes time to attend most of the lessons face-to-face and watch the recordings of the missed ones since all of them are recorded in a hybrid education context. Therefore, other students in the classroom observed the fact that having academic and administrative duties, being married with children are not obstacles to creating time for academic studies such as learning a language and the students attending the research were fully aware that they have much less workload compared to the adult learner.

Of course, the level of consciousness, awareness level is higher than other students and since they are students, it also affected the approach of some students in this class more positively, so some students thought even a person of this age who has reached a certain point in professional life is trying to improve the language skills (English) here with us. They also thought that this is a really important situation. In this sense, it was motivating. (Instructor 1)

Another prominent benefit of having an adult learner in the classroom was the motivating role in the interaction with other students in pair work and group work activities. Thanks to the extrovert learner profile, the students were participatory in these types of activities and stated that they might not have been so in the

absence of the AL's encouraging manner. Besides, the students have become aware of the fact that learning a foreign language could become a requirement even in the mid-career period.

When I first saw the adult learner in my class, I saw the determination, I questioned myself because I came here to study, and the adult learner is over 40 years old and is both taking lessons, teaching at university, having a job, etc., and in the meantime, the adult learner goes to school and develops language skills and is trying to learn English better. When I saw this, I questioned myself because I have a lot of free time, but I can't do anything. I don't do anything extra to develop my skills. (Student 5)

The AL's being an academic and having experience and knowledge has been a valuable opportunity to ask and answer questions in lessons regarding real-life experiences, get consultancy and academic advice from the AL, which turned the learning environment into a medium of fruitful knowledge transfer and input for the students for further use. The teachers' statements have declared that although course books are elaborated on various themes and topics such as education, science, technology, art, health, and finance, the AL's knowledge and additional comments and contributions paved the way to a better comprehension of the learning material. The AL has not only assisted the perception of the course material by the students but also has acted as a bridge between the student and the language learning skills.

It was mostly positive. And because the learner was also a teacher, sometimes, there were not many students who attended my classes, the adult learner was trying to contribute more to the lesson by establishing empathy. The AL considered my situation, I think it was nice in that way, too. The lesson could go further with the adult learner's support. The learner was also very positive in terms of motivating the students because AL gave relevant answers in discussions, I think the students listened to the AL with interest and learned a lot of things. (Instructor 3)

Learning strategies are what students implement to learn a new piece of information. There are many learning strategies some of which are unique to the four skills of language which are reading, listening, writing and speaking. Specifically for the reading skill, students can apply strategies to infer the meaning of an unknown word, get the main idea of a paragraph in a text or read between the lines. According to Macaro (2003), in cases of students' using strategies effectively, language learning becomes successful, which gives motivation to them to pursue for more.

In language teaching, strategy training is a significant aspect. Therefore, language learners must have a clear understanding and awareness of comprehending a reading text or a listening item. Strategy training could be challenging if the learners do not fully understand the rationale behind it. However, once strategies are adopted and applied in using the language, language learning becomes a more efficient, effective, and pleasing process. The students learning a language in the availability of an AL with this unique profile demonstrated that their awareness has elevated with the adult learners directing touch and made them understand the significance of using strategies in language use.

The benefit I observed was that, especially in the "strategy training" part of teaching no matter how much I explained the logic to the students, why we do this, why we do "strategy training", they did not fully understand. They obviously didn't care. In terms of technical features, the presence of the AL in the class and the contribution, such as the "strategy training" affected the students positively. Since the AL talks about own experiences, which is something tangible for the students, the students say, "Look, we will experience these as well, starting next year. Then if we learn these strategies, it will work for us." The student became fully aware of the logic behind strategy training thanks to the AL's contribution. (Instructor 1)

The teachers have declared that the presence of the AL functioned as a medium for bonding among students appropriately accelerated the pace of communication and interaction among the students and teachers. In a language learning context, communication, interaction, peer learning, group work, and pair work are indispensable components. The AL has become the catalyst, which has made the students benefit more in their learning experience.

When the AL took up his profession and was still trying to do something to improve himself, I understood that I had to do something, even though I had not taken up my profession yet. Despite the age, the adult learner was still trying to learn more. The AL said that the AL's English was insufficient. The AL admitted that it was insufficient. Since the AL is still trying to improve the language even though the AL knows a bit, it should never be said that I am complete, it should not be said that I am enough. I realized that we always have to do something for ourselves. (Student 5)

It can be concluded from the AL's statements that corresponding with other authors and academics

regarding research, editorial works without referring to a dictionary give a liberating feeling to the learner, which makes the whole process satisfactory. Additional learning materials suggested by the instructors such as reading novels, short stories, and exposing yourself to the foreign language outside the classroom are an indispensable part of learning and give the learner self-confidence in using the language.

It can be inferred from the AL's statements that the fossilized mistakes the learner developed over long period of the language learning journey has been cleared in this very context with all the learning outcomes.

Challenges of Having an Adult Learner in a Language Learning Process

The challenges of having an AL on the teachers' side in a language learning setting have emerged in two areas: the learners' being more willing and participatory in warm-ups, classroom discussions, and the teachers' concerns about having an AL (academic) regarding the effects of it on their teaching style and class management.

The fact that the AL has more knowledge, experience, and top view of the classroom context made the learner respond to the questions either directed by the teachers or available in the course material. Since other students knew that the adult learner is there to give quick responses to all sorts of questions, they withdrew themselves from contributing to the lesson at first. However, the teachers' classroom management strategies have led to more collaborative and participatory settings further in the process.

As far as I have observed, the AL can sometimes dominate the lesson. Of course, there is nothing wrong here. It is not with bad intentions, but maybe because the AL is actually a teacher who knows the classroom environment, the AL is actually trying to contribute to us, the teacher of the class. That's what I mean when I say the AL dominates the class. But sometimes it can go a little too far. Sometimes the AL can get ahead of other students. I have observed such a negative issue. Therefore, while planning the lesson, I chose to ask the younger students and get their opinion first, then, towards the end, especially in class activities such as in-class discussions, ask the AL's opinions. The AL really has more knowledge and life experience, therefore more to say. That's how it affected my planning. In this sense, as I said, the AL's presence in the classroom had both positive and negative effects, but whichever one is more, the positive effects are definitely more. (Instructor 2)

According to the teachers' statements about an AL in the classroom, it can be concluded that they had concerns in their communication with the learner, which is mostly related to their class management. In addition to this, they were worried about how their teaching style would be affected by the possibility of the learner being over-critical and interruptive. Nevertheless, all their concerns were eradicated after observing the way the adult learner approached both the teachers and other students and contribute as much as possible with the distinct academic and personal qualities the learner had.

Having an AL in the classroom was an overall positive contribution. I remember in a few lessons; the AL cited itself as an example when talking about learning English: "Even though I am in my forties, I still have to learn English. I'm late because I didn't find out earlier." said. That's why the AL gave advice to the students. The AL said, "Be aware of this at this age and try to learn the language actively, I remember that. It was also effective that AL had an academic identity. Under normal circumstances, if there was someone else in the class, it might not have made a positive contribution in this sense. Also, the fact that the AL was a teacher, a teacher from within the institution, sometimes in the class there was such a teacher in the eyes of the students, as if the AL was a second teacher. As a de facto, we can say that it was not an uncomfortable situation in general, but we are talking about this positive contribution due to the academic identity the AL possesses. (Instructor 4)

The AL was highly aware of the fact that even though the learner has the necessary language skills and level to sustain academic life and has already met the requirements of the highest academic titles, has a wide network with the academics around the world, writes two or three academic articles, works as an editor for journals, adopting social sciences studies as a life style intertwines with the level of the foreign languages you know, basically your language skills. Producing your work without getting any linguistic assistance is a necessity.

It is evident from the statements of the AL that although the learning materials and the instructors are significant in language acquisition becoming an autonomous learner is a self-sustaining journey. Performance concerns and feeling worried are inevitable for the AL since the learner is an instructor in the same institution and making a mistake while using the language, answering a question namely the overall in-class performance

would cause discomfort. However, the learner had an awareness that learning a new language is not free of mistakes.

According to the AL's statement language learning is most effective in face-to-face classroom environments, not in hybrid education or online education since the interaction is limited due to the fact that it is almost impossible to sustain the concentration-time. Compared to the hybrid and online language learning sessions, face-to-face ones make the student more focused, interactive and alert. Although all the online and hybrid sessions are recorded and available for use at any time, they are not as effective as face-to-face ones because psychologically students feel tired, which exemplifies the importance of an effective learning atmosphere.

Effects of Having an Adult Learner in a Language Learning Process

According to the AL, language acquisition is a social process with an immense amount of interaction and counselling. A proficient teacher is a must in the language learning environment. The AL has declared that when you enter a classroom as an authority figure keeping your titles on, you cannot learn anything and damage the learning atmosphere. Abolishing the rankings in the learning atmosphere, become title-free in the classroom and blending has provided effective and efficient learning and teaching atmosphere for the teachers, the AL and the other students.

All learners have different backgrounds, needs and reasons to learn a language. However, when it comes to having a role model what students need is have a proficient user in the classroom so that this proficient user of the language can show them the value of being proficient in more than one language (Walqui, 2000). In this context, students can easily become aware of the personal experiences of people from diverse backgrounds and can reflect the challenges of the role model in acquiring the language on their own and develop an understanding for their own journey of learning. In the context of this very research the AL, with all the qualities, acted as a role model and gave the students an opportunity for reflection and learning from their mistakes in their own path.

Mentoring is a relationship between two equal parties. Since the AL put aside all the titles outside the classroom and developed a relationship with other students as a peer, what the AL has advised them to do academically, socially and professionally can be considered as mentoring. In a mentoring relationship, both parties learn from each other and this relationship contains cooperation, respect, trust and benefits. The AL in this study acted as a mentor for other students and from the AL's statements, it can be concluded that it is a mutually beneficial process for both sides.

Although there is one full generation gap between the students and the adult learner, blending into the group of young learners, starting to consider the world around from their perspective is an invaluable opportunity to experience in terms of perceptions, which gave the adult learner a new perspective regarding teaching undergraduate students. In addition to this, learning to adapt and use the mental tools to acquire a language is a key to develop and learn a new one. Besides, the teachers have acted as a problem-solver for the adult learner against the apparent concerns and worries.

There is a generation gap between us and the students in our class. I am 42 years old, they are 19. Trying to think like them is a great experience. What you feel when you enter the classroom as a teacher is very different from what you feel when you enter the classroom as a student. Evaluating the situation from their perspective is a very different experience. Why can't we think like young people? I learned how to acquire the language with young students. I learned to think like them. (AL)

It can be inferred from the statements by the AL that recess has become a counselling time for the students since the adult learner's qualities, the decision to be there in class with students who are one full generation younger was both inspiring and thought-provoking in addition to its being enlightening. However, despite having teaching experience, being active in academic life, and having a wide network, working with institutionalized entities do not guarantee a positive outcome. The differentiating aspect is the communication among the parts of the learning atmosphere namely the teachers, the students, and the adult learner, and the relationship you develop and sustain. The nature of the relationship determines its

transferability of it into other contexts such as academic and social.

It is the instructors who teach the course that provides my learning process. They made it easy for me. They encouraged me. Instructors have an important role. They treated me like a student. I may not know everything. They met every situation with maturity and encouraged me in times of difficulty. (AL)

It can be concluded from the AL's statements that an adult learner with a different profile would most probably attain a similar relationship between the students and the learner. However, the only difference would be an adult learner outside the institution would not be familiar with the academic and administrative environment within the institution.

Teachers' motivation is an indispensable part of the classroom atmosphere since it undeniably affects the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers' motivation in the classroom is of utmost importance. Enabling environment and the necessary equipment are just some of the variables that enhance teachers' motivation. Praver and Oga-Baldwin (2008) mentions the intrinsic type of teacher motivation which includes an internal will to teach, a dialogue established between the teacher and the students and sense of achievement.

The motivation level of the instructor must be high so that this motivation can transfer to the students and the teaching performance of the instructor depends on the students' interaction. In a language learning atmosphere, the differentiating aspect between effective and ineffective classroom atmosphere is the students' motivation. Active language acquisition and use of a language depends on many aspects such as instructor, learning environment, course materials, yet the inner motivation of the students solely make the positive difference.

The student's motivation to learn a language is very important at this point. Of course, there are many ways to motivate the students and they can be used effectively, but what matters is how motivated the student is to use this language. If the student is not motivated, the process is incomplete. I came here to learn. I do my homework; I follow the lessons. We take hybrid education, so if I miss a lesson, I watch it again from the recording. I do my homework online, come to the class and actively participate in all the tasks given by the teacher. Thanks to this, I acquired the language and still continue to acquire it. I have a separate notebook at home in which I take my own notes. I organize my notes every evening. I may be an associate professor, I may have fulfilled many requirements, but I want to learn this language in the best way, I want to speak and write in this language in the best way possible. The way to do this is to be motivated. This motivation cannot be given by the teacher, school or course material alone. The student should be self-motivated. (AL)

Informal education or extra-curricular activities must blend in language learning with their unique goals and it can be concluded from the AL's statements that interaction was visible and feeding the learning process in the activities the AL attended, however, face-to-face one was more effective and interactive.

Students' personalities are also part of the learning in the classroom since their interaction with the teacher and each other has the potential to feed the positive learning atmosphere or be detrimental to all the interactions within or outside the classroom since learning does not end outside the walls of the school. Being extrovert or introvert affects the learning styles of the students (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1995). In the scope of this research, the AL's being extrovert has fed the learning atmosphere tremendously with the extrovert personality.

Having a student that gives mentoring to others, provides an atmosphere suitable for interaction, communication, peer learning and always helpful academically and socially in and outside the classroom is beneficial for teachers' motivation to teach. In this sense, having this particular adult learner has been an opportunity for the instructors involved in this study to keep motivation at a certain level.

It can be mentioned that specifically in the tertiary education, language learners who will study in English-medium programs need counselling which may potentially make a difference.

Conclusion

The study, which examines having an adult learner in a university English preparatory class by analysing the views and experiences of the adult learner, other students in the classroom and the instructors was conducted with 4 instructors, 5 students and an AL. After, the data obtained via the interviews with all the participants was analysed, three themes were reached: challenges in having an adult learner during

language learning process, benefits of having adult learner in a language class, the effects of having an adult learner in language learning process. It can be inferred from the views of the participants that having and adult learner in the classroom is highly beneficial for the class atmosphere if the AL's profile fits the context and if the AL is highly motivated like the one in this study.

Class atmosphere is fragile since many different factors affect the efficiency and effectiveness of students' learning. Once a component is taken off from the context, it might lead to irreversible changes both in positive and negative outcomes. Therefore, in the dynamic setting of this very study, the AL has brought many benefits to boost learning and create a fruitful atmosphere by bringing knowledge, skills, counselling and mediating dimensions. However, without the very nature of the AL in this study, other students and instructors might have not approached the existence of AL in the same way as they did. Learners feel that they are developing new competencies only when they can accomplish challenging tasks with some assistance from a more skilled person (Wu, 2003). Hence, it can be concluded that having an adult learner in a language learning setting will inevitably be affected with the AL's profile and the qualities brought by the AL.

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

Interview forms enabled the researchers to attain in-depth knowledge, their one-dimensional nature is a limitation against varying the data collection tools. Also, the findings in this study cannot be generalised. However, our suggestion is to do further research with more participants so that it may shed light to future studies.

Declarations

Authors' contributions: Both authors have an equal contribution.

Competing interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Ethics approval and consent to participate: The ethical permission form number is 2022/14 and was signed by the chair of the ethics committee of the Istanbul Kültür University on 03.02.2022.

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