

Turkish Young Adult Learners of English with Special Educational Needs in Turkey: A Critical and Descriptive Case Study

Research into diverse learners with special educational needs in second language settings has been on the rise in recent years. However, action is still rarely taken to enhance individualized and differentiated learning environment because of various problems such as lack of awareness, traditional and uncritical discourses, use of standard teaching methods, assessment, exclusionary classes that hardly take diverse learners into account and insufficient number of teachers majoring in special education for teaching a second language. This study aimed to focus on the problems that four second English language learners (ESL) encountered in their schools by using two data collections composed of a semi-structured interview form and a scenario technique having two questions. The findings of the study show that the diverse learners that need special education in ESL settings encounter serious difficulties at micro and macro levels, although they have some positive views regarding their self-identity, their teachers' and friends' attitudes towards them. However, these attitudes hardly assure their academic success in language learning because the curriculum, syllabus and in-classroom tasks rarely address their needs and lack individualized as well as differentiated learning environment.

Keywords: *special education, disability, second language learning, diverse learners*

Introduction

Learners with special educational needs are considered in its broadest scope in this study covering physical, sensory, mental health and learning hardships. Therefore, instead of using the term 'learners with disabilities', the term 'learners with special educational needs' is preferred, although both terms are debated in theory and practice. However, the participants in this study used disability instead of learners with special educational needs because of discriminatory discourses produced for these individuals in a given society. In Turkey, the dominant discourse and reference is still in relation to disability or the disabled, although the term 'special educational needs' is progressively used as a new trend in the academia in particular. Another term used to correct misunderstandings is diversity or diverse learners to emphasize their unique capacity and learning strategies in language learning. It is widely acknowledged that learning a second language is often an effortful and painstaking process for all learners. Therefore, diversity and differentiation in every sense need to be taken into consideration for each learner (Hoover, Erickson, Patton, Sacco & Tran, 2019; Orosco & O'Couhnnor, 2014; Watkins & Liu, 2013). Although various methods and approaches have been developed in applied linguistics for diverse learners, the practicality of these methods is still questionable because of different variables such as textbooks used in classroom settings, analysis of learners' needs, individualized syllabus and differentiated curriculum (García

1 & Tyler, 2010; Hoover, 2000; Ortiz, 2007; Park, Magee, Martinez, Willner
2 & Paul, 2016). A more problematic case is the diversity of English as a
3 second language learners (ESL) with special needs because few methods have
4 been developed to address these learners who need closer care that is often
5 ignored in language teaching (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Baca & Cervantes, 2004;
6 Polloway, Patton, Serna & Bailey, 2018; Wagner, et al., 2005). Cummins and
7 Sayers (1995) also note that these learners' academic progress has been
8 disregarded by also ignoring the way they are assessed in local, contextual,
9 national and international exams.

10 Although Donovan and Cross (2002) report that the number of learners
11 who need special education in language learning is high, they are often
12 neglected in language teaching settings because of wrong policies that tend to
13 deny their presence and needs. Therefore, equal opportunities for them to
14 access second language learning are not created (Zehler, Hopstock, and
15 Fleischman, 2003). Therefore, urgent steps need to be taken to produce
16 differentiated curriculum, tasks and syllabus. This situation behooves
17 policymakers, administrators and teachers to differentiate their curriculum for
18 learners with special needs (Tomlinson, 2000). Gartin, Murdick, Imbeau and
19 Perner (2002) also emphasize that differentiated tasks need to be adjusted for
20 them. Hoover and Patton (2005) recommend practical and individualized
21 curricula that address learners with special needs. Paneque and Rodriguez
22 (2009) note that there are few teachers who major in special education to meet
23 the needs of diverse learners.

24 25 26 **Contextualizing ESL Learners with Special Educational Needs in Turkey** 27

28 Turkey has made significant progress in the field of special education
29 considering the increasing number of school, teachers and students (Melekoglu
30 et.al, 2009). However, the most pivotal problem is the low number of the
31 specialized and well-trained teachers in special education. Although inclusive
32 education has been a progressive trend across the globe in recent years, the
33 high number of the students in regular classes hinders the development of
34 inclusive education in Turkey (Cavkaytar, 2006). However, Yılmaz (2019)
35 reports that there has been a dramatic rise in the studies on inclusive education
36 supported by the Turkish government. However, the lacking number of trained
37 teachers still remains a chronic problem (Melekoglu et.al, 2009; Rakap &
38 Parlak-Rakap, 2017; Yılmaz, 2019). A summary of the number of the schools,
39 students and teachers in special education is shown in Table 1.
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2 **Table 1.** *Summary of special education schools from the 2018–19 school year*
3 *in Turkey*

School/Institution	Number of Schools	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
Special Education Schools with Nursery Classes	161	1351	321
Special Education Kindergarten	44	2110	455
Private Special Education Kindergarten	6	50	25
Primary School (Hearing-Impaired)	32	674	193
Lower Secondary School (Hearing-Impaired)	32	1068	458
Primary School (Visually-Impaired)	17	511	165
Lower Secondary School (Visually-Impaired)	17	668	289
Primary School (Physically-Impaired)	3	274	50
Lower Secondary School (Physically-Impaired)	3	309	55
Primary School (Light Levels of Educable Mentally-Impaired)	32	814	182
Lower Secondary School (Light Levels of Educable Mentally-Impaired)	40	874	508
Training School of Special Education (I. Grade)	321	9772	1895
Training School of Special Education (II. Grade)	320	8670	2353
Private Special Education Primary School	12	66	202
Private Special Education Lower Secondary School	4	37	13
Special Education Vocational Upper Secondary School (Physically-Impaired)	2	77	37
Special Education Vocational Upper Secondary School (Hearing-Impaired)	20	1690	498
Training School of Special Education (III. Grade)	272	11436	3322
Special Education of Vocational High School (Visually-Impaired III. Grade)	2	35	15
Special Education of Vocational High School (Mentally-Impaired III. Grade)	147	12629	3001
Total of Special Education, Formal Education	1455	53115	14037

4 Compiled from data available at https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/www/icerik_goruntule.php?KNO=361
5 (accessed May 14 2020)

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7 Since Turkey's priority is to develop teacher training in special education
8 by increasing the number of the schools and teachers, the teaching of second
9 languages, particularly English, has remained at a disadvantage. Therefore, in
10 developing countries such as Turkey where English is taught as a second

1 language, learners with special needs are often ignored (Erkan & Dogru, 2012).
2 In line with this observation, problems in Turkey are threefold. First, English
3 language departments have not included any class for diverse learners that
4 could be integrated into curriculum or syllabus. There are curricula that
5 incorporate only trendy or standard methods that do not take the needs of
6 second language learners with special needs into consideration. The second
7 problem in Turkey is that Turkish Ministry of National Education lacks the
8 policies to address second language learners with special educational needs
9 because few special education teachers are appointed to schools that can work
10 with these learners. Another problem is that the Turkish Higher Council of
11 Higher Education responsible for the education of English in Turkish
12 universities also lacks the policies that could take into consideration the needs
13 of language learners with special educational needs, although the Turkish
14 Higher Council of Higher Education always cooperates with international
15 institutes such as the British Council that prepares reports that also ignore these
16 students (British Council & Tepav, 2015). Almost all Turkish universities
17 have preparatory programs that teach English as a second language so that
18 more than four millions of learners can attend English medium education lack a
19 policy to teach English to these learners.

20 This study aims to unravel the problems that four Turkish ESL learners
21 with special needs have experienced. Therefore, a semi-structured interview
22 form was formed to discover the problems that they have experienced while
23 learning English as a second language by identifying five themes obtained
24 from the data. These themes are composed of (1) self-identity (self-concept) (2)
25 social issues (3) political and administrative issues (4) learning environments,
26 (5) personal experiences and self-development. Therefore, it is important to
27 present operational definitions of themes.

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30 **Self- identity (self-concept)**

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32 This term refers to ones' conception of who they are and how they define
33 themselves. Onato and Turner (2014) emphasize that self- identity is related to
34 self-perception and self-categorization, although social identity may also affect
35 self-identity in certain contexts. In this study, we consider both self-identity
36 and social identity because they may overlap with each other in some contexts.
37 Features of self-identity show features of personality and skills (Turner &
38 Onorato, 1999).

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41 **Social issues**

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43 Social issue refers to factors that go beyond individual control and affects
44 individuals on different levels. These issues may include interpersonal social life,
45 school environment, economic issues, social disorganization, marginalization,
46 family and peer attitudes as well as behaviors (Oliver, 1986; Tepperman & Curtis,
47 2007).

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Political and Administrative Issues

Political and administrative issues denote how individuals are governed by those in power at macro and micro level (Hess, 2004; Hoyle, 1982). Macro-level political issues refer to policy makers' perspectives towards marginalized individuals at a disadvantage, while micro-level political issues refer to those in power in administration in schools in particular because they are dependent on policy makers such as deputies and ministers. However, the first immediate encounter of individuals in schools is administrative staff. However, laws passed and decisions made by policy-makers influence how micro policies are to be used in schools (Ball, 2012).

Learning Environment

Learning environment can be defined as a setting where learning and teaching takes place as a result of interaction between learners, teachers and administrative staff. It also refers to formation of a specific culture where certain rituals, interaction styles, values, beliefs, norms and ideas flourish and are established in classes and schools. These aspects of learning environment, in a way, constitute societal culture. However, in certain contexts and situations, conflicting issues may arise because of social issues that may affect individuals' identity (Franklin, 1992; Fuller et al., 2004; Powell & Driver, 2013).

Personal Experience and Self-development

Personal experience is related to one's bringing outside-classroom experience into learning environment or taking personal school experiences outside learning environment. Therefore, experience is interactional and interpersonal (Roth & Jornet, 2014), while self-development can be described as one's activities outside school environment or extracurricular activities because learning environment does not always guarantee learners' self-development. Therefore, they may need extra learning opportunities (Kuh, 1995). If experience and self-development can interact with each other in a critical manner, then individuals may have the chance to develop themselves and care for their experiences (Pugh, 2011).

1 **Method**

2
3 A descriptive case study design was adopted to elicit the ideas and
4 experiences of the language learners with special needs in their school
5 contexts. This research uses illustrative and configurative idiographic case
6 study. This kind of case study research aims to understand why certain
7 behaviors or problems arise in a certain context (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Noor, 2008;
8 Woodside & Wilson, 2003). By doing so, we aim to focus on the lives of who
9 have been forgotten in English language teaching in Turkey. Therefore, this
10 methodological preference can be justified in this study because these diverse
11 language learners are visibly forgotten or ignored. This case selection is based
12 on the researchers' sensitivity and prior knowledge regarding the participants.
13 This kind of choice has four advantages. First, this configurative idiographic
14 case study has conceptual validity, detailed and strong procedures of the
15 specific case, usefulness and the potential to analyze the causal complexities
16 (George & Bennett, 2005; Starman, 2013). However, this study does not aim
17 to find out the causal relations between the variables. Rather, we intend to
18 describe four cases and their experiences in school environment. We are aware
19 that learners with special educational needs in English language education
20 setting have been ignored in the related literature in Turkey, although
21 international scholars have, only to limited extent, addressed this issue (Abedi,
22 2014; Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Ortiz & Yates, 2001; Rodriguez, 2009). In
23 addition, there are few articles in the context of Turkey that address these
24 learners (Basaran, 2012; Erkan et al., 2012). Two data collections tools were
25 used. The first semi-structured interview form was composed of 30 questions.
26 The second form included a scenario technique composed of two questions
27 including the issues of policy and administration.

30 **Setting and Participants**

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32 In Turkey, only certain high schools provide English education for the
33 learners to be English teachers in the future. In our context, there are ten public
34 high schools that provide English education and only two universities in our
35 context where English departments train the learners to become English
36 teachers, translator or interpreters. We visited all of these schools and were
37 able to reach out to only four ESL learners who were involved in the study and
38 who all aimed to be English teachers. Therefore, their major in both high
39 school and university was English. One of them was a university student, and
40 three of them were high school students. Three of them were physically
41 disabled in legs, while one of them had visual impairment.

1 **Table 2.** *Demographic and Personal Information of the Participants*

Names	Age	Gender	School	Parental status	Disability Status	Socio-economic
Ali	19	Male	University	Single mother	Visual	Low
Tuba	18	Female	High school	Single mother	Physical	Low
Nida	17	Female	High school	Divorced	Physical	Low
Ahmet	17	Male	High school	Father - Mother	Physical	Low

2
3 They all volunteered to participate in the study and were learning English
4 as a second language. They all came from low socio-economic background
5 because they attended the schools in the disadvantaged areas of the city where
6 the people were living in the suburbs. Each family of the participants had at
7 least five siblings. All of their mothers were housewives, and the two fathers
8 were working in unskilled jobs with no benefits. Thus, the participants were
9 living in the impoverished environment and had physical and visual disabilities.

10 11 12 **Procedure**

13
14 The researchers visited ten public high schools and two public
15 universities with English language teaching departments or classes to learn
16 whether they had the learners with special needs. In the first stage, we
17 expressed and explained our concern in the Turkish education system regarding
18 their state. Therefore, we talked about our study very openly and even offered
19 to help them develop their English with the volunteer senior English
20 undergraduates in our university. As for the second stage, a warm-up activity
21 about their experiences was conducted in a round-table discussion format. We
22 showed some documentary programs in Turkish and English in which the
23 learners with special needs shared their experiences. In the third stage, a semi-
24 structured interview form composed of 30 questions under five categories was
25 formed with the help of the participants. They were told to answer the
26 questions in our office within five days so that they could feel more
27 comfortable. We also answered some of their questions that they had difficulty
28 answering such as what do you think of the policies applied in Turkey and your
29 school? Thus, they were oriented and motivated to do the tasks given. In the
30 fourth stage, a focus group interview was held in two sessions because of the
31 high number of the interview questions. Each session lasted around 60 minutes.
32 After the data were collected, the codes and categories developed by the
33 researchers were given to the participants to confirm the interpretation and
34 classification of the data and results.

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1 **Data Analysis**

2
3 The data of the study were analyzed by means of inductive content
4 analysis technique.. Themes were determined through the constructed codes
5 (Patton, 2002). For instance, the codes were done using such concepts as
6 identity, social issues, political and administrative issues, learning environment,
7 and personal experiences and self-development. Further, the codes were done
8 using related scenarios on political and administrative issues. Coding was
9 performed by each researcher and an expert individually, and the codes were
10 found to be consistent (kappa .80).

11 **Findings**

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13 Study findings are presented in relation to five overarching self-
14 conceptions of disadvantaged students on: 1) self-identity (2) social issues (3)
15 political and administrative issues (4) learning environments, (5) personal
16 experiences and self-development; and related scenarios under two sub-
17 categories as political and administrative.
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20 **Findings related to Identity**

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22 All the participants ascribed positive characteristics to their identity.
23 Further, They also declared bearing both introvert and extrovert characteristics
24 which are among the major personality traits identified in many theories of
25 personality (Matthews, Deary & Whiteman, 2003). Excerpts from the students'
26 views are as follows:
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29 I define myself as being an inquisitive, modern, and enterprising student. I
30 am a human-focused person who wishes to be beneficial for all humanity.
31 Further, I see myself as determined, self-esteemed, self-conscious, brave,
32 helpful, and successful. My friends and other people may, however, see me as
33 insufficient. I myself do not feel this way.(P1)

34 I define my identity as a girl constituting no source of harm for anyone. I
35 have a calm and quiet personality. I am quite introverted. I like observing
36 people and what they do. Maybe they judge my situation negatively. I want to
37 believe myself. (P2)

38 The informants described their identity representing introvert and extrovert
39 features. Although having a highly vulnerable personality, the respondents,
40 who constitute a disadvantaged group, did not reject being interviewed as
41 individuals with special needs. In addition, their self-evaluation and self-
42 perception were positive. However, their social identity was affected by others'
43 attitudes and behaviors. We can say that there might be a gap between their
44 self-identity and social identity.
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1 **Findings related to Social Issues**

2

3 Social issues such as being disadvantaged in the societal system, problems
4 faced in the learning environment, the feeling of being marginalized in the
5 society, family attitudes, network with other disabled students around, and
6 contact with other disabled students abroad were covered by the students.
7 Three students stated that they encountered tragic situations in the society,
8 particularly at school. On the other hand, only one student referred to his
9 situation in the social setting as promising. With regard to feeling
10 disadvantaged within the societal system, excerpts from their answers are as
11 follows:

12 Disabled students are unfortunately in a disadvantaged position in both
13 school and society. For instance, even if we ask for disabled-friendly streets or
14 stairs proper for wheelchairs in the campus, the school administration ignores
15 us, even in the construction phase. I was mocked by one of the senior managers
16 of our university when I reported my problems related to my disability.
17 Tragically, all my demands as a disabled student have been rejected by our
18 university administration that continuously stated that I am the only disabled
19 student at the university and added that it is not worth to spend such money for
20 only one disabled student. (P1)

21 The attitudes of irresponsible people around bother me because they tend
22 to marginalize us. I think the main for this is that the people around me at
23 school do not have enough awareness of my situation. They tolerate me but I
24 do not want this tolerance because tolerance is a kind of humiliation for me. Of
25 course there are friends that help me. However, I think that in Turkey this is a
26 general problem. I have been experiencing this problem since my childhood. I
27 think it will take time to solve these problems. (P3)

28 The students were also asked whether they had any problems related to
29 their disability while learning English. Three students stated that they have no
30 difficulty related to their disability while one expressed that she sometimes has
31 difficulty while reading small texts. Related excerpts are as follows:

32 While learning English, I have similar problems with my classmates, but I
33 do not have difficulty related to my physical disability. (P3)

34 I sometimes find it very difficult to read small texts written by our English
35 teacher on the board. This causes me not to understand the lesson if I cannot
36 revise it afterwards. (P4)

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39 **Finding related to Political and Administrative Issues**

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41 The participants were asked about whether policy-makers were involved in
42 their learning needs and helped them lead better lives. In addition, when asked
43 whether the school administration finds solutions for their disability related
44 problems, three high school students declared negative views, while a
45 university student put forward a contrary point of view. The students'
46 sentences are as follows:

1 The school administration states that they will enhance our facilities, but
 2 they apply useless practices, if any. For instance, they made a handrail which
 3 cannot be used properly and is inappropriate for the disabled students. I
 4 regularly expressed them my demands related to my disability through both
 5 verbally asking and writing a petition; however they have not provided any
 6 related recovery. I think policies support us only in papers. (P1).

7 I think we are nothing before the politicians. We can never voice our ideas.
 8 Even we speak sometimes, we are not listened or we are not involved in any
 9 step. Besides, we are all not pleased with our course load at school. The weekly
 10 homework, quizzes, reports, and online tasks hinder us from studying for mid
 11 and final exams. The teachers show no tolerance for this problem. They think
 12 that only their own course and curriculum is important, but not other teachers.
 13 We talked about this issue with the school principal. However, no solution was
 14 found. They seemed disinterested and indifferent' (P1, P3)

15 The political and administrative issues seemed insufficient for the
 16 participants because it appears that a participatory approach was not
 17 implemented for them. In a way, the participants felt excluded and deprived.
 18 At macro and micro level, policy-makers and administrative staff tended to
 19 ignore their presence and voices. In principle, their rights are protected.
 20 However, in daily practices, their rights lack transformative power and
 21 potential. Thus, we can see the bifurcation between de jure and de facto rights.
 22 The participants resisted, reacted and objected to the insufficient situations.
 23 However, since no action plan was applied, they tended to maintain their
 24 reaction and resistance to the system.

25 26 27 **Findings related to learning Environment**

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29 The students were asked about how other students treat them at school. All
 30 of them stated their contentment with their school friends, though very rarely
 31 encountering negative approaches. Excerpts from the participants are as follows:

32 Whether from my class or not, the students and teachers at our school
 33 always ask me if I need anything and this makes me very happy. I face
 34 discriminated on rare occasions. However,, one of my classmates once mobbed
 35 on me when I wanted to sit at the front desk. I am, in a way, accustomed to
 36 people who sometimes exclude me from society by means of looking at me
 37 with relenting eyes or looking at my legs strangely, or even asking me
 38 saddening questions related to my disabled legs. I can be easily distracted and
 39 negatively affected in my learning environment because of my teacher's or my
 40 friends' sudden acts. The teachers do not give me special tasks. I understand
 41 them. The class is too crowded. (P1).

42 My school friends always help me and they never discriminate me. I like
 43 some of their attitudes towards me. My teachers are trying to help me. I do not
 44 know how long they will tolerate this situation. To be honest, teaching methods
 45 and tasks are not for me. I find the classes very boring. I feel anxious in the
 46 school environment. I hope and pray that I am not a burden for them. I question
 47 it a lot. (P2, P3).

1 The learning environment of the participants showed some differentiation
2 because two of the participants felt positive in the school environment since
3 their friends and teachers behaved well. However, the other two participants
4 developed a negative perspective towards the learning environment by saying
5 that they could feel exclusion. Although some positive utterances were made
6 regarding the settings, they had the anxiety of being negatively affected while
7 learning something.

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10 **Personal Experiences and Self-development**

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12 The informants were asked whether they receive extra training after
13 school. Two reported that they receive extracurricular training after school,
14 while a student stated that he attends a private course for the university
15 entrance exam. On the other hand, one student expressed that she does not take
16 any training after school. Excerpts highlighting the answers of students are as
17 follows:

18 I do not take any training although there is some training that I want to
19 receive. The reason is that I do not have any opportunity as a consequence of
20 my heavy course load. I also have severe financial problems. Some of my
21 friends are lucky because they have good experience outside the school. (P1).

22 Yes, I am attending a private course for the university entrance exam
23 because this course develops me and my English. I learn new things in this
24 private school. This experience is important to me because I feel valued. (P2).

25 The participants' sense of personal experiences and self-development
26 outside the school environment were also investigated. Although they had
27 positive ideas towards gaining enriched experiences and developing
28 themselves, they had financial problems and course load in the schools. In
29 addition, private courses also made them feel valuable, which possibly affected
30 their social identity positively.

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33 **Findings of Scenarios related to Policies**

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35 The informants were given possible scenarios regarding the situations they
36 were in. They were told to voice their ideas and express their emotions related
37 to what they would do if they were the president. Excerpts are as follows:

38 If I were the president, I would establish a commission at each school,
39 which touches the lives of the disabled students. I would allocate a budget for
40 the education of the disabled students. I would increase the scholarship of the
41 disabled students 50% more. I would provide free medicine for them. I would
42 hold the Council of Higher Education responsible to inspect schools for the
43 disabled students. I would send the disabled students abroad for their
44 internship. I would give disabled students more positions in the government
45 sector (P1).

1 I would make only two school days obligatory for the disabled students,
2 because we have too heavy course load. I would change assessment criteria for
3 disabled learners. (P2, P3)

6 **Findings of Scenarios related to Administration**

8 The students formed possible scenarios in case of the mentioned specific
9 event. They put forward their emotions related to what they would do if they
10 were the school administrator to see what solutions they would bring to the
11 school environment. Excerpts are as follows:

12 I would listen to the problems of the disabled students. I would allocate
13 budget for the disabled students. I would establish a commission of disabled
14 students at school and I would call the head of this commission to school
15 meetings. I would ask for the opinions of the disabled students. Further, I
16 would take precautions to minimize the risks that could be harmful for the
17 disabled students. Lastly, I would arrange a conference to raise awareness for
18 the disabled people. (P4).

19 I would show more tolerance to the disabled students. Consequently, they
20 would not rush to come to school early. I would not dictate them to wear
21 school uniform. (P3).

22 It can be clearly seen that the participants developed a direct democratic
23 approach to education system. They also desired to implement a participatory
24 approach because they desired to be involved in the process of preparing
25 curriculum, syllabus and other related educational tasks and activities. They
26 also implied that they would develop a critical perspective towards the load in
27 the school and uniform issue. We can see that the participants appreciated
28 diversified, inclusionary, individualized and participatory approach in the
29 schools.

32 **Discussion**

34 This study intended to address the problems of English language learners
35 with special educational needs in Turkey that they have experienced. The
36 overall findings of the study show that the participants had positive self-identity
37 but controversial social-identity because of others' evaluation of the participants
38 and that administrative staff lacked the empathy to take precautions and action
39 regarding their problems. In addition, societal system in the school and
40 community affected three of them negatively. Oliver (1986) mention similar
41 problems by saying that a social theory is needed to enhance education of
42 learners with special needs. Otherwise, he adds that what we do will remain
43 only personal tragedies of these learners. We also believe that the participants
44 in this study should not remain as personal tragedies because marginalization
45 of any group in education or society is a result of social construction by those
46 in power and by those who impose certain discourses (Fairclough, 1992;
47 Foucault, 1980; Froestad & Ravneberg , 2006; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002;

1 Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Sleeter, 1986). Froestad and Ravneberg (2006)
2 clearly showed that a change in discourse based on a historical perspective
3 would alter perspectives towards those with special learner needs radically. This
4 study also showed that the participants suffered most from policy-makers'
5 indifference and administrative staff's ignoring them possibly because of the
6 lack of transformative practices in Turkey.

7 The findings also show that syllabus and teaching methods used were not
8 individualized. In addition, no need analysis regarding teaching method or
9 assessment was conducted. Abedi (2014) showed that assessment criteria of the
10 learners with special needs were absent in the curriculum. Another problem
11 that the participants reported was that physical settings were not designed for
12 their needs. Besides, since the language teachers have had no educational
13 background in special education, four main skills were taught insufficiently by
14 them because their special needs were neglected. This problem has been
15 addressed in other studies (Franklin, 1992; Ortiz & Yatez, 2001; Powell &
16 Driver, 2013; Wagner, 2005). However, if teachers have strong educational
17 background in special education, they can make a difference in these learners.
18 For example, Kořak-Babuder, Kormos, Ratajczak and Piřom, K. (2019) showed
19 that reading performance of dyslexic learners could be enhanced with reading-
20 aloud activity. Trainor, Newman, Garcia, Woodley, Traxler and Deschene
21 (2019) also suggest that transition planning could help learners with disabilities
22 by providing them with essential skills and services that facilitate their learning
23 within the framework of individualized education plan. However, the results of
24 this present study indicate that individualized and diversified education plan
25 was absent in the curriculum and syllabus. Cartledge and Kourea (2008)
26 articulate that these learners need culturally and linguistically responsive
27 education because these groups receive the least effective and evidence-based
28 education. As Ortiz and Yates (2001) state, disproportionate representation of
29 these learners can be enhanced by supporting multidisciplinary teams and
30 tools.

31 Karvonen and Clark (2019) also found that English language learners with
32 cognitive disabilities had some difficulties in expressive-communication and
33 receptive levels as well as assessment, which entails development of and
34 further research into individualized approaches that could promote their
35 academic skills. Similarly, Chen and Saulter (2018) found that second language
36 learners with disabilities were left to be exposed to standard testing assessment,
37 which placed a serious disadvantage for them. Therefore, they concluded that
38 assessment professionals need to accommodate individualized assessment for
39 them. Counts, Katsiyannis and Whitford (2018) approached this problem from
40 a cultural and linguistic perspective by reporting that these learners from
41 diverse backgrounds lack the necessary support. Therefore, they are either
42 underrepresented or overrepresented in language classroom settings.

43 Based on the data from three countries Nijakowska, Tsagari, & Spanoudis
44 (2018) reported that professional training is needed to address learners who need
45 special education. Haager and Osipova (2017) suggest several contextualized and
46 content-embedded support for reading skills. Piazza, Rao and Protacio (2015)
47 show that some strategies such as collaboration, social dialogue enhancement

1 of visual representation, explicit instruction and inquiry can be listed as certain
2 useful strategies that could support learners with special needs. A similar
3 finding was also observed in our study because in the learning environment
4 they reported that they need more support from both their friends and teachers.
5 Cheatham and Hart Barnett (2017) show that some misunderstandings regarding
6 learners with disabilities need to be corrected because some myths constantly
7 emphasizing that these learners cannot develop their second language need to
8 be changed.

11 Conclusion

13 The results of the study show that the diverse learners that need special
14 education in second language settings encounter serious difficulties at micro
15 and macro levels, although they have some positive views regarding their
16 teachers' and friends' attitudes towards them. However, these attitudes hardly
17 guarantee their success in language learning because curriculum, syllabus and
18 in-classroom tasks hardly focus on their needs and lack individualized and
19 differentiated learning environment. Therefore, Turkish Higher Council of Higher
20 Education, Turkish Ministry of National Education and English language teaching
21 departments need to address the needs of language learners with special
22 educational needs and ought to add classes that could raise awareness of
23 diverse language learners because transformative discursive and social
24 construction of diverse learners can help those in power, practitioners and
25 individuals in the society reconsider their traditional and uncritical perspectives
26 towards groups that they tend to otherize or marginalize or even ignore. In
27 addition, English teachers that major in special education needs to be appointed
28 to public schools. Future studies need to focus on more realistic, concrete and
29 participatory policies that could support learners with special educational needs
30 by cooperating with diverse learners.

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