

*Full Length Research Paper*

## Investigating lifelong learning dispositions of students studying English language and literature in terms of different variables

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**This study aims to determine lifelong learning dispositions of English Language and Literature students in terms of gender, grade levels, and age variables. Descriptive research design was used. The study group consisted of 402 students studying English Language and Literature at Cumhuriyet University in Sivas, Turkey. Research data were collected with “Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale” developed by Coşkun (2009). Data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, independent sample t-test, One-Way ANOVA and Tukey test. The results revealed that students studying English Language and Literature had high level of lifelong learning dispositions. While no significant differences were observed in terms of gender variable, there were significant differences in terms of grade levels in favor of 4<sup>th</sup> grade and age variable in favor of the age range between 20-22.**

**Key words: Lifelong learning, disposition, students studying English Language and Literature.**

### INTRODUCTION

Contemporary society has turned into a knowledge-based society to succeed in the changing educational, economic and political dynamics of the modern world; and therefore, in order to meet people's demand for upgrading their knowledge and skills to adapt to the rapidly changing environment, lifelong learning has emerged as a necessary guiding and a road map for the worldwide knowledge society of the future.

Lifelong learning is “the process of learning which occurs throughout life” (Jarvis, 1990, p. 203) and entails learning from the cradle to the grave (Cohen, 1975). There are several definitions that have included learning as an ongoing process beginning at birth and ending only with

death. Lifelong learning is operationally defined as education provided to people of all ages (Cheng et al., 1999) and is regarded as an integral part of the texture of living (Dowd, 1979). Therefore, lifelong learning includes all kinds of learning experiences in life (Candy et al., 1994).

Lifelong learning is neither a privilege nor a right (Cross, 1981); it involves the whole society and encompasses all learning forms, formal, non-formal, and informal at all ages and stages of life, irrespective of where it occurs and who organizes it (Candy, 2000; Cropley, 1979; Dave, 1975; Dinevski and Dinevski, 2004; Faure, et al., 1972; Lengrand, 1970; Preece, 2011; Tuschling and

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Engemann, 2006; Wain, 2009). Formal education means “full-time school programs,” non-formal education refers to “classroom-based courses,” and informal education involves “all other deliberate forms of self-directed or collected learning (Livingstone, 1999). While lifelong learning has “re-emerged in the past few years as one of the 'hottest' topics in public discussion” concerning the organization of educational thought (Hake, 1999, p.79), the idea of lifelong learning is not new. Field (2006) traced the genesis of the concept of lifelong learning back to the “intellectual ferment that followed the end of World War One” (p. 12). On the other hand, the concept of lifelong learning was emphasized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the first time, in 1972 in the international field (Faure, et al., 1972) and since then lifelong learning and lifelong education have become two of the underlying principles of the UNESCO (Faure, 1972). The study of lifelong learning as a discipline began in the early 20th century (Asundi and Karisiddappa, 2006) and became a topic of discussion only in the first quarter of the 20th century (Knowles, 1975). In addition, the discourses on lifelong learning are divided into three time periods: (a) a fervent introduction of the principles of lifelong learning that emerged in the 1920s and persisted through the 1970s, (b) a quiet interlude in the 1980s where very little lifelong learning research was conducted, and (c) a resurgence of interest in lifelong learning in the 1990's that has continued into the present reflecting paradigmatic shifts in emphasis from education to learning and from non-vocational to vocational learning (Belanger, 1997; Boshier, 1998 and 2005; Field, 2006; Wilson, 2009). Some events supporting lifelong learning as a major global educational challenge of the future are as follows: (a) 1996 was the “European Year of Lifelong Learning”; (b) UNESCO included “Lifetime -Education” as one of the key issues in its planning; and (c) the G7-G8 group of countries named “Lifelong Learning” as a main strategy in the fight against unemployment (Fischer, 2001). In late 1997, the Commission for a Nation of Lifelong Learners defined lifelong learning as “a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals...to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes...and to apply them with confidence, creativity, and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances, and environments.” The philosophy underlying this definition of lifelong learning is as follows:

1. Continuous—Lifelong learning never stops.
2. Supportive—It is not done alone.
3. Stimulating and empowering—It is self-directed and active, not passive.
4. Lifetime—It happens from our first breath to our last.
5. Applied—Lifelong learning is not just for knowledge's sake.

6. Confidence, creativity, and enjoyment—It is a positive, fulfilling experience (Duyff, 1999).

Since the sole source of knowledge in traditional educational systems is the teacher, lifelong competencies cannot be acquired by learners through teacher dictation (Soni, 2012). Some characteristics of traditional learning and lifelong learning are presented in Table 1.

As is seen in Table 1, lifelong learning enables learners to acquire and construct all forms of learning in a knowledgebased society through not only formal education but also ongoing work activities. Moreover, as well as being an ongoing process over the individual's lifespan, “lifelong learning makes each individual benefit from universal learning opportunities regardless of their age, gender and status” (Sweeting, 2000, p. 261). Some functions of lifelong learning argued by Bagnall (1990) are as follows:

- (a) The preparation of individuals for the management of their lives;
- (b) The distribution of education throughout a person's lifespan;
- (c) The educative function of the whole of one's life experience;
- (d) The identification of education with the lifespan.

The concept of lifelong learning is frequently used synonymously with lifelong education. However, the two are not one and the same, but rather one is subsumed under the other (Overly, 1979; Stock, 1979; Knapper and Cropley, 1985; Chapman & Aspin, 1997; Leicester & Parker, 2001).

### ***Lifelong education***

Lifelong learning is the result of lifelong education which is a continuous formal and informal process that occurs over a life span producing a 'learning society' (Wain, 1987). Lifelong education has been referred to as “adult education” (Hiemstra, 1976, p. 16; Stock, 1979, p. 78; Knapper and Cropley, 1985, p. 62; Leicester and Parker, 2001, p. 117) “learning to learn” (Mentkowski and Doherty, 1984, p.5), “recurrent education” (Stock, 1979, p. 78; Knapper and Cropley, 1985, p.62), “learning over the lifespan” (Titmus, 1999, p.343), “self-directed learning” (Banta, 1993, p.16), “learning without boundaries” (Edwards and Usher, 2001, p. 276), and “permanent learning” (Overly, 1979).

Lifelong education is a process of accomplishing personal, social and professional development throughout the life span of individuals (Dave, 1975). In other words, it refers to learning activities, including all skills and branches of knowledge, using all possible means, and giving the opportunity to all people for full development of

**Table 1.** Characteristics of traditional and lifelong learning models.

	<b>Traditional Learning</b>	<b>Lifelong Learning</b>
Emphasis	Basic skills	Education embedded in ongoing work activities
Mode	Knowledge absorption	Knowledge construction
New topics	Defined by curricula	Arise incidentally from work situations
Trainers	Expound subject matter (Teaching)	Engage in work practice (Facilitating)
Problems	Given	Constructed
Method to solution	Mostly personal work	Group work
Role	Expert-Novice model	Reciprocal learning
Assessment	Basis for promotion	Guide learning strategies
Structure	Pedagogy (logical structure)	Work activity

Soni, (2012).

their personalities (Sell, 1978). It enables people to learn at different times, in different ways, for different purposes at various stages of their lives and careers (Preece, 2011). Continuing education is only one part of the educational process and exists as one stage within the lifelong education continuum (Madill, 1984). However, "lifelong education considers the formal and non-formal learning processes in which children, young people, and adults are involved during their lifetimes" (p. 183). Medel-Añonuevo, et al. (2001) stated that according to the UNESCO Institute for Education, the idea of lifelong education is the keystone of the learning society and therefore, every individual must be in a position to keep learning throughout his life. Considering that lifelong education is seen as a process that continues throughout the entire life span, it responds to different requirements throughout the working and life cycle (Barker, 1998); it is a way to systematically coordinate and facilitate learning (Knapper and Cropley, 1985). Similarly, Cropley (1980) noted that "if lifelong education were to become a means for facilitating, lifelong learning should last the whole life of the individual; acknowledge the contribution of all available educational influences including formal, non-formal and informal" (p. 3). According to Cropley (1979), lifelong education is a set of organizational, financial, and didactic principles established with the aim of fostering lifelong learning. Therefore, "lifelong education is the system and lifelong learning is the content, the goal and the result" (Knapper & Cropley, 2000, p. 6) and thus, lifelong education is planned, systematic, and purposeful. According to Knapper and Cropley (2000, 12):

- (a) Lifelong education is intentional. Learners are aware that they are learning.
- (b) It has specific goals which are the reason why learning is learned.
- (c) The learners intend to retain and use what has been learned for a considerable period of time.

According to Toffler (1980) progression seen in a society

has gradual waves. He identified the first wave as "agriculturally-based society"; the second wave as "industrially based society" and the third wave as "information-based society". To him, lifelong education is seen as "lifejacket for the third wave" (p. 282) offering each individual the possibility of maintaining balance while the environment shifts and changes. In addition, Savicevic, (1999) suggested that continuity and integration are two basic postulates that lifelong education includes. He further stated that "lifelong education is an essential factor in the creation of human happiness and it influences changes of the environment ( family, working, cultural), as well as the personality" (p. 179).

### ***Traits and skills of lifelong learners***

A lifelong learner is a person who possesses the motivation and attitude necessary to continually pursue learning through all stages of his or her life (Candy, 1991; Cropley and Dave 1978; Knapper and Cropley, 2000; Wain, 1987). Some traits that an ideal lifelong learner possesses are his/her being: (a)strongly aware of the relationship between learning and real life; (b) being aware of the need for lifelong learning; (c) being highly motivated to undertake lifelong learning; and (d) having a self concept that is conducive to lifelong learning (Knapper and Cropley, 2000, p. 47).

In addition, prominent traits of a lifelong learner have been outlined as curious, venturesome and creative, innovative in practice, resourceful, motivated to learn, willingness to make and learn from mistakes, flexible in thinking, methodical and disciplined, logical and analytical, reflective and self-aware (Brookfield, 1992; Candy, 1991; Collins, 2009). The necessary skills of a lifelong learner include, the capacity to set personal objectives in a realistic way; effectiveness in applying knowledge already possessed; efficiency in evaluating one's own learning; effectiveness in using different learning strategies; and the ability to use and interpret materials from different subject

areas (Knapper and Cropley, 2000). According to Collins (2009) these skills include well-developed communication skills, self-directed learning skills, information-seeking and retrieval skills, high-order thinking skills and meta-cognitive skills.

### ***Teachers as lifelong learners***

Although “education is fundamentally an activity of continuous renewal and exploration” (Rud and Oldendorf, 1992, p. 45), most education systems are not designed to promote lifelong learning. Jensen (1987) stated that the system which only rewards teachers for endurance, not excellence, does not encourage reform. However, for lifelong learner teachers who employ the best practices, endurance is not a factor in resistance to change. Excellence in teaching, as in other professions, requires continuing education and the ongoing refinement of practice (Shapiro, 1995, p. 2).

Even if no one has been able to identify an ideal teacher personality (Van Manen, 1991), teachers are often viewed simply as transmitters of inert and approved knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 1990). Moreover teachers as continuous learners must be role models for their students and “in order to develop a love of learning in students, teachers must first be learners themselves” (Jalongo, 1986, p. 355) and also in order to continually update their base of knowledge, to use new strategies, and to adapt to changing student and community needs, it is a must for teachers to be lifelong learners (Jensen, 1987). Similarly, Dimova (2012, p. 282) stated that “as models of lifelong learners, teachers should constantly display awareness of the incompleteness of their existing knowledge and intellectual curiosity to find ways for reducing the gaps”. Thus, “teacher development as knowledge and skill development”, is key to successful lifelong learning, both of the teachers and their students (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992, p. 36).

According to Johnson (1990) good teaching is a creative process. Teachers who lack opportunities for learning and growth become intellectually depleted. As long as teachers become learners, they can stimulate students to be continuous learners (Fullan, 1993). Therefore, some attributes of teachers as learners indicated by Steuteville-Brodinsky, et al. (1989) are: being flexible and willing to learn; being committed to teaching and loyal to the profession; having esteem for themselves as professionals; keeping up with educational research and literature; and looking forward to professional development\_\_ eager to grow professionally.

### ***Language Learning within Lifelong Learning***

Because English is a common lingua franca and a bridge

across the globe, there is a growing need to boost interest and to find new and efficient ways for developing English proficiency. Therefore, educators have made efforts, looking for ways to optimize effective language teaching. National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (ACTFL, 1999) discussed five core standards in foreign language education, also known as the five C's which include communication, culture, connections, comparisons, and communities. Lifelong learning takes place under the title of communities (Standard 5-2) and “implies that through the regular access to authentic texts and the discovery of new interpretations, students become lifelong learners (Breiner-Sanders et al., 2000). Furthermore, “the ultimate goal of foreign language education is to create a lifelong desire to learn and grow intellectually” (Dimova, 2012, p.21). According to Kubota (2011, p.475), “learning a foreign language, in particular English, can be a lifelong hobby driven by intellectual curiosity or a pursuit of casual or serious leisure”. The European Union (EU) put in place a set of actions designed to promote language education and learning under the framework of community programs to be implemented between 2004 and 2006 (COM, 2008). The specific objectives identified in the action plan and related to lifelong learning are: learning a mother tongue plus two other languages from a very early age; continuing language learning in secondary education and vocational training; continuing language learning in higher education; encouraging language learning among adults and developing language learning for persons with special needs (COM, 2003). In addition, in the objectives of the European Year of Languages, lifelong language learning take place for the development of intercultural understanding through multilingualism and language instruction (COM, 1999).

Relevant literature has revealed that there is an increase in lifelong learning based studies that have been carried out in Turkey in the 2000s. Most researches conducted by Kara and Kürüm (2007), Demirel and Akkoyunlu (2010), Demirel and Yağcı (2012), Gencel (2013), İzci and Koç (2012), Kılıç (2014), Oral and Yazar (2015) and Şahin et al. (2010) were focused on prospective teachers. In addition, Coşkun and Demirel (2012) and Karakuş (2013) disclosed university students' lifelong learning dispositions and competences in their studies. Furthermore, lifelong learning from teachers' perspectives has been investigated in some studies conducted by Ayra and Kösterelioğlu (2015), Özcan (2011), Selvi (2011), Soran et al. (2006), Şahin and Aragök (2014) and Yavuz et al. (2014a). The reason for involving English language and Literature students in this research is to find out whether knowing English at least at an advanced level affects their lifelong learning efforts.

This study aims to determine the lifelong learning dispositions of English Language and Literature students in terms of gender, grade levels, and age variables, and

**Table 2.** The level of lifelong learning dispositions of the students.

Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale	n	Minimum	Maximum	$\bar{X}$	sd
Overall Scale	402	63	145	95.14	14.99
1 <sup>st</sup> Sub- dimension: Motivation		10	36	30.28	4.75
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sub- dimension: Perseverance		7	36	25.57	6.24
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sub- dimension: Lack of self-regulation		6	33	15.29	6.63
4 <sup>th</sup> Sub- dimension: Lack of curiosity		9	54	23.99	9.65

therefore, it would be fruitful for future researches to examine the impact of knowing a foreign language on lifelong learning dispositions. To fulfill the purpose of this study, the following research questions were addressed:

RQ1: What level of lifelong learning dispositions do English Language and Literature students have?

RQ2: How do English Language and Literature students' lifelong learning dispositions differ in terms of gender, grade level, and age variables?

## METHOD

### Research model

A descriptive research design was employed in this study. Descriptive research is used to describe a current situation that existed in the past or exists now in the way it is (Karasar, 2009).

### Study group

The study group for the research consisted of 402 students, 147 being males (36.6%) and 255 females (63.4%), studying in the Faculty of English Language and Literature at the Cumhuriyet University in Turkey during the spring semester of the 2014 - 2015 academic year. The study group was selected randomly through convenience sampling method among 604 English language and literature students, of whom 124 were in preparatory grade; 123 in 1<sup>st</sup> grade; 123 were in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade; 118 were in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade; 116 were in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Convenience sampling method enables researchers to gain practicality without incurring the cost or time required to select a random sample (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). Of the students in study group 29.6% (n=119) were from preparatory grade, 21.6% (n= 87) from 1st grade (freshman), 18.9% (n= 76) from 2nd grade (sophomore), 20.6% (n=83) from 3rd grade (junior), and 9.2 % (n=37) from 4th grade (senior).

### Instrument

The research data were obtained through Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale (LLTS) developed by Coskun (2009). This six-point scale, ranging from 1-6, consists of 27 items and four sub-dimensions namely motivation, perseverance, lack of self-regulation and lack of curiosity. The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was computed as (Coşkun and Demirel, 2012). Pearson correlations coefficient was at the level of .67. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was found to be .89. The total

maximum score of the scale is (27 x 6)162, the minimum score is (27 x 1) 27 and the medium score is (27 x 3.5) 94.5 (Coşkun and Demirel, 2012). While the maximum score of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd sub- dimensions (motivation, perseverance and lack of self-regulation) of the scale is (6x 6) 36, the minimum score is (6 x 1) 6 and the medium score is (6 x 3.5) 21, the maximum score of the 4th sub- dimension (lack of self-curiosity ) is (9 x 6) 54, the minimum score is (9 x 1) 9 and the medium score is (9 x 3.5) 31.5.

### Data analysis

The SPSS 18.0 package program was used for analyzing the data focusing on frequencies, percentages, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA and Tukey test. All P values below 0.05 were taken to indicate statistical significance.

## FINDINGS

The first research question asked what level of lifelong learning dispositions that the participants had. The mean scores of the participants obtained from the scale and the standard deviation of the distribution are presented in Table 2.

According to the scores that the participants obtained from the overall scale, as is indicated in Table 2, the least score was (63), the highest score was (145), and the mean score was ( $\bar{X}$ =95.14). This result shows that the participants have a high level of lifelong learning dispositions with respect to being in the upper value of the medium score of the scale (94,5). According to Coşkun and Demirel (2012), while the first two dimensions of the Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale (LLTS) aim to determine affective organization related to lifelong learning desire and effort, the last two dimensions tend to make regulations related to lifelong learning reasons and conditions. According to the findings obtained from the sub-dimensions of the scale, while the mean scores of the sub- dimensions---namely motivation ( $\bar{X}$ =30.28) and perseverance ( $\bar{X}$ =25.57) were higher than the medium score (21), the mean scores of lack of self-regulation ( $\bar{X}$ =15.29 and lack of curiosity ( $\bar{X}$ =23.99) were at lower levels than the medium scores calculated related to these sub-dimensions. High scores from the

**Table 3.** Independent groups t-test scores of the students in terms of gender variable.

Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale	N 402	Female (n= 255; 63.4 %)		Male (n= 147; 36.6 %)		T & P Values		Levene's Test	
		$\bar{X}$	Sd	$\bar{X}$	Sd	t	P	F	P
Overall Scale		94.57	15.55	96.12	13.98	1.000	.318	.059	.282
Motivation		30.25	4.88	30.31	4.51	.140	.889	.152	.697
Perseverance		25.34	6.35	25.97	6.06	.983	.326	1.177	.279
Lack of self-regulation		15.09	6.73	15.65	6.45	.810	.418	.843	.359
Lack of curiosity		23.89	9.70	24.18	9.59	.293	.769	.005	.942

P>.05.

**Table 4.** The Descriptive statistical results (the mean scores and standard deviations) demonstrating students' lifelong learning dispositions in terms of grade level.

N=402	Overall Scale		Motivation		Perseverance		Lack of selfregulation		Lack of curiosity	
	$\bar{X}$	Sd	$\bar{X}$	Sd	$\bar{X}$	Sd	$\bar{X}$	Sd	$\bar{X}$	Sd
<b>Prep. grade</b> (n= 119; 29.6 %)	95.91	14.41	31.55	3.53	27.44	5.25	14.08	6.66	22.84	9.89
<b>1<sup>st</sup> grade</b> (n= 87; 21.6 %)	96.48	14.55	31.24	3.89	27.10	6.99	14.82	6.32	23.32	10.26
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> grade</b> (n= 76; 18.9 %)	89.93	13.79	28.16	5.92	23.43	7.01	14.95	5.74	23.39	8.24
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> grade</b> (n= 83; 20.6 %)	96.05	16.47	29.71	5.04	25.02	5.10	17.19	6.91	25.66	9.55
<b>4<sup>th</sup> grade</b> (n= 37; 9.2 %)	98.14	15.19	29.54	4.96	25.57	6.24	16.76	7.40	26.81	9.76

first two sub dimensions and low scores from the last two sub dimensions are expected to show from this scale as an indicator of high level of lifelong learning dispositions (Ayra and Kösterelioğlu, 2015).

To find out the answer to the second research question on how English Language and Literature students' lifelong learning dispositions differed in terms of gender, grade level, and age variables, the following analyses were done:

#### **Findings on the gender variable**

Mean, standard deviation and independent t test scores of the students in terms of the gender variable are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that although male students have higher mean scores obtained from the overall scale and all sub-dimensions than female students, there are no statistically

significant gender differences [ $p>.05$ ] in terms of mean scores of students.

#### **Findings on the grade level variable**

The mean scores of lifelong learning dispositions of the students and standard deviations in terms of their grade levels are presented in Table 4

Table 4 indicates that when the overall scale is considered, lifelong learning dispositions of the students in all grades range between ( $\bar{X}=89.93$ ) and ( $\bar{X}=98.14$ ). While students in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade have the highest lifelong learning dispositions, students in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade have the lowest ones. The respective higher scores obtained from the sub- dimensions were as follows: for motivation: prep grade had ( $\bar{X}=31.55$ ), for perseverance: prep grade had ( $\bar{X}=17.19$ ), and for lack of curiosity: 4<sup>th</sup> grade had (=26.81).

**Table 5.** Total score results of multi-comparison between groups in terms of grade variable (ANOVA).

Variance source		Total of Squares	Mean of Squares	Std. deviation	F	Sig. (p)	Group Difference
Overall Scale	Between groups	2686.965	671.741	4	3.047	.017*	1-2 (p=.041*) 4-2 (p=.048*)
	Within groups	87524.510	220.465	397			
	Total	90211.475		401			
Motivation	Between groups	660.569	165.142	4	7.829	.000*	Prep-2 (p=.000*) Prep-3 (p=.043*) 1-2 (p=.000*)
	Within groups	8373.782	21.093	397			
	Total	9034.351		401			
Perseverance	Between groups	1338.837	334.709	4	9.299	.000*	Prep-2 (p=.000*) Prep-3(p=.000*) 1-2 (p=.001*) 1-3 (p=.001*)
	Within groups	14289.713	35.994	397			
	Total	15628.550		401			
Lack of self-regulation	Between groups	581.630	145.408	4	3.391	.010*	Prep-3 (p=.009*)
	Within groups	17021.733	42.876	397			
	Total	17603.363		401			
Lack of curiosity	Between groups	749.655	187.414	4	2.033	.089	-
	Within groups	36603.343	92.200	397			
	Total	37352.998		401			

\*p&lt;.05.

Variance analysis was done to determine whether the difference observed in the mean scores of the students, as shown in Table 4, is significant or not according to grade level variable. Therefore, comparison and differences between the groups concerning lifelong learning dispositions of students are given in Table 5.

As illustrated in Table 5, a statistically significant difference was found between the groups in terms of the scores of overall scale and sub-dimensions of motivation, perseverance and lack of self-regulation at the level of 0.05. Therefore, the Tukey technique was used as a multi-comparison technique to determine for us which group the difference favored. Considering the overall scale, a significant difference was found between the 1st and 2nd grades in favor of the 1st grade ( $=96.48$ ); the 1st and 4th grades in favor of the 4th grade ( $=98.14$ ) concerning their lifelong learning dispositions [ $F(4-401)=3.047$ ;  $p<0,05$ ]. Regarding the motivation sub-dimension, in addition to a significant difference between the preparatory grade ( $=31.55$ ) and 2<sup>nd</sup> ( $=28.16$ ) grade in favor of the preparatory grade; the preparatory grade ( $=31.55$ ) and 3rd ( $=29.71$ ) grade in favor of the preparatory grade; a significant difference was found in the scores of the 1st ( $=31.24$ ) and 2nd ( $=28.16$ ) grades in favor of the 1st grade [ $F(4-401)=7.829$ ;  $p<0,05$ ]. While there were no significant differences between the groups

in terms of the scores obtained from the sub-dimension of lack of curiosity, in the scores of the sub-dimension of perseverance, there was a significant difference between the preparatory grade ( $=27.44$ ) and 2nd ( $=23.43$ ) grade in favor of the preparatory grade; the preparatory grade ( $=27.44$ ) and 3rd ( $=25.02$ ) grade in favor of the preparatory grade; the 1st ( $=27.10$ ) and 2nd ( $=23.43$ ) grade in favor of the 1st grade; and the 1st ( $=27.10$ ) and 3rd ( $=25.02$ ) grade in favor of the 1st grade [ $F(4-401)=9.299$ ;  $p<0,05$ ]. For the sub-dimension of lack of self-regulation, there was a significant difference between the preparatory grade ( $=14.08$ ) and 3rd grade ( $=17.19$ ), in favor of the 3rd grade [ $F(4-401)=3.391$ ;  $p<0,05$ ]. According to these results, it is possible to say that the preparatory and 2nd grade students exhibited lower lifelong learning dispositions than students in the 1st and upper grades.

### **Findings on age variable**

The mean scores and standard deviations of the students' lifelong learning dispositions in terms of age variable are given in Table 6.

The results as seen in Table 6 indicate that the 17-19 age range exhibits the lowest lifelong learning dispositions

**Table 6.** The descriptive statistical results demonstrating students' lifelong learning dispositions in terms of age variable.

N=402	Overall Scale		Motivation		Perseverance		Lack of self-regulation		Lack of curiosity	
	$\bar{X}$	Sd	$\bar{X}$	Sd	$\bar{X}$	Sd	$\bar{X}$	Sd	$\bar{X}$	Sd
Between 17-19 (n= 162; 40.3 %)	94.75	15.66	29.82	5.15	24.76	6.72	15.56	6.46	24.61	9.55
Between 20-22 (n= 181; 45.0 %)	94.98	14.96	31.12	3.86	26.64	5.59	14.54	6.66	22.69	9.92
Between 23-25 (n= 48; 11.9 %)	96.94	12.92	29.38	5.44	25.88	5.47	16.12	6.97	25.56	8.42
26 and over (n= 11; 2.7%)	96.00	14.10	29.27	5.25	21.91	7.87	18.36	6.37	26.45	11.03

while the 23-25 age range shows the highest dispositions according to the mean scores obtained from the overall scale. As for sub dimensions, (namely, motivation and perseverance), the highest mean scores belonged to the 20-22 age range; in lack of self-regulation and lack of curiosity sub dimensions, the highest scores belonged to the 26 and over age range.

In order to find out whether the mean scores of the groups were significantly different, variance analysis was done. The comparison and the differences between the groups concerning lifelong learning dispositions of the students are given in Table 7.

As given in Table 7, a significant difference was found between the groups in terms of the score of the sub-dimension of perseverance at the level of 0.05. In order to find out in favor of which groups the significant difference occurred, the Tukey test was applied. The results showed that there was a significant difference in the scores obtained from the perseverance sub-dimension between the age range of 17-19 ( $\bar{X}$ =24.76) and 20-22 ( $\bar{X}$ =26.64) in favor of 20-22 [ $F(3-401)=3.983$ ;  $p<0,05$ ]. On the other hand, there were no significant differences between the groups in terms of the scores obtained from the overall scale and the sub-dimensions of motivation, lack of self-regulation and lack of curiosity.

In the light of these findings which revealed that young adult students exhibited higher lifelong learning dispositions than younger students, it is possible to say that lifelong learning dispositions were strongly related to increasing age.

## DISCUSSION

The findings made in this study revealed that the English Language and Literature students had high level of

lifelong learning dispositions. Overall, the obtained data are parallel to the results of other researches in relevant literature (Demirel and Akkoyunlu, 2010; Oral and Yazar, 2015). Similarly, in a study performed by Özcan (2011), lifelong learning perceptions of English language teachers were found in the "most" competent level (4.04 out of 5). According to the results of the study conducted by Evin Gencil (2013), although perception level of prospective teachers' lifelong learning competences was sufficient, students were found the least competent in communicating in foreign languages. She also found out that English Language Teaching and German Language Teaching students' lifelong learning competencies were at high levels. Ayra and Kösterelioğlu (2015) also found teachers' lifelong learning dispositions to be at high level. On the other hand, in another studies conducted by Kılıç (2014) and Karakuş (2013), the lifelong learning perceptions and competences of students were found to be at the medium level. In contrast to the findings of my study, Coskun (2009) indicated that lifelong learning dispositions of university students were lower than the medium score of the scale which was used in this study as well. However, lifelong learning at university is about the promotion of a "want-to-learn" attitude and the competences to be learned. It focuses primarily on the needs of the learners within their learning context and prompting lifelong learning opportunities (Crosier et al., 2007). In this respect, it is possible to say that students who involved in this study have sufficient motivation or encouragement for active learning that encapsulates the lifelong learning philosophy.

No significant differences were found between the scores of female and male students obtained from both overall scale and all sub-dimensions of the scale. Similarly, in line with this result, Şahin et al. (2010), Şahin and Arcagök (2014), Oral and Yazar (2015) also found no



**Table 7.** One-Way ANOVA results according to the age variable.

Variance source		Total of Squares	Mean of Squares	Std. deviation	F	Sig. (p)	GD
Overall Scale	Between groups	194.949	64.983	3	.287	.835	-
	Within groups	90016.526	226.172	398			
	Total	90211.475		401			
Motivation	Between groups	201.805	67.268	3	3.031	.029	-
	Within groups	8832.546	22.192	398			
	Total	9034.352		401			
Perseverance	Between groups	455.574	151.858	3	3.983	.008*	17-19 and 20-22
	Within groups	15172.975	38.123	398			
	Total	15628.550		401			
Lack of self-regulation	Between groups	242.771	80.924	3	1.855	.137	-
	Within groups	17360.593	43.620	398			
	Total	17603.363		401			
Lack of curiosity	Between groups	530.364	176.788	3	1.911	.127	-
	Within groups	36822.633	95.519	398			
	Total	37352.998		401			

\*p&lt;.05.

significant gender differences in students' lifelong learning scores. However, studies conducted by Demirel and Akkoyunlu (2010), Coskun (2009), Gencel (2013), İzci and Koç (2012) and Kılıç (2014) revealed gender differences in lifelong learning scores of students in favor of female students. On the other hand, in the 2006 UNESCO report which described inequality of participation in lifelong training, gender was analyzed as one of the fundamental variables, but large differences between the male and female participants were not found by Desjardins et al. (2006). Likewise, in some studies on gender differences in lifelong learning training conducted by Arulampalam et al. (2004) and Burgard (2012), the participation of women was found to be no less or even slightly more likely in lifelong learning training than men. Aside from these findings, in some studies done by Bassanini and Brunello (2008), and Green (1993), women were found to participate in lifelong learning training more often than men did; while in contrast, Royalty (1996) and Tharenou (2001) found that women participated less than men did.

On the grade level variable, this study revealed that while the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade participants showed lower level lifelong learning dispositions, the upper grade students (4<sup>th</sup> grade) were clearly above average in exhibiting lifelong learning dispositions according to the scores obtained from the overall scale. A significant difference between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students resulting in favor

of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade was also observed in the scores obtained from the overall scale. This result is in line with findings of Demirel and Akkoyunlu (2010), Coskun (2009) and Karakuş (2013). They indicated a significant difference between 1<sup>st</sup> grade students and senior students in favor of senior students. Similarly, in a study done by Yavuz Knokman and Yelken (2014b), students' attitudes toward learning were investigated and according to grade level, students in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade were found to be more eager to learn than those in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade. It can be so because being too close to their careers, 4<sup>th</sup> grade students are more enthusiastic to acquire new knowledge and skills. Aktürk (2012) associated students' being open to learning and having high expectations with their learning needs and improvement quests. On the other hand, Oral and Yazar (2015) revealed that 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students had the highest lifelong learning perceptions among students in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. However, Atacanlı (2007) investigated medical students' lifelong learning behavior changes across years in his study and found no differences in terms of grade levels.

According to the scores obtained from perseverance sub dimension, there was a significant difference regarding the age variable between the age range 17-19 and that of 20-22 in favor of the latter. In addition, this study revealed that students in the age range of 23 and 25 exhibited the highest lifelong learning dispositions

while students at the age range of 17-19 showed the lowest. This finding is consistent with the result of grade variable in that lifelong learning scores were higher for upper grade students than for lower grades. A nearly similar result was obtained by Kılıç (2014), who found out that students in the age range between 25 and over showed the highest lifelong learning perceptions. It is clear that an increase in lifelong learning disposition is associated with increasing age of students.

## Conclusion

In knowing a foreign language, especially English as a lingua franca which is one of the significant factors affecting lifelong learning competencies, English Language and Literature students are expected to enrich their lifelong learning experiences and therefore, participation of students who study foreign languages in exchange programs like Erasmus should be increased in order to enable them to gain experiences from learning situations and to develop lifelong learning opportunities as well. In addition, lifelong learning related activities and projects should be included in foreign language students' education programs. More extensive research to determine lifelong learning dispositions of foreign language students is also suggested for future researchers.

## Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflicts of interest.

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