Are We Burning Students out in the Cauldron of Curricular Practices?

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Abstract

In this single case study, university students' burnout was examined with respect to the curricular activities in an institution. The participants consisted of A2 level English students (N=390) at an English preparatory school of a state university. The participants were given a survey consisting of the Turkish version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Scale and open-ended questions. The data were analyzed and the results were reported through descriptive and inferential statistics and content analysis. In the study, implications were drawn for curriculum developers and educators.

Keywords: student burnout, curriculum, tertiary education

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Introduction

English has always been indispensable in the history of Turkish education given its role around the globe. The demographic, economic, and technological changes across the world have led to inevitable changes in English education, specifically for universities trying hard to catch up with universal standards. Considering these changes, Turkish universities have started attributing more importance to their language education, evaluate their teaching materials, reconsider their educational practices, and go through accreditation processes to improve the credibility of their teaching. Some of them even have initiated or switched into English medium instruction in their academic programs.

Although they agree on the importance of English and take some precautions to improve their practices, universities in Turkey may still have differences when it comes to teaching English. Some programs may require one year English preparatory school education for students, for instance, whereas others may keep it optional. In either case, however, students are required to take English classes before they can graduate. Though the number of hours and requirements may change in programs with a mandatory preparatory school, university students in Turkey generally attend intensive English classes over a semester or year to develop general and academic English language skills. They follow course books and additional materials, take quizzes, midterms, finals, and proficiency exams, keep portfolios, submit assignments, deliver presentations, and do some other projects during the process. In such intensive programs, it is oftentimes the case that students feel overwhelmed with the practices, lose motivation and interest, and thus, demonstrate lower academic performance, with some other personal and non-personal factors adding on.

Every now and then, it may be considered challenging to pinpoint and appreciate the variations in the actions of individuals. Social Cognitive Theory points to this, specifically defining the causes by which human behavior is regulated (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). The theory assumes that the actions of individuals can be anticipated not only in likely effects but also in personal self-efficacy (Yang, 2004), which is one of the most crucial principles in SCT. In this respect, self-efficacy can be described as the personal evaluation of ability to coordinate and execute actions to achieve specified types of output (Bandura, 1977). It makes a difference in how one thinks and behaves, impacting their motivation. In relation to student burnout, when a student with high self-efficacy deals with a challenging task, they may enjoy it more compared to a student with low self-efficacy. In other words, the level of self-efficacy is intertwined with burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1985). Likewise, in addition to their motivation and anxiety, learners' self-efficacy may have a positive or negative impact on their language learning depending on the levels of these affective factors (Deb, 2018). In accordance with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, language learners differ in terms of the strength or level of their affective factors, which represents the link between affective filters and the process of second language acquisition. Language learning of students whose affective filter is high may be affected badly; therefore, even if they comprehend the input, it may not reach the language learning device or the portion of the brain responsible for language acquisition and vice versa.

Burnout is a psychological condition that responds to persistent interpersonal occupational stress factors (Maslach, 1982). It is a negative physical, social, and mental stress, combined with a profound sense of job disappointment. It may be caused by virtue of work surplus, loss of power, lack of compensation, community or equity, and differences of value (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Although students are not employed and do not have any jobs, whatever they carry out while studying could also be called "work", as a result of which they might experience burnout (Hu & Schaufeli, 2009). In this respect, student burnout, in particular, is considered as feeling tired of studying, having a pessimistic and separate attitude towards studying, and feeling incompetent as a student (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Student burnout is comprised of three dimensions: exhaustion, the feeling that one's emotional resources are unnecessary and drained, depersonalization, a distorted emotional condition, and low sense of efficacy, a sense of inefficiency and unproductivity in one's actions (Balogun et al. 1996; Lingard et al., 2007; Zhang, Gan, & Cham, 2007). These dimensions refer to intrapersonal, interpersonal, and self-

evaluation aspects of burnout respectively. When the relevant literature is reviewed, one can find some studies indicating that university students may suffer from student burnout due to school practices they need to deal with (Chambel & Curral, 2005; Li, Song & Guo, 2009). Student burnout can be the gateway to recognizing a broad spectrum of students' behaviors, affect the current and future ties with their schools, peers and professors, and impact the institution's appeal for potential students with possible implications for current and future registrations (Neumann, Finaly-Neumann & Reichel, 1990).

To the humble knowledge of authors, although most studies in literature deal with teacher burnout, the number of studies dealing with student burnout in relation to English education is quite limited in Turkey. For example, Yeni Palabıyık (2014) examines the burnout of high school students across gender, grade, and proficiency levels, whereas Erakman and Mede (2018) examine the burnout feelings of students who attended an English preparatory school for the second time. Both of these studies indicate a high or increased level of burnout by students, but none reflects on the effects of schools' curricular practices on student burnout. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research questions from the perspective of preparatory school students at a state university:

1. What is the burnout level of English students at the preparatory school?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the burnout levels of English students in terms of department, medium of instruction in the department, midterm and quiz scores, and whether or not students have repeated the preparatory school?
3. Which curricular practices affect the burnout levels of English students at the preparatory school?

The results of this study are expected to guide other tertiary education contexts that are aware of the importance of English education and concerned about the psychological state and academic performance of their students.

Method

Design, Participants, and Context

In this study, a case study design with a mixed method approach was adopted, and the English preparatory school of a prestigious state university in Turkey was taken as a single case. In this preparatory school, every year a large number of university students, divided into A1, A2, and B1 levels[3] in the beginning, learn English through a well-established language program. It is oftentimes the case that instructors observe, and students complain about burnout due to some reasons.

The participants of the study (*N*=390) consisted of university students attending the A2 level English classes in this school in the fall term of 2019-2020 academic year. Slightly less than three quarters of these participants (*n*=285; 73.1%) were to follow 30% of their future departmental classes in English, while slightly over a quarter (*n*=105; 26.9%) were to have 100% of their courses in English. A2 level students were purposefully chosen for the study because they represented the group of students with the average level of English proficiency, compared to A1 and B1 level students who were relatively less and more proficient in English. Following is a brief demographic presentation of the participants.

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[3] Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

Table 1
The Participants

	n	*%*
male	207	53.1
female	183	46.9
*30% English program	285	73.1
**100% English program	105	26.9
repeating students	26	6.7
self-reporting of feeling burnout	262	67.2

*Students in this program have 30% of their departmental courses in English.
** Students in this program have all their departmental courses in English.

The participants were the students of chemical engineering ($n=64$; 16.4%), industrial engineering ($n=60$; 15.4%), civil engineering ($n=54$; 13.8%), mechanical engineering ($n=49$; 12.6%), architecture ($n=36$; 9.2%), electric and electronics engineering ($n=33$; 8.5%), industrial design ($n=28$; 7.2%), medicine ($n=23$; 5.9%), computer engineering ($n=22$; 5.6%), city and regional planning ($n=18$; 4.6%) and English language teaching ($n=3$; .8%), and The majority was Turkish ($n=384$; 98.5%), and there were also some international students ($n=6$; 1.5%). The students' achievement in midterms and quizzes is presented below.

Table 2
The Participants' Exam Scores

Scores (/100)	midterms		quizzes	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*
26-50	1	.2	5	1.3
51-75	136	34.9	115	29.5
76-100	253	64.9	270	69.2
Total	390	100	390	100

In the study context, students are required to sit the English proficiency exam in September of each academic year, and those failing the exam sit a placement test. It is after the placement test that students are placed into A1, A2, and B1 level classes to learn English. If successful enough, those in B1 level are allowed to complete their program at the end of the fall term. A1 and B1 students follow a 24-hour-a-week program, while A2 students have 20-hour-a-week in the first term, increasing to 24 hours in the second. Students take quizzes, midterms, and a final exam throughout the year and are also evaluated via writing portfolios, presentations, debates, extensive reading practices and online task software. The language program aims to develop students' four skills in the target language along with grammar and vocabulary thanks to the course books and other supplementary materials in the form of photocopies. Students need to attend at least 80% of their classes to successfully finish the preparatory school. In specific, the participants follow the instructional practices below.

Table 3
Curricular Practices of the English Preparatory School

Course Books	● a four skill-based course book by a well-known international publishing house ● consisting of modules in which students practice all major skills and language areas with contemporary communicative topics and tasks
Midterm Exams	● once a month; skill-based; questions prepared in line with the curriculum content ● a reading test based on two academic texts ● a listening test with three or four recordings ● a writing test i.e., paragraph writing or other registers on given topics ● a speaking test with individual and pair work
Quizzes	● unannounced achievement tests; short and based on course content ● mainly on vocabulary, grammar and language functions
Online Task Software	● online self-study practices of the software of the main course book ● covering all skills along with grammar and vocabulary

	● assigned to students over a period of time
Presentations	● once in a semester; 10-15 minute long
	● presentation on the topics in the course book depending on interest
Debate	● once in a semester; dividing the whole class into two groups
	● students expressing opinions, asking and answering questions on given topics
Extensive Reading	● two graded reading through the academic year; self-reading of the books over some time
	● a written exam testing comprehension and the content
Writing Portfolios	● writing different types of paragraphs; process writing
	● getting feedback over the first draft and being graded over the second draft
Additional Materials	● additional photocopied class materials; extra practices by the materials office
	● some done in class if instructors have enough class time; some given as homework or for self- study

The campus where the preparatory school is located is a district of Ankara and is almost 20 km and 20-25 minutes away from the main campus and the city center. School starts at 09.30 a.m. every day, and students need to travel this long-distance school way before they can make it to the school before 9.30 a.m.

Data Collection Tools and Procedure

In the study, the data were collected through a questionnaire survey in three sections. First, students were required to fill in some demographic information, and second, they responded to a five-point Likert scale questionnaire with 16 items regarding their burnout. The scale was the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Scale (MBI-SS), which was designed by Schaufeli et al. (2002). It was translated into Turkish by Çapri, Gündüz and Gökçakan (2011), and the researchers in this study utilized the Turkish version of the scale in order not to cause any misunderstandings on the part of the participants. The MBI-SS consisted of three dimensions: *exhaustion*, *depersonalization*, and *efficacy*. In the third section, the participants stated whether or not the preparatory school practices contributed to their burnout, provided additional factors for their burnout, if any, and came up with suggestions for improvement for the school practices so that they would feel burnout less.

The survey was developed by the researchers in the fall term of the academic year 2019-2020. Two experts' opinions were taken as a validity measure. Besides, the survey was piloted with A1 and B1 level preparatory school students (*N*=100) for reliability, and the reliability of the inventory was found to be acceptably high (α=.857). Then at the end of the fall language program, the A2 level participants were administered the survey. The reliability check was done one more time with the actual data collected, supporting the first reliability check (α=.856). The official permission from the school officials and the professional development and research unit was taken prior to the data collection in addition to participant consent.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the burnout inventory were analyzed on SPSS 23 for descriptive and inferential statistics. First, the items (3, 6, 9, 12, 14, and 16) related to efficacy in the questionnaire were reversed, and then depending on the research questions, Mann-Whitney U Test and Kruskal Wallis nonparametric tests were conducted, as no normal distribution was observed in the data. The data obtained from the open-ended components of the survey, on the other hand, were analyzed by content analysis. Following the framework by Huberman and Miles (1994, cited in Creswell, 2013), codes and themes were created, and the two researchers reached a consensus on the codes and themes. In the analysis of the content, tallying by hand was used to determine the frequencies of the codes and themes, and the codes were presented depending on how many times they appeared in the overall data.

Results

The Student Burnout Levels

The results of the study showed that more than half of the participants (67.2%, *N*=262) believed the preparatory school contributed to the level of burnout the participants experienced, while the rest (32.8%, *N*=128) did not believe so. Following is the report of the burnout levels of the participants specifically across the dimensions of the burnout scale that was used in the study: exhaustion, depersonalization, and efficacy.

Exhaustion

It was found out that more than half of the participants (62.4%) always (40.3%) and most of the time (22.1%) felt tired when they got up in the morning and had to face another day at the university (*M*=3.72; *SD*=1.32).

Table 4
English Learners' Burnout Levels in terms of Exhaustion

	Statements	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	*M*	*SD*
7.	I feel tired when I get up in the morning and I have to face another day at the university.	5.9	18.7	13.1	22.3	40.3	3.72	1.32
4.	I feel used up at the end of a day at university.	5.9	22.8	16.9	23.8	30.5	3.5	1.29
13.	I feel burned out from my studies.	10	34.9	20.3	16.9	17.9	2.98	1.28
1.	I feel emotionally drained by my studies.	10.5	37.2	20	16.2	16.2	2.9	1.26
10.	Studying or attending a class is really a strain for me.	19	40.8	17.2	10.8	12.3	2.57	1.26

*1=Never, *2=Sometimes, *3=Generally, *4=Most of the time, *5=Always

More than half of the participants (54.8%) stated that they always (30.5%) and most of the time (23.8%) felt used up at the end of a day at university (*M*=3.5; *SD*=1.29). Slightly more than one third of the participants (34.9%) reported that they sometimes felt burnout from their studies (*M*=2.98; *SD*=1.28). That they sometimes felt emotionally drained by their studies (*M*=2.9; *SD*=1.26) was indicated by more than one third of the participants (37.2%). Less than half of the participants (40.8%) stated that studying or attending a class was sometimes really a strain for them (*M*=2.57; *SD*=1.26).

Depersonalization

Slightly less than one third of the participants (32.6%) stated that they sometimes became less enthusiastic about their studies (*M*=2.92; *SD*=1.27). That they sometimes became less interested in their studies since their enrollment at the university (*M*=2.74; *SD*=1.25) was reported by approximately one third of the participants (33.8%).

Table 5
English Learners' Burnout Levels in terms of Depersonalization

	Statements	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	*M*	*SD*
5.	I have become less enthusiastic about my studies.	11.8	32.6	24.1	15.1	16.4	2.92	1.27
2.	I have become less interested in my studies since my enrollment at the university.	15.6	33.8	24.1	13.6	12.8	2.74	1.25
8.	I have become more cynical about the potential usefulness of my studies.	16.4	39.7	17.4	14.6	11.8	2.66	1.25

15.	I just want to study my lesson and not be disturbed.	29.5	32.3	19	10.8	8.5	2.36	1.24
11.	I doubt the significance of my studies.	33.8	34.6	13.8	8.5	9.2	2.25	1.26

*1=Never, *2=Sometimes, *3=Generally, *4=Most of the time, *5=Always

More than one third of the participants (39.7%) indicated that they sometimes became more cynical about the potential usefulness of their studies (*M*=2.66; *SD*=1.25). It was also seen that slightly less than one third of the participants (32.3%) sometimes just wanted to study their lesson and not be disturbed (*M*=2.36; *SD*=1.24). Slightly more than one third of the participants (34.6%) indicated that they sometimes doubted the significance of their studies (*M*=2.25; *SD*=1.26).

Efficacy

Slightly less than half of the participants (47.2%) always (19%) and most of the time (28.2%) felt stimulated when they achieved their study goals (*M*=2.65; *SD*=1.18). That in their opinions they were always (14.6%) and most of the time (28.2%) good students (*M*=2.74; *SD*=1.11) was stated by less than half of the participants (42.8%).

Table 6
English Learners' Burnout Levels in terms of Efficacy

	Statements	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	*M*	*SD*
12.	I feel stimulated when I achieve my study goals.	7.2	17	28.5	28.3	19	2.65	1.18
9.	In my opinion, I am a good student.	5.9	19.7	31.5	28.2	14.6	2.74	1.11
3.	I can effectively solve the problems that arise in my studies.	6.7	24.4	27.4	32.1	9.5	2.87	1.09
14.	I have learned many interesting things during the course of my studies.	11	28.5	27.7	21.8	11	3.07	1.18
6.	I believe that I make an effective contribution to the classes that I attend.	12.1	29	25.1	22.6	11.3	3.08	1.2
16.	During class I feel confident that I am effective in getting things done.	11.3	33.3	28.7	17.2	9.5	3.2	1.14

*1=Never, *2=Sometimes, *3=Generally, *4=Most of the time, *5=Always

Less than half of the participants (41.6%) reported that they always (9.5%) and most of the times (32.1%) could effectively solve the problems that arose in their studies (*M*=2.87; *SD*=1.09). Slightly less than one third of the participants (32.8%) indicated that they always (11%) and most of the time (21.8%) learned many interesting things during the course of their studies *(M*=3.07; *SD*=1.18). It was seen that one third of the participants (33.9%) always (11.3%) and most of the time (22.6%) believed that they made an effective contribution to the classes that they attended (*M*=3.08; *SD*=1.2). That during class they sometimes felt confident that they were effective in getting things done (*M*=3.2; *SD*=1.14) was reported by one third of the participants (33.3%).

The Difference in the Student Burnout Levels

The results of the study showed that there was not any statistical difference in the burnout levels of students depending either on their department (x^2(sd=10, *n*=390) =11.046, *p*=.354(*p*>.05)) or how much instruction via English they would get in their future department (*U* ($N_{30\%}$= 285, $N_{100\%}$=105)=14486.50, *z*= -.482, *p*=.630(*p*>.05)). However, it was seen that there was a statistically significant difference in the extent to which the students felt burnout depending on their midterm results (x^2(sd=2, *n*=390) =11.175, *p*=.004(*p*<.05)), their quiz results (x^2(sd=2, *n*=390)=16.600, *p*=.000(*p*<.05)), and their being a repeat student (*U*(N_{repeat}= 26; $N_{nonrepeat}$= 364)=2824. 50, *z*=-3.437, *p*=.001(*p*<.05)). A statistically significant difference was observed in the burnout levels of those students whose midterm results were between the

range of 51-75 and 76-100. A statistically significant difference was also observed in the burnout levels of those students whose quiz scores were between the range of 25-50 and 76-100 and between the range of 51-75 and 76-100, as well. Table 7 shows these pair-wise differences for the midterm and quiz results and students' status.

Table 7
The Pair-wise Comparison of Burnout Levels

	*groups	range	*N*	mean rank	sum of ranks
MIDTERM SCORES	3	51-75	136	220.81	30029.50
	4	76-100	253	181.13	45825.50
		Total	**389**		
QUIZ SCORES	2	26-50	1	20.00	20.00
	4	76-100	253	127.92	32365.00
		Total	**254**		
	3	51-75	136	136.01	18497.50
	4	76-100	253	226.71	57357.50
		Total	**389**		
STATUS	1	non-repeat	364	190.26	69254.50
	2	repeat	26	268.87	6990.50
		Total	**390**		

grouping of exam scores (1)=0-25, (2)=26-50, (3)=51-75, (4)=76-100

As can be seen in the table above, those students whose midterm scores were in the range of 51-75 and those students whose quiz scores were in the range of 76-100 felt burnout most. It was also seen that repeat students felt burnout more than non-repeat students.

Curricular Practices Affecting the Student Burnout Levels

The English preparatory school practice increasing the students' burnout most was believed to be quizzes (f=191) mainly because these were pop quizzes (f=258). The participants supported that quizzes need to be modified (f=170) considering their unpredictable timing. The second practice contributing the burnout levels of the students was the online task software (f=166). In general, the participants thought that it was useless (f=109) and expensive (f=58), and needed a lot of payment (f=29). The participants were unhappy that they were given a quiz score depending on whether they did the assigned homework, and the system was accessed only when they had the access code sold with original course books. They were unhappy that on the system they were assigned too much homework at once (f=51). They also believed the system was too selective while accepting answers (f=33) and it took a lot of time to finish the assignments (f=19). Therefore, the participants suggested that this practice should be removed (f=181). The debate (f=154) was the third practice contributing the participants' burnout since it was too early for them for such an experience (f=37); they were not proficient in English enough for holding debates. Nevertheless, the participants thought that this practice could continue (f=165).

The fourth practice partly responsible for the burnout of the participants was midterms (f=126), mainly because they were stress-provoking (f=23) and difficult (f=16) for students, particularly the listening section (f=3). However, the participants reported that midterms could continue the way they were (f=236). The photocopies were the fifth practice reported to increase the English students' burnout (f=99). The participants believed photocopies were unnecessary (f=31) and useless (f=24) in that the photocopies had no explanations but too much grammar with too easy or boring activities. They were not covered in class (f=32). This resulted in too many papers for students to self-study outside at home as well as feeling unwilling and guilty to do or not to do them. The participants stated they could not reach the answers of the photocopy materials immediately. The participants also had to pay extra every week to access them (f=32). However, they indicated that this practice could continue (f=179). The next practice seen as a contributor to the burnout of the participants was presentations (f=95) because they

created public speaking anxiety (*f*=23) and stress (*f*=24). Nonetheless, the participants reported that the presentations could continue in the same way (*f*=221).

Another practice leading the participants to have experienced burnout was the course books (*f*=81). The participants stated course books were expensive (*f*=87). The participants also found them useless (*f*=39) i.e., they did not believe in the worth of course books during language education. Still, the participants believed course books could continue to be in use (*f*=173). Extensive reading (*f*=59) was a further practice seen as a cause for the participants to feel burnout due to its assessment. The participants stated that they were assessed in their extensive reading practice through the book and one episode of its TV series. They were discontent that they had to take an exam after reading the book (*f*=10) and they were asked to compare and contrast the book and the episode in the exam (*f*=17). The format of the quizzes was also criticized by the participants (*f*=38) because it could be taken only by watching the movie, the questions of it were too detailed, was based on memorization and did not differentiate between those who studied and did not. However, they believed this practice could remain the same (*f*=221). The last preparatory school practice contributing to the burnout of the participants was portfolios (*f*=24). They stated they had similar assignments (*f*=4) and the topics of the assignments were boring (*f*=9). Nevertheless, they expressed that portfolios could remain the same (*f*=281).

On the top of all, the participants provided some extra reasons for experiencing burnout. They criticized that the campus for the school of foreign languages was remote (*f*=32) and far from where they accommodated (*f*=59) and they needed to spend a great deal of time to commuting. To them, transportation was always a problem (*f*=25); there were not enough busses, they could not easily get on a bus in the mornings, and the busses were generally very crowded. They also expressed they had to attend the 80-85% of the classes (*f*=52). That the campus the school of foreign languages was on was big enough but boring for university students (*f*=23), intense weekly pacing of the lessons (*f*=15) and that the classes started too early (*f*=11) were the other reasons why the participants reported to have felt burnout.

Discussion

In the study, it was found that the participants believed their school affected how much burnout they felt. The participants felt burnout due to their exhaustion. They felt tired when they got up in the morning and had to face another day at the university. Similarly, Maslach, Leiter and Schaufeli (2008) reported since the early phases of burnout studies that the most frequently discussed component of burnout syndrome has been exhaustion. Another reason why they felt burnout was because of their depersonalization. The participants had become less enthusiastic about their studies, and with regards to efficacy, they were not confident in getting things done effectively. There is a clear connection between exhaustion and depersonalization. As a reaction to exhaustion, depersonalization can come into existence, and these two components may have an influence on the sense of efficacy (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Likewise, the findings of this study are in line with the findings of the study conducted by Erakman and Mede (2018). In their study, they also found out that students experienced burnout the most because of exhaustion, followed by depersonalization and a low sense of efficacy respectively. The results of the current study are also consistent with Yeni Palabıyık's (2014) study reporting that the dimension of exhaustion was found high regarding students' burnout levels.

It was seen that the extent to which students felt burnout was significantly different depending on their repeat status. This finding was also reported by Erakman and Mede's (2018) study highlighting the issue of repeat students' burnout. Repeating obviously could have negative consequences for students. Repeat students may not necessarily improve academically, experience mental, social, behavioral problems, or drop out of school, and repeating can bring financial and moral costs for individuals and the society (McGrath, 2006). Therefore, repeating the English preparatory school may possibly cause some students to feel burnout given the fact that they go through the whole schooling process from the beginning. They carry all the burden of the learning and assessment all over again and try extra hard not

to get low scores to avoid failing for a second time.

In addition to their repeat status, the burnout levels of students were also found to be significantly different depending on their midterm and quiz scores. One commonly reported concern regarding quizzes was their timing; the students were not content that quizzes were administered unannounced. It was also reported that the midterms were stress-provoking and difficult in some respects. Hu and Schaufeli (2009) indicate that students demonstrate different repercussions which are associated with stressful conditions created by exams. Hence, taking midterms and unannounced quizzes may have even worsened the case. It is possible that the students tried extra hard not to miss and do well in exams to pass the prep school. Therefore, it would not be wrong to suggest that quizzes and midterms might have caused students to experience burnout. Çapulcuoğlu and Gündüz (2013) also explain that the burnout levels of students are increased by intense study load, test anxiety, and the fear of failure.

In the study, the participants were found to feel burnout due to the practice of extensive reading, particularly by the virtue of its nature. They were required to sit an examination after reading the book and watching an episode of its TV series adaptation. This could be explained by achievement and organizational expectations (Jackson, Schwab & Schuler, 1986). Students may feel that if there is an exam, they need to be successful in it. The purpose of the practice is obviously to have students read in English extensively; however, when the educational institution expects these students to sit an exam after their extensive reading, the students may feel burnout.

Borg (2006) makes it clear that teaching English involves commercialization more than other fields. He claimed this considering the various certifications English teachers are expected to get. However, it is true that teaching English is indeed a global sector in which financial concerns are felt by some parties. Most course books, for instance, are written by native speakers abroad and imported to countries like Turkey, which costs students a lot given the current rate of the currency. These books may not necessarily be enough on their own and additional materials may be needed, and students may need to pay extra to reach sources such as the photocopies provided by schools. These all may cause students to be stressed and under pressure, and thus, contribute to their burnout. Besides, the students criticized that the photocopy activities were not done at school. They expressed they were left to their own devices while dealing with the photocopies, which may again cause them to feel stressed given the amount and complexity of the work to be done.

It is known that the amount of homework, study demands (Apay, 2012; Lin & Huang, 2014), and engaging in online/distance learning (Pavlakis & Kaitelidou, 2012) may cause students to feel burnout. Obviously, the participants already believed they were given a lot of tasks on the internet, and they were unhappy that they encountered technical difficulties in the assignments of their course books. The difficulties in question can cause students to spend extra time and effort on the tasks, which could be why students may have felt burnout. In addition, the students may have felt burnout due to the intense weekly pacing of the curriculum as their success was badly affected because of it since class pacing has a considerable amount of impact on student achievement (Arlin & Westbury, 1976).

Additionally, delivering presentations and participating in debates were reported by the participants to increase their burnout. Mark (2011) states that the fear of negative feedback, the fear of class failure and discomfort were some causes of speaking anxiety, which all could also be related to the participants' burnout. It is further known that the more competent students become in the target language, the less anxious they will be while speaking that language (Bailey, 1983; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). The participants of the study had been learning English for approximately three months by the time this research was conducted. Therefore, they may have thought that they were not proficient enough in English for participating in presentations or debates, as a result of which they may have felt burnout.

The participants also reported that portfolios increased their burnout, especially because of the boring topics assigned, which is supported in the literature. It is known that some students view portfolios tiring

and tedious, do not enjoy keeping them or have difficulty in interpreting the corrections in their portfolios (Hirvela & Sweetland, 2005; Boyden-Knudsen, 2001; Cohen, 1994; Pollari, 2000).

In the study, some additional reasons for burnout were further indicated by the participants. Of these, commuting long distances and having transportation problems, the obligation to start school early and attend most of classes not to fail may be treated as life stressors for university students, though these may not be too severe to leave strain. These life stressors may contribute to students' burnout (Plieger, et al., 2015). In this respect, students specifically indicated campus life as a reason for burnout. They believed the campus life was not enjoyable. Alienation is known to be an indicator of burnout (Tomaszek, 2020; Tomaszek, & Muchacka-Cymerman, 2020), i.e., when students feel burnout, they may withdraw themselves from the society or their surroundings. However, it may also be the other way around. Students may feel bored and believe there is not much to do on campus and isolate themselves, which in return may have a deteriorating effect on their level of burnout.

Conclusions and Implications

The current study examined whether the English preparatory school students at a state university felt burnout and whether their burnout levels differed across some variables, which was realized by the use of the MBI-SS that was translated into Turkish by Çapri, Gündüz and Gökçakan (2011). The study also investigated whether or not the students thought the practices of English preparatory program affected their burnout levels, which could be understood mainly by means of open-ended questions in the survey. This study has shown that the participants believed the curricular practices of their English preparatory school contributed to their level of burnout to an extent.

In the study, it was first seen that there were significant differences in the students' level of burnout depending on their midterm and quiz results. The students attracted attention to the unannounced nature of quizzes and stress-provoking and difficult midterms in relation to their burnout. It is known that the difficult midterms and unannounced quizzes raise the pressure and anxiety and do not give a chance of rational assessment (Graham, 1999). The evidence from this study suggests that all of the quizzes may be announced in order not to increase the burnout of the students. The institution could also make sure the difficulty level of midterms is in line with the targeted language levels of CEFR for students, and students could be give chances to practice more in the target language so that they can be more proficient in English and consequently do well in exams. In relation to extensive reading, Krashen's *Comprehension Hypothesis* supports that when students understand signals – i.e., what they hear and read - upon receiving input a little above their current level - they learn language and improve literacy (Krashen, 2003). Extensive reading, in this respect, may provide the means for students to be exposed to such input. Therefore, the practice of extensive reading should not be based on an examination. They rather may be used through a process-oriented approach to reading, for which literature circles, in which a tiny community of students discuss a certain text (Daniels, 2002), could be ideal to implement. Literature circles are known to encourage students to engage in extensive reading as they are learner-centered, which also improves learner autonomy (Shelton-Strong, 2012). It could be this way that students may not feel alone in the process, be guided by their instructors, exchange ideas with them on the way to comprehension, and develop positive attitudes towards reading in the target language. Besides, the course books and supplementary materials might be prepared by the English instructors working at the institution at a lower cost so that the materials would match the learning needs and desires of students and they would not carry the burden of financial cost of these materials. In relation to online assignments, on the other side, teachers may provide an induction at the beginning of the program and assign a manageable amount of homework to students. Students may also be required to deliver presentations or have debates after they have gained some proficiency in the target language. This is rather than starting these as early as the fall term in an academic year, these practices can take place in the spring term. Then students may feel themselves more ready in terms of their language skills. Specifically of portfolios, students may be asked their opinions about the topics and may be allowed to work on these topics while writing. What is more, if students can go over the extra materials with their instructors in class hours more, they may not feel under pressure, stressed, or guilty to complete them

outside the school alone. If these materials are to be optional, only the soft copies could be shared with students to prevent any financial burden on the part of students', as well. Furthermore, university preparatory schools may first make some adjustments in the curriculum load to help lower student exhaustion. They may also reconsider starting times of the school and attendance rate in classes given the campus proximity and difficulties in transportation. They may even consider relocating their school of foreign languages, if possible and share some responsibility in making campus life attractive and enjoyable for young adult students with additional extracurricular practices. To add, given that the study found a significant difference in the burnout levels of repeat and non-repeat students, preparatory schools should pay special attention to their repeat students. They should provide not only educational but also psychological support for the repeat students so that these students could deal with the burnout caused by their status.

To conclude, this study is a single case study in which student burnout was reflected from the perspective of a specific group of students at a specific school of foreign languages at a specific university. Therefore, in another study, all stakeholders could be consulted; the study could be extended to other universities, and different data collection tools such as making participatory or non-participatory observations or having intermittent and focus group interviews. By doing so, a more thorough description of the case could be achieved.

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