

Makalenin Türü / Article Type : Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article
Geliş Tarihi / Date Received : 18.10.2018
Kabul Tarihi / Date Accepted : 15.10.2019
Yayın Tarihi / Date Published : 31.12.2019



<https://dx.doi.org/10.17240/aibuefd.20xx.xx.xxxxx-xxxxxx>

ÖĞRENCİ VE ÖĞRETMENLERİN GÖZÜNDEN YÜKSEKÖĞRETİMDE DİL ÖĞRENİMİNDE ÖĞRENEN ÖZERKLİĞİNİN İNCELENMESİ

Ali ÖZTÜFEKÇİ¹, Enisa MEDE²

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı öğrenci ve öğretmenlerin öğrenci özerkliğini nasıl algıladığını ve İstanbul, Türkiye’de bir İngilizce Hazırlık Okulu’ndaki özerk öğrenme ile alakalı görüşler arasında farklılık olup olmadığını incelemektir. Aynı zamanda, bu çalışma özerkliğin öğrenci sorumlulukları açısından nasıl algılandığını ve katılımcıların düşünceleri arasında bir farklılık olup olmadığını incelemektedir. Bunun dışında, bu çalışma aynı zamanda her iki grup tarafından özerk öğrenmeyi teşvik ederken yaşadıkları zorlukları incelemektedir. Veriler anketler ve her iki grupta yapılan görüşmeler aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Bulgular, öğrenci özerkliğinin üniversite seviyesinde teşvik edilmesinin ne kadar önemli olduğunu göstermiştir. Son olarak, bu çalışmanın bulguları sınav bazlı eğitim durumunun hem öğrencilere hem de öğretmenlere öğrenen özerkliğini destekleme konusunda önemli güçlükler oluşturduğunu gün yüzüne çıkarmıştır. Bu bulgular doğrultusunda, İngiliz Hazırlık Programlarında öğrenen özerkliğinin teşvik edilmesi konusunda bazı çıkarım ve önerilere de çalışmanın ilerleyen kısımlarında değinilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğrenen özerkliği, dil öğrenimi, dil öğretimi, yükseköğretim, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce

AN INVESTIGATION OF LEARNER AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN TERTIARY EDUCATION: FROM THE PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate how the students and instructors perceive learner autonomy as well as examine whether there are any differences between their perceptions regarding autonomous learning in an English language preparatory program in İstanbul, Turkey. The study also attempts to find out how autonomy is perceived by the participants regarding student responsibilities and to identify the differences between their perceptions of the aforesaid variable. Besides, this research attempts to reveal the challenges faced by the students and instructors while promoting autonomous learning in language classrooms. The data were obtained from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews administered to the two groups of participants. The findings revealed that learner autonomy should be closely addressed at tertiary level classes to promote more autonomous behaviors. Finally, the exam-oriented educational context was perceived as the only challenge to both instructors and students in their efforts to promote autonomous learning. Based on the findings, implications and suggestions about promoting learner autonomy in language preparatory programs were provided further in this study.

Keywords: autonomy, learner autonomy, language learning, language teaching, tertiary education, English as a foreign language

¹ Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi, ali.oztufekci@es.bau.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4519-3796>

² Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi, enisa.mede@es.bau.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6555-5248>

1. INTRODUCTION

With the reform movements away from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness taking place in Foreign Language Education (FLE), learner autonomy (hereafter LA) has gained greater attention and popularity amongst scholars (e.g. Little, 1995; Broady & Kenning, 1996; Benson, 1997; Smith, 2003; Allford & Pachler, 2007) and language teachers. As a consequence of changed views in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), the language practitioners have started to put their students at the center of what they do in their own classroom settings, laying particular emphasis on their needs, interests, and styles.

Considering the importance of student-centered language classrooms, teachers' role in helping language learners to develop autonomy is fundamental, meaning language teachers themselves need to be autonomous, either 'in the sense of being free to organize learning in new ways' or 'in the sense of having experience of the demands of learning autonomously' (Lamb & Reinders, 2008). In fact, the development of learner autonomy depends on teachers being autonomous, in other words, they are inextricably interwoven (Little, 2000). In this regard, Benson (2011) pointed out that 'in order to foster learner autonomy, teachers themselves must display a degree of autonomy in their instructional approaches, which might be regarded as the ability teachers need to possess to foster their learners' autonomous skills' (p. 185). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to dig deeper into the relationship between students' readiness for autonomous learning and teachers' perceptions alike in the hopes of creating an environment where students take the initiative to learn independently and where teachers guide their learners towards such autonomy.

1.1. Literature Review

1.1.1. Learner autonomy

It has been quite problematic to come up with a commonly-held view on the definition of learner autonomy because any possible definition of the phenomena is likely to be rather subjective (Han, 2014). Gardner and Miller (2002), for instance, proposed three reasons why it is difficult to define the concept of autonomy. First, different writers have defined the concepts in different ways. Second, they are areas of ongoing debate and therefore definitions are continuing to mature as more discussion takes place. Third, these concepts have developed independently in different geographical areas and therefore they have been defined using different (but often similar) terminology (p.5).

The origins of the research on learner autonomy in language teaching and learning can date back to mid-1970s (Holec, 1981; Gremmo & Riley, 1995; Broady & Kenning, 1996; Benson and Voller, 1997; Littlewood, 1999; Lamb & Reinders, 2008; Smith, 2008). Holec (1981), being the by far most cited scholar in terms of definition of the concept of learner autonomy, defined learner autonomy as "to have and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning" (p.3). Several subsequent definitions tended to build up on this early definition rather than dispute it, such as that of Knowles (1975), who defined learner autonomy as a process in which individuals take responsibility for all the decisions regarding their own learning. Similarly, Little (1991) stated that autonomy is "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action" (p.4).

Based on the aforesaid definitions of learner autonomy, it might as well be argued that Holec's (1981) early definition may be said to exemplify the required skills of an autonomous learner as well as the technical aspect of learner autonomy, but that of Little (1991) delves into the issue from a psychological perspective, i.e. whether the learner is capable of using such skills. Therefore, it leads to a situation where psychological aspect of learner autonomy may be regarded as utmost importance. Both of these definitions, however, are related to "the view of learner autonomy as a mental attribute of the learner that must be trained and developed" (Knaldre, 2015, p.18).

Recently, the concept of learner autonomy have been defined in differing ways by scholars (e.g. Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019; Little, 2015, Oxford, 2015). Little (2015), in this regard, stated that learner autonomy is a problematic, if not impossible, term because it is widely confused with self-instruction. However, the literature on L2 learner autonomy is extensive and characterized in particular by several books on the subject (e.g. Benson, 2013; Everhard & Murphy, 2015). Similarly, much has been written about different perspectives on learner autonomy – technical, psychological, sociocultural and political – with each being underpinned by different theoretical assumptions. Oxford (2015) revisited some of these distinctions. More specifically, Oxford's (2015) discussion of the psychological perspective is broken down into seven descriptors (e.g. psychologically self-regulated learner, emotionally intelligent learners), while a further six descriptors are discussed in her analysis of a sociocultural perspective on the autonomous learners (e.g. mediated learner, cognitively apprenticed learner).

1.1.2. Learner autonomy in language learning

There have been numerous attempts to define the role of learner autonomy in foreign language education. Such being the case, scholars have defined LA from different perspectives, considering different conditions. Joshi (2011) for instance, states that “it is the complete responsibility for one’s learning carries out without the investment of a teacher or pedagogic materials” (p.13). Similarly, Benson (2006) claims that autonomy is the ability of people taking control over their own lives as individuals, and within the context of learning, autonomy is regarded as the individual learner’s control over their own learning process inside and outside the classroom.

Another worthy-to-mention aspect of LA is to be able to see and measure whether or not students have actually become autonomous learners, therefore; learner autonomy should also be promoted as an explicit goal of teaching and learning (Little, 1995). Kessler (2009), for example, examined language students’ autonomy as they interacted through collaborative writing in classroom wikis. The obtained findings revealed that to promote autonomy, teachers need to set up an atmosphere where their role as a teacher is de-emphasized, instead, students should be encouraged to take control over their own learning process. Besides, Cotterall (1995) mentioned that autonomous learners could manage to take responsibility in setting their own goals, planning practice opportunities, or evaluating their progress. Lastly, Hedge (2000) claimed that learners could take responsibility for their learning processes independent of the teacher, meaning they can plan and evaluate themselves as individuals. Thus, autonomy is a, by definition, self-determined behavior, whereby individuals are ready to actively participate in their own learning and take control over their own learning independent of, albeit to a certain degree, their teachers.

1.1.3. Perceptions of learner autonomy in language teaching and learning

It would go quite awry if it is neglected to comprehend and appreciate the interrelationship of teachers’ and students’ perceptions of learner autonomy. Phan (2012) carried out a study with both students and teachers at a university in Vietnam to reveal their perceptions on learner autonomy. The findings showed that the participants were highly unfamiliar with the concept of autonomy. In another study, Joshi (2011) attempted to investigate the autonomous activities of the students in learning English and to explore their beliefs about the role of teachers and their own in learning. Following the analysis of relevant data and findings, it was concluded that 80% of the respondents were aware of their learning goals and the vast majority of the students performed autonomous activities outside the classroom such as use of libraries, listening and watching audio-visual materials in English.

Finally, Shahsavari (2014) conducted a similar study with an attempt to compare the learners and teachers’ perception on autonomy. The results indicated that all teachers and students agreed that learner autonomy may enhance language learning, and learner autonomy had a positive impact on being an achiever. The findings also claimed that if the teachers attempted to give the students more responsibilities, the students thought these teachers were not active nor well-experienced and that’s why they tried to hand over their responsibilities. Therefore, it can be argued that classroom culture and dynamics in society play a key role in perceptions of both teachers and students; thus, fostering autonomous behaviours by paying particular attention to the needs and interests of individuals involved as well as their readiness and perceptions of the concept would bolster such autonomous practices.

1.1.4. Challenges of learner autonomy

Shifting the focus from teaching to learning may bring along problems both students and teachers may encounter a movement towards teacher-independence. According Turloui and Stefansdotir (2011), the kinds of problems that students may encounter due to this shifting can be classified into two categories, namely, discouraging environment and reluctant teachers. As pointed out by Holden and Usuki (1999), a teacher-centered class depends on the grammar-translation method where the student is required to memorize and learn about mechanical approaches. Such a classroom environment would discourage learners to get involved in the learning process and would discourage to develop their own learning strategies, meaning students would not be able to put their learning strategies into practice. In this regard, Holden and Usuki (1999) concluded that “these learners are not less autonomous, but the educational and behavioral norms and the goals of language study had the effect of discouraging learner autonomy” (p. 64).

Besides a discouraging environment, another challenge that students may have to encounter in becoming autonomous would be related to the problem with reluctant teachers. As is widely known and accepted in the field of Foreign Language Education, one simple and very effective way of promoting learner autonomy is through group work activities where students are required to work collaboratively with their peers. However, according to Little (2000), teachers are not aware of the advantages of such activities and they think that they do not have time for this kind of activities and that they have to cover the objectives of their weekly-syllabi. This brings up the concern of the teachers on how to cover all the materials without following the textbook framework (Seaman & Tavares, 2000). Therefore, teachers tend to be rather reluctant in promoting and fostering autonomous behaviors

of their students. In a similar vein, all these insecurities on the part of the teachers arise from the necessity to fulfil all the curricular demands and tests (Dam, 2000).

Yet another study carried out by Alibakhshi (2015) aimed to investigate the perceptions of EFL teachers about learner autonomy focusing on the challenges that they confront while attempting to promote learner autonomy. To do so, a qualitative research design was used to collect data from 23 Iranian EFL teachers working at different universities in Iran. Upon completing the data analysis, the researcher came up with three themes, namely, institution – related challenges, learner – related challenges, and teacher – related challenges. This being the case, the study concluded that teachers and students should get rid of the factors which block learner autonomy in EFL settings, knowing that learner autonomy does not lead to the teachers' lack of respect and authority.

Based on the literature reviewed above, it can be argued that little is known about teachers' and students' perceptions of learner autonomy and much, to the best of our knowledge, research focuses on the readiness of tertiary level EFL students for autonomous learning. Such being the case, the present study aims not only to look into perceptions of both teachers and learners at tertiary level regarding learner autonomy, but also to investigate the promotion of learner autonomy at tertiary level.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Purpose of the study and the research questions

As stated previously in this study, it is important that students at tertiary level need to develop their autonomous skills, as they will have to cope with their language-related needs when they start their undergraduate studies. In this regard, students need to know how to develop such autonomous skills and teachers' role in this process cannot be glossed over. This being the case, the primary purpose of the current study is to compare if there are any differences between the participating students and instructors regarding their perceptions on learner autonomy. The study also aims at exploring how the concept of learner autonomy is perceived by students and instructors in terms of student responsibilities. Finally, the present study attempts to reveal the challenges that both instructors and students experience while promoting autonomy in their classes.

To meet these objectives, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1- Are there any significant differences between the overall perceptions of students and instructors about learner autonomy?
- 2- Are there any significant differences between the perceptions of students and instructors in terms of student responsibilities?
- 3- What are the challenges that both EFL instructors and students experience when promoting learner autonomy in B2 level preparatory classes?

2.2. Research design

A mixed method approach employing quantitative and qualitative elements was utilized in this study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashokkari & Creswell, 2007). As such, the relevant quantitative data were gathered from questionnaires, whereas, the qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Based on the purpose of the present study, the rationale for such a research design was to provide a deeper comprehension for and to triangulate quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires and with qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews.

2.3. Setting and Participants

The study was carried out at the English Preparatory School of a foundation (non-profit, private) university in Istanbul, Turkey. In this regard, the participants were 140 students enrolled at upper-Intermediate level preparatory program and 10 Turkish EFL teachers enrolled in the same program. Out of 140 student respondents, 73 were male and 67 were female. The participants whose age ranged from 18 to 20 constituted the largest group (92%), whereas, the ones over the age of 21 constituted the smallest group (7%).

As for the participating instructors, 6 out of 10 instructors had up to 5 years of total teaching experience, whereas 2 of them have 6 to 8 years, 2 of them have been involved in teaching for 9 to 11 years. Besides, all the teachers teach at the same level with exactly the same teaching workload, namely, main course (15 hours) and integrated-skills (9 hours). Moreover, 8 out of 10 teacher participants were female while 2 of them were male. In this regard, the vast majority of the participating teachers were over the age of 27, whereas, the ones whose age ranged from 30 to 35 constituted the smallest group (15%).

2.4. Data collection instruments

2.4.1. Perspectives on learner autonomy questionnaire (PLAQ)

For the purposes of this study, a questionnaire adapted from Le's (2013) was administered to the participants. The questionnaire had two versions, one for teachers and one for students. Specifically, the version for teachers investigated teachers' perceptions of their own and students' role in the classroom, their confidence in students' capacity to take some control over their learning, their suggestions for teaching and learning activities to promote learner autonomy, and lastly their perceptions of context-related difficulties. The questionnaire for teachers consisted of 4 sections and the primary purpose of this questionnaire was to be parallel the RFAQ, which was intended only for students. Section 1, 'Responsibilities', had 13 items (e.g., to what extent do you think the teacher and students are responsible for students' progress during lessons, outside class, students' interest in learning English, and students' working harder) which sought to explore teachers' views as to who had the main responsibilities in- and out-of-class learning activities. The second section of the questionnaire, 'Abilities', enquired into how confident teachers were about their students' ability to make important decisions in managing their learning, such as choosing learning activities and materials, evaluating their learning and identifying their weaknesses. Section 3, 'Autonomy and your teaching', aimed to examine the extent to which teachers were conscious of learner autonomy as teaching goal and consider it to be important for effective language learning. The final section, 'Activities', encouraged teachers to draw on their experiences and suggest teaching/learning activities that they considered contextually-suitable/feasible for use in promoting learner autonomy within the context they taught in.

2.4.2. Semi-structured interviews.

A semi-structured interview allows a researcher control over the line of questioning and participants can provide historical information (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). To complement the quantitative data, interviews were carried out with the two groups of participants. Specifically, 30 students from different B2-level classes were randomly asked about their English language learning experiences and also their perceptions about autonomous learning. In addition, they were requested to provide information vis-à-vis the types of activities, the challenges/difficulties they have with these activities, and finally, express their perceptions of teachers in terms of autonomy development. Specifically, the participating students were asked the following questions:

- What do you think is the difference between learning English in high school and in the university (i.e. preparatory program)?
- Do you think your English classes prepare you for autonomous learning? If not, should they?
- What do you think you can do to better at English?
- To be a better English learner, do you think you should take some responsibilities regarding your own learning procedure? Why? Why not?
- Do you think you always need your teacher to help you learn English? Why?

As for the teacher interviews, 5 teachers were asked to express their perceptions about learner autonomy as well as state their attitudes towards promoting autonomous learning in their classroom. Finally, they had to share their experiences and concerns regarding their own teaching profession. To go in details, the teachers were requested to answer these questions:

- What do you understand by 'learner autonomy'?
- Do you consider learner autonomy important? Why? Why not?
- Do you do anything to encourage students to become more autonomous in our outside the classroom? If yes, what exactly and do you face any challenges/difficulties in doing so?
- What do you think your most important roles are as a teacher? Please support your answer with related examples.
- In general, what do your students think are the teacher's most important roles? Can you give examples?
- Does the teaching and learning environment in Turkey help or hinder the development of autonomy? In what ways?

2.5. Data Analysis Procedures

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed accordingly. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires using Survey Monkey Audience. Specifically, the participants were given a link to the questionnaires, which were created using Survey Monkey Audience (www.surveymonkey.com/mp/audience). The findings of the questionnaires employed in this study were analyzed

using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 22, which provided well-founded and clear picture of the data obtained.

Moreover, to find out the perceptions of both students and instructors regarding teacher responsibility and to examine if there are any differences in the scores, the Mann-Whitney U non-parametric test was deployed. Also, so as to examine perceptions of instructors and students about taking responsibility for learning and developing autonomous skills thereunto, the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test was deployed on both students' and instructors' responses to the items in the questionnaire.

As for the qualitative part, the semi-structured interviews were subjected to inductive analysis. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transcriptions and the semi-structured interview forms were studied many times to analyze and categorize them under the same theme using an inductive approach to data analysis.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Findings from the PLAQ questionnaire

3.1.1. Students' and instructors' overall perceptions of learner autonomy

With an attempt to find out whether the respondents to the PLAQ (i.e., instructors and students) the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test was implemented to reveal instructors and students' views on areas of responsibility in language learning. In this regard, firstly the test results from the perceptions of the participating students regarding learner autonomy are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1.
Students' Perceptions of Learner Autonomy

Item	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Min.	Max.	Mean Rank	z	p-value	Sig.
Students' progress during lessons? (T)	140	4,24	0,783	4,00	1,00	5,00	27,96	-1,556	0,120	p>0,05
Students' progress during lessons? (S)	140	4,11	0,823	4,00	2,00	5,00	29,40			
Students' progress outside class? (T)	140	3,51	1,103	3,00	1,00	5,00	29,90	-4,398	0,000	p<0,001
Students' progress outside class? (S)	140	4,05	0,977	4,00	1,00	5,00	41,78			
Students' interest in learning English? (T)	140	4,21	0,886	4,00	1,00	5,00	31,89	-1,773	0,076	p>0,05
Students' interest in learning English? (S)	140	4,03	0,974	4,00	1,00	5,00	28,42			
Students' working harder? (T)	140	3,89	0,987	4,00	1,00	5,00	43,44	-0,277	0,782	p>0,05
Students' working harder? (S)	140	3,91	1,099	4,00	1,00	5,00	38,09			
Identifying students' weaknesses in English? (T)	140	3,95	1,055	4,00	1,00	5,00	35,40	-1,560	0,119	p>0,05
Identifying students' weaknesses in English? (S)	140	3,80	0,991	4,00	1,00	5,00	32,05			
Setting learning goals for students for their English course? (T)	140	4,07	0,934	4,00	1,00	5,00	34,07	-1,412	0,158	p>0,05
Setting learning goals for students for their English course? (S)	140	3,95	0,916	4,00	1,00	5,00	35,15			
Deciding what should be learned in English lessons? (T)	140	4,27	0,821	4,00	2,00	5,00	33,44	-4,711	0,000	p<0,001

Table 1. continued

Item	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Min.	Max.	Mean Rank	z	p-value	Sig.
Deciding what should be learned in English lessons? (S)	140	3,71	1,083	4,00	1,00	5,00	24,19			
Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons? (T)	140	4,28	0,796	4,00	2,00	5,00	36,81			
Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons? (S)	140	3,72	1,100	4,00	1,00	5,00	28,47	-4,763	0,000	p<0,001
Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class? (T)	140	4,14	0,923	4,00	1,00	5,00	37,51			
Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class? (S)	140	3,54	1,153	4,00	1,00	5,00	29,86	-5,038	0,000	p<0,001
Evaluating students' learning? (T)	140	4,21	0,820	4,00	1,00	5,00	32,91			
Evaluating students' learning? (S)	140	3,69	0,988	4,00	1,00	5,00	25,63	-4,781	0,000	p<0,001
Deciding what students learn outside class? (T)	140	3,61	1,197	4,00	1,00	5,00	26,76			
Deciding what students learn outside class? (S)	140	3,99	1,011	4,00	1,00	5,00	42,33	-3,869	0,000	p<0,001

As shown in the table above, eight out of eleven items in the questionnaire found out that the students think that it is the instructors who should take more responsibility, whereas, three items revealed that the students themselves need to take more responsibility. This being said, the item 'students' progress' outside class' occurs to be the situation for which students are more inclined to take relatively more responsibility, while they hold the instructor responsible for 'choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons'. Moreover, the mean rank of the responses to the items related to students' taking more responsibility, such as 'students' progress outside class', and 'deciding what students learn outside class', happens to be statistically greater than those of instructors' ($p<.05$). However, the mean rank of the responses to the items concerning students' holding their instructors responsible for 'deciding what should be learned in English lessons', 'choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons', 'deciding how long to spend on each activity in class', and 'evaluating students' learning' is significantly lower than those of instructors' ($p<.05$). In other words, both students and instructors concurred that instructors had main responsibility in making in-class decisions related to the content of the lesson, time allocation, and assessment of students' learning.

Furthermore, the perceptions of the participating instructors regarding the concept of learner autonomy are presented in the table below. Specifically, the table below, from the teachers' viewpoint, exhibits their perceptions on learner autonomy.

Table 2.
Instructors' Perceptions of Learner Autonomy

Item	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Min.	Max.	Mean Rank	Z	p-value	Sig.
Students' progress during lessons? (T)	10	4,10	,568	4,00	3,00	5,00	3,50	-1,897	,058	p>0,05
Students' progress during lessons? (S)	10	4,70	,483	5,00	4,00	5,00	4,08			
Students' progress outside class? (T)	10	3,00	,816	3,00	2,00	5,00	0,00	-2,754	,006	p<0,01
Students' progress outside class? (S)	10	4,90	,316	5,00	4,00	5,00	5,00			
Students' interest in learning English? (T)	10	3,60	,843	4,00	2,00	5,00	0,00	-2,456	,014	p<0,05
Students' interest in learning English? (S)	10	4,60	,516	5,00	4,00	5,00	4,00			

Table 2. continued

Item	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Min.	Max.	Mean Rank	Z	p-value	Sig.
Students' working harder? (T)	10	3,20	,919	3,00	1,00	4,00	0,00	-2,565	,010	p<0,05
Students' working harder? (S)	10	4,60	,516	5,00	4,00	5,00	4,50			
Identifying students' weaknesses in English? (T)	10	4,10	,876	4,00	2,00	5,00	2,67	-,137	,891	p>0,05
Identifying students' weaknesses in English? (S)	10	4,10	,876	4,00	3,00	5,00	3,50			
Setting learning goals for students for their English course? (T)	10	4,20	1,033	4,50	2,00	5,00	3,83	-,718	,473	p>0,05
Setting learning goals for students for their English course? (S)	10	3,80	,789	4,00	3,00	5,00	6,50			
Deciding what should be learned in English lessons? (T)	10	3,90	,876	4,00	2,00	5,00	5,31	-1,566	,117	p>0,05
Deciding what should be learned in English lessons? (S)	10	3,00	1,054	3,00	1,00	5,00	6,25			
Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons? (T)	10	3,90	,876	4,00	2,00	5,00	3,80	-,862	,389	p>0,05
Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons? (S)	10	3,50	,850	3,50	2,00	5,00	4,50			
Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class? (T)	10	4,50	,527	4,50	4,00	5,00	5,00	-2,687	,007	p<0,01
Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class? (S)	10	2,60	1,075	3,00	1,00	4,00	0,00			
Evaluating students' learning? (T)	10	4,40	,516	4,00	4,00	5,00	4,00	-2,460	,014	p<0,05
Evaluating students' learning? (S)	10	3,30	,949	3,00	2,00	5,00	0,00			
Deciding what students learn outside class? (T)	10	2,70	,483	3,00	2,00	3,00	0,00	-2,719	,007	p<0,01
Deciding what students learn outside class? (S)	10	4,50	,707	5,00	3,00	5,00	5,00			

Based on the results reported above, five out of eleven items in this section of the questionnaire revealed that the instructors themselves take the main responsibility, however; other five items showcase that they allocate most of the responsibility to the students. Yet again, both groups had the same mean score in one item. Additionally, it was seen that instructors tend to give the responsibility to the students in situations, such as 'students' progress during lessons', 'students' progress outside class', 'students' interest in learning English', 'students' working harder', and 'deciding what students learn outside class', on the other hand, they hold themselves responsible for 'setting learning goals for students for their English course', 'deciding what should be learned in English lessons', 'choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons', 'deciding how long to spend on each activity in class', and 'evaluating students' learning'.

3.1.2. Findings of the differences between the overall perceptions of students and instructors about learner autonomy

In order to find out if there are any differences between the overall perceptions of students and instructors about learner autonomy and to gather data for the sub-question of the second research question in the present study, the non-parametric Man Whitney U Test was utilized. With regards to the results, it was found out that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the responses provided by the instructors and students to the items 'deciding how long to spend on each activity in class', and 'evaluating students' learning' ($p<.05$) (see Table 1 & Table 2).

3.1.3. Findings of the students' and instructors' perceptions of students' responsibilities

As for the second research question, the mean scores and the descriptive statistics of the items in the PLAQ questionnaire, which were used to measure the extent to which students are thought to be responsible for the English language classroom activities are given in the tables below.

To begin with, the perceptions of the instructor and student participants about the responsibilities of students are presented in the table below.

Table 3.
Students' and Instructors' Perceptions of Student Responsibilities

Item	Instructor (N=10)						Student (N=140)						p-value	Sig.
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Min.	Max.	Mean	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Min.	Max.		
Students' progress during lessons?	4,70	,483	5,00	4,00	5,00	103,50	4,11	,823	4,00	2,00	5,00	73,50	,023	p<0,05
Students' progress outside class?	4,90	,316	5,00	4,00	5,00	111,55	4,05	,977	4,00	1,00	5,00	72,93	,004	p<0,01
Students' interest in learning English?	4,60	,516	5,00	4,00	5,00	98,60	4,03	,974	4,00	1,00	5,00	73,85	,064	p>0,05
Students' working harder?	4,60	,516	5,00	4,00	5,00	100,40	3,91	1,099	4,00	1,00	5,00	73,72	,048	p<0,05
Identifying students' weaknesses in English?	4,10	,876	4,00	3,00	5,00	86,25	3,80	,991	4,00	1,00	5,00	74,73	,396	p>0,05
Setting learning goals for students for their English course?	3,80	,789	4,00	3,00	5,00	66,80	3,95	,916	4,00	1,00	5,00	76,12	,490	p>0,05
Deciding what should be learned in English lessons?	3,00	1,054	3,00	1,00	5,00	48,60	3,71	1,083	4,00	1,00	5,00	77,42	,035	p<0,05
Choosing what activities to learn English in the lessons?	3,50	,850	3,50	2,00	5,00	64,60	3,72	1,100	4,00	1,00	5,00	76,28	,393	p>0,05
Deciding how long to spend on each activity in class?	2,60	1,075	3,00	1,00	4,00	45,20	3,54	1,153	4,00	1,00	5,00	77,66	,018	p<0,05
Evaluating students' learning?	3,30	,949	3,00	2,00	5,00	59,25	3,69	,988	4,00	1,00	5,00	76,66	,200	p>0,05
Deciding what students learn outside class?	4,50	,707	5,00	3,00	5,00	95,70	3,99	1,011	4,00	1,00	5,00	74,06	,107	p>0,05

In this part of the questionnaire, the instructors had greater mean scores in six out of eleven items compared to the students, whereas, the students had greater scores in 5 of the items. Specifically, while it was apparent that the instructors' responses to items, such as 'students' progress outside class', 'students' progress during lessons', 'students interest in learning English', 'students working harder', 'deciding what students learning outside class' had a mean score greater than 4.5, which in this case means that, from the instructors' viewpoint, students are mainly responsible for working harder and making decisions related to learning outside the walls of a classroom. However, their responses to the items 'deciding how long to spend on each activity in class', and 'deciding what should be learned in English lessons' had a mean score lower than 3, meaning that students have fewer responsibilities concerning in-class activities and decisions.

In line with the aforesaid findings, students' responses to the items 'students' progress during lessons', 'students' progress outside class', 'students interest in learning English', which are about in- and out-of-class learning activities, revealed that they take the main responsibility, with a mean score greater than 4.0. However, the students' perceptions of classroom decisions, as is in the item 'deciding how long to spend on each activity class',

are relatively less significant. Concerning the in- and out-of-class progress and learning, both groups agreed on the fact that students are more responsible than instructors are.

3.1.5. Findings of the differences between the perceptions of students in terms of student responsibilities

In order to investigate whether there are any differences between the participating students and instructors in their mean scores of each item in the relevant part of the questionnaire (see table 3 above), the non-parametric Mann Whitney U test was utilized. In terms of student responsibilities, the test results revealed that there are 5 significant differences. Specifically, the mean rank of the responses provided by the teachers to the items 'students' progress during lessons', 'students working harder', 'deciding what should be learned in English lessons', and 'deciding what students learn outside class' are significantly greater than those of students' ($p < .05$).

3.1.6. Findings of the challenges that the students and instructors experience in promoting learner autonomy in B2 level English preparatory classes

To gather in-depth information regarding the perceptions of the students and the instructors about the concept of learner autonomy and the challenges that they face when trying to develop and sustain such autonomy and to answer the last research question of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted. In this part, firstly, the findings of the interviews administered to the students and then the findings of the instructor interview are presented.

3.1.7. Findings of students' interviews

The findings of the transcribed interviews were analyzed under five main categories, namely, factors affecting English-learning experiences, the impact of English classes on the development of autonomous skills, perceptions of instructors' responsibility, teachers' control, and lastly creating opportunities for oneself.

3.1.8. Factors affecting English learning experience

This theme is mainly concerned with students' general motivation in learning English. Nevertheless, the topics categorized into this theme are examples of what students found most and least motivating in their language learning experiences. Specifically speaking, this theme provides an insight into students' learning preferences and ways to enhance their motivation in learning English, comparing the past with the present. The following excerpt supports this finding:

- 4- [...] *Back in high school, most of the teachers were more focused on getting us students to prepare in a better way for the university entrance exam, which is the reason why the English lessons were paid the least attention. (S1, Interview Data, 13.03.2018)*

Based on these findings, it is obvious that there are different factors motivating students, either intrinsically or externally, in their language learner experiences. However, it might as well be concluded that, especially when compared to their high-school years, students' past habits regarding their language learning process was formed in a bad manner, as they were not made aware of the importance of the English language. Moreover, it is evident from the above given statements that students can be motivated by learning tasks that require them to work together and stretch their level to a certain extent.

Perceptions of instructors' responsibilities. The findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews with the students revealed that they value the presence of instructors and expect them to play a significant role in their learning process. In addition, similar to the findings provided by the quantitative data, the fact that this is one of the most mentioned topics might mean that the respondent students are teacher-dependent as they seem to rely on the instructors to facilitate their learning. In this regard, the responsibilities of instructors as perceived by the students cover a broad spectrum, which range from providing guidance to students to understanding their needs. The following extract illustrates the findings regarding the aforementioned situation:

- 5- [...] *Until after I make sure that I have enough confidence in my own abilities of learning English by myself, I always want to be guided by a teacher as I will have a clearer idea of the way to achieve my goals than trying to work on it all by myself. (S14, Interview Data, 13.03.2018)*

According to this point, it can be concluded the vast majority of the participants are teacher – dependent and they all stated that the least an instructor can do is to provide guidance, if not every time. Amongst the responsibilities that the students think their instructors should take is providing guidance – the most stated one, which might as well mean that no matter how independent the students think they should be regarding their learning processes at tertiary level, they still need their instructors to help them make this come true.

Creating opportunities for oneself. In line with instructors' control, some students showed their willingness to share the responsibilities in creating for practicing English. Specifically, the vast majority of the participating students stated that there are various activities that can help them practice the target language on their own. This finding is supported by the excerpt below:

- 6- [...] ... to be a better English learner, there are various activities we can make use of, such as reading and writing more, watching TV series with English subtitles, etc. Such activities would enable us students to get better at what we are trying to achieve. (S22, Interview Data, 13.03.2018)

To wrap up, the obtained results revealed that some students are aware of the importance of self-studying and taking responsibilities, which can also conclude that these students can be believed to be ready to develop autonomous skills.

3.1.9. Findings of instructors' interview.

The findings obtained from the instructors' interviews were analyzed under five main themes, which are instructors' understanding of learner autonomy, instructors' practice in promoting learner autonomy, instructors' views of their roles and responsibilities, instructors' perceptions of students' expectations and ability, and lastly instructors' view of learner autonomy in Turkey.

Instructors' understanding of learner autonomy. When the respondent instructors were asked what they perceived of learner autonomy, the most frequently occurring finding was that of the qualities students should possess to develop autonomous skills. The following comment supports this finding:

- 7- [...] I believe learner autonomy occurs when learning is directed by learners either independently or through teamwork. Learners have a variety of choices in terms of time, location, pace and resources when they learn in an autonomous way. (T1, Interview Data, 14.03.2018)

In brief, it is apparent that the majority of the instructors agreed that the students are to take the main responsibility in terms of developing autonomous behaviors in class. They build even more up on what they have developed which helps them become more responsible for their learning.

Instructors' practice in promoting learner autonomy. This theme is mainly concerned with the perceptions of the participating instructors regarding their role in promoting and fostering learner autonomy. In this regard, when asked whether they thought their teaching encouraged learner autonomy amongst students, the instructors asserted their practice supported learner autonomy because they believed they 'show' students how to learn in their teaching practices. Considering this issue, one of the instructors said:

- 8- [...] I generally encourage my students to make the most of the learning management system that we use in our institution. Thanks to the variety of the activities on this LMS, learners are guided to complete the activities at their own pace. As online learning is on the rise, students also enjoy benefiting from such materials and this contributes to their independent learning. (T2, Interview Data, 14.03.2018)

As can clearly be seen from this statement, the instructors are aware of the fact that students need more freedom as to 'discovering' their own path concerning autonomous skills and behaviors. Moreover, in order to achieve the desired goal of autonomous learning, some methods and techniques can be used to promote learner autonomy in a classroom setting. However, taking the views of the instructors into consideration, it might as well be concluded that a certain level of teacher control might be preferable for both students and instructors to develop the self-study habit and raise awareness about independent learning for students before asking them to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

4.DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was not only to look into perceptions of both instructors and learners at tertiary level regarding learner autonomy per se, but also to investigate the promotion of learner autonomy at tertiary level, i.e. if it is promoted at all and/or if autonomy is somehow sustained within the same context. Specifically, the present study attempted to provide insights into the promotion of learner autonomy in a preparatory program of a private (non-profit) university in addition to the perception of both the instructors and the students. In this regard, the relevant data were collected both qualitatively and quantitatively, and a mixed method research design was adopted for analysis.

First and foremost, as per differences between the student and instructor respondents' perceptions of learner autonomy, the results reported that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean score of the responses provided by the instructors and students to two items, namely, 'deciding how long to spend on each activity in

class', and 'evaluating students' learning'. Based on this finding, it might be argued that students happen to be teacher-dependent when it comes to in-class decision-making procedures, which echoes the findings of a study conducted by Koçak (2003) who concluded that students still considered their teachers as more responsible for their learning process even though they used some metacognitive strategies such as self-monitoring, self-instruction, and self-evaluation. To this end, given the aforementioned argument, it might be claimed that the reason why there are some differences between the perceptions of the students and instructors would have to do with some context-related issues. Specifically, students considering their teachers as responsible for in-class activities and learning progress might just as well mean that what they go through in their studies presumably throughout their whole student lives leads to a situation where teachers inevitably find it difficult to promote learner autonomy, thus; hindering and preventing students from developing autonomy as they also get used to the idea of an instructor being around them to help them with their studies.

When it comes down to the perceptions of the participating students and instructors as regards student responsibilities, it was seen that there were 5 significant differences. Specifically, the mean rank of the responses provided by the instructors to the items 'students' progress during lesson', 'students working harder', 'deciding what should be learned in English lesson', and deciding what students learn outside class' are significantly greater than those of students'. Given the aforementioned differences, it might be claimed that there were various situations where the participants allocated different levels of responsibility to their own group and to the other. This argument is in line with a study by Hedge, (2000) who claims that responsible learners are those who favor the idea that their own efforts are of great importance to be able to progress in learning. In other words, responsible learners monitor their own learning progress and try to use available opportunities to their advantage. In parallel, in order for a successful promotion of learner autonomy to take place, Lamb and Reinders (2008) suggests that 'the teacher needs to reflect on his/her own autonomous learning behavior and consider its implications for his/her learners' learning'' (p.279), which means the teacher might help his/her learners develop autonomous skills and behaviors by acting this way. Therefore, instructors are to be introduced to the concept of learner autonomy at an early stage of their career, i.e. possibly when they go through their practicum period or even earlier, so that they can actually take the initiative to act upon their learners. In this way, they can also develop a sense of being on their own and be autonomous. As such, there are different situations where students and instructors consider each other more or less responsible for learning/teaching process. The primary reason why, for example, students consider their instructors more responsible for in-class activities would be related to students' backgrounds, viz., students' learning experiences from lower levels might have created a habit of teacher dependence and this argument substantiates other studies into learner autonomy (Benson, 2006; Sinclair, 2000; Smith, 2008).

In the hopes of finding out if there were any challenges pertaining to the promotion of learner autonomy, the relevant findings based on the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the students and instructors indicate that there are some challenges regarding the promotion of learner autonomy at tertiary level in English preparatory classes. According to the results, the main challenges were reported to be related to learners, instructors, and educational system in general though institute related factors were mostly cited by the participating instructors. Specifically speaking, one of the findings of this study was that institutions and policy makers are the main challenges for instructors to help learners become autonomous, unearthing that even though teachers are quite eager to help students develop their autonomous behaviors in language learning, their efforts are restricted mostly by institutional constraints, lack of teacher training programs, and educational policies. This finding is in line with a body of related studies (Balçıklı, 2010; Balçıklı & Çakır; 2012, Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012) which claim that there are some constraining factors involved in the formal learning atmosphere which might be viewed as hindrances to the development of learner autonomy. The results also showed that there are some institution related factors which hinder the promotion of learner autonomy. One possible reason for institution-related challenges would be that education system is centralized and institutions make all the decisions about different components of a curriculum such as types of materials used and assessment system, which is in line with Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), who claimed that institutions force the teachers to follow their own policies and teach in line with the guidelines which were developed for teachers. Another challenge related to the promotion of learner autonomy was seen to be related to learners themselves. The participating teachers believed that they found it quite challenging to promote learner autonomy because students were not motivated, they were teacher-dependent. As the learners were trained to develop their own language proficiency through exposure to language outside EFL classrooms, it might be asserted that it is rather difficult for teachers to develop learner autonomy in crowded EFL classrooms which consist of heterogeneous students. These findings are in line with the findings of some other related studies (e.g. Benson, 2011; Balçıklı, 2010).

Moreover, as for the challenges that students might experience when trying to promote learner autonomy, one of the most widely stated challenges was that of not being aware of the "whats" and "hows" of developing autonomy. Specifically speaking, based on the findings of the last research question, it was quite apparent that the vast majority of the students were teacher – dependent, and they needed their teachers to decide what they need to do

both in and out of class, which supports a study carried out Phan (2012) who suggested that teachers need to be introduced to the concept of LA in order to promote their students' autonomous behaviors and skills.

Overall, it can be argued that when teachers exhibit autonomous behaviors, they can help their students behave autonomously in the learning environment (Benson, 2007; Little, 1995). In this regard, students whose autonomy is supported end up developing with the effect and support of social milieu. Specifically talking and doubtlessly, students need to be supported and encouraged in the classroom setting and the person who should provide such support is the teacher. To achieve this, teachers in constructivist learning environments need to have the responsibility for supporting their learners. Therefore, they need to demonstrate autonomous behaviors of their own.

However, the study has some limitations that need to be pointed out. First of all, the present study is limited in its scope since it mainly focused on a particular group of students and teachers. Conducting the study with a larger population in different contexts would have to yield more reliable results, which, accordingly, could be generalized to different groups and achieve higher external validity. This limitation, though, was minimized by using triangulation in data collection tools. Furthermore, mainly due to time constraints in the school programme and schedule, there was no treatment nor intervention in the present study to be better able to find out if there was any kind of different in the results depending on the treatment that different groups of students receive as regards developing autonomous skills. Finally, the present study was carried out with the participating of only English language learners at upper-intermediate level and EFL teachers teaching at the same level. Obtaining data from different proficiency levels would provide comparative results, which could improve the external validity.

REFERENCES

- Alibakhshi, G. (2015). Challenges in promoting EFL learners' autonomy: Iranian EFL teachers' perspectives. *Issues in Language Teaching (ILT)*, 4(1), 79-98. Retrieved from http://ilt.atu.ac.ir/article_3464_5f97acf1c82149f4bbcd3f411836d02e.pdf
- Allford, D., & Pachler, N. (2007). *Language, autonomy and the new learning environments*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Balcikanli, C. (2010). Learner autonomy in language learning: Student teachers' beliefs. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, 35(1), 90.
- Benson, P. (1997). The philosophy and politics of learner autonomy. In P. Benson, & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp.18-34). London: Longman.
- Benson, P., & Voller, P. (Eds.). (1997). *Autonomy and independence in language learning*. London: Longman.
- Benson, P. (2006). Autonomy in language teaching and learning. *Language Teaching*, 40, 21-40. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261444806003958>
- Benson, P. (2011). *Teaching and researching: Autonomy*. London: Longman.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Ally & Bacon: Needham Heights, MA.
- Broady, E., & K, Marie-Madeleine. (Eds.). (1996). *Promoting learner autonomy in university language teaching*. London: Middlesex University Printing Services.
- Creswell, John W. 2013. *Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Washington DC: Sage.
- Cotterall, S. (1995). Developing a course strategy for learner autonomy. *ELT Journal*, 49(3), 219-227. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/49.3.219>
- Gardner, D., & Miller, L. (2002). *Establishing self-access: From theory to practice*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press
- Gremmo, M-J., & Riley, P. (1995). Autonomy, self-direction and self-access in language teaching and learning: The history of an idea. *System*, 23(2), 151-164. doi: 0346-251X(95)00002-X
- Han, L. (2014). Teacher's role in developing learner autonomy: A Literature review. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 1(2), 21-27. doi: 10.5430/ijelt.v1n2p21
- Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. Oxford: OUP.
- Holden, B., & Usuki, M. (1999). Learner autonomy in language learning: A preliminary investigation. *Bulletin of Hokuriku University*, 23, 191-203.
- Holec, H., 1981: *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon. (First published 1979, Strasbourg: Council of Europe).
- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), 14-26. 65.
- Joshi, K.R. (2011). Learner perception and teacher beliefs about learner autonomy in language learning. *Journal of NELTA*, 16, 13-29.
- Kessler, G. (2009). Student-initiated attention to form in wiki-based collaborative writing. *Language Learning & Technology*, 13(1), 79-95.
- Knaldre, H. (2015). *A qualitative document analysis of two Norwegian national curricula* (Master's thesis). University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway.
- Knowles, M. (1975). *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*. Chicago: Association Press.
- Lamb, T. & Reinders, H. (Eds.). (2008). *Learner and teacher autonomy: Concepts, realities, and responses*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Le, Quynh X. (2013). *Fostering learner autonomy in language learning in tertiary education: An intervention study of university students in Hochiminh City, Vietnam* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Little, D. (1995). Learning as dialogue: The dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy. *System*, 23(2), 175-181.
- Little, D. (2000). *We're all in it together: Exploring the interdependence of teacher and learner autonomy*. Paper presented at Autonomy 2000, University of Helsinki Language Centre, 7-9.
- Littlewood, W. (1996). Autonomy: an anatomy and a framework. *System*, 24(4), 427-435.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Phan, T. T. T. (2012). Teacher autonomy and learner autonomy: An East Asian's perspective. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*. 2(6), 468-471.

- Seeman, T., & Tavares, C. (2000). Getting the learners involved in their own learning - how to get started. In D. Little, L. Dam, & J. Timmer (Eds.). *Focus on Learning Rather than Teaching: Why and How? Papers from the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) Conference (Krakow, Poland, May 14-16, 1998)* (pp. 59-70). Dublin: Centre for Language and Communication Studies.
- Shahsavari, S. (2014). Efficiency, feasibility and desirability of learner autonomy based on learners' and teachers' point of views. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(2), 271-280. doi:10.4304/tpls.4.2.271-280
- Smith, R. C. (2008). Learner autonomy. *ELT Journal*, 62(4), 395-397.
- Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. W. (2007). Editorial: The new era of mixed methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 3-7.
- Turloiu, A., & Stefánsdóttir, S. (2011). *Learner autonomy theoretical and practical information for language teachers*. Reykjavik: University of Iceland.

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

1. Giriş

Yabancı Dil Öğretimi (YDÖ) alanında öğretmen merkezlikten öğrenci merkezliğe doğru eksen değiştirmeyi sağlayan reform hareketleriyle birlikte, öğrenci özerkliği (bundan sonra ÖÖ olarak anılacaktır) çok daha fazla dikkat çekmeye ve alanın uzmanlarıyla yabancı dil öğretmenleri arasında popülerlik kazanmaya başladı (örn; Little, 1995; Broady & Kenning, 1996; Benson, 1997; Smith, 2003; Allford & Pachler, 2007). Yabancı Dil Öğretimi (YDÖ) alanında değişen görüşlerin sonucu olarak, dil eğitimi sürecinde öğrenci merkezli sınıf ortamları yaratarak; öğrencilerin ihtiyaçları, ilgileri ve öğrenme tarzlarına eğilim önem kazanmıştır.

Öğrenci merkezli dil öğrenme sınıflarının önemi ile birlikte, öğretmenlerin dil öğrenen öğrencilerine özerkliklerini geliştirme konusunda yardımcı olmaları temel bir husustur. Öğretmenlerin “yeni öğrenme yolları bulacak kadar özgür düşünceli olma” veya “özerk bir şekilde öğrenme taleplerini tecrübe etmiş olma” anlamında özerk olmaları gerekir (Lamb & Reinders, 2008). Bir başka deyişle, öğrenci özerkliğinin öğretmenin özerkliğine bağlı olarak geliştiği; bir diğer deyişle bu iki özerklik türünün ayırt edilemeyecek kadar birbiri içine geçtiğidir (Little, 2000). Benson (2011) bu bağlamda “öğrenci özerkliğini artırmak üzere bizzat öğretmenlerin kendi eğitim yaklaşımlarında bir nebze de olsa özerklik sergilemeleri gerektiğine” işaret etmiştir ki bunun “öğretmenlerin öğrencilerinin özerklik becerilerini artırmak için gereksinim duydukları kabiliyet olarak görülebileceğinin” de altını çizmektedir (s. 185).

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı da araştırmaya katılan öğrencilerle öğretmenlerin öğrenci özerkliği algısındaki farklılıkları bulup karşılaştırmaktır. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda öğrenci özerkliği kavramının, öğrencinin sorumlulukları açısından, öğrenciler ve öğretmenler tarafından nasıl algılandığını da araştırmaktadır.

Bu nedenle, bu çalışma aşağıdaki araştırma sorularını ele almaktadır:

- 1- Öğrencilerin ve öğretmenin öğrenci özerkliğiyle ilgili genel algılarında anlamlı farklar var mıdır?
- 2- Öğrenciler ve öğretmenlerin öğrencinin sorumluluklarına ilişkin algıları arasında anlamlı farklar var mıdır?
- 3- B2 düzeyindeki hazırlık sınıflarında öğrenci özerkliğini artırırken hem YDÖ öğretmenlerinin hem de öğrencilerinin karşılaştığı zorluklar nelerdir?

2. Yöntem

Bu çalışmada hem niceliksel hem de niteliksel unsurlardan yararlanan karma bir yöntem kullanılmıştır (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashokkari & Creswell, 2007). Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden nitel veriler toplanırken, anketlerden de nicel veri toplanmıştır.

2.1 Örneklem ve Çalışma Grubu

Çalışma, İstanbul’da (Türkiye) yer alan bir vakıf üniversitesinin (kâr amacı gütmeyen özel üniversite) İngilizce Hazırlık Okulu’nda yürütülmüştür. Katılımcılar, hazırlık programındaki seviyelerden ortanın üstünde (upper-intermediate) yer alan 140 öğrenci ve aynı program dahilinde ders veren 10 tane Türk İngilizce öğretmeni idi. 140 katılımcı öğrenciden, 73’ü erkek 67’si kadındı. 21 yaş üstündeki öğrenciler sayıca en küçük grubu oluştururken (%7), 18-20 yaş arasındaki katılımcılar en geniş gruptu (%92).

Katılımcı öğretmenlere gelince, 10 öğretmenden 6’sının 5 yıla kadar öğretmenlik tecrübesi vardı; 2 tanesinin tecrübesi 6 ila 8 yıldır, diğer ikisi de 9 ila 11 yıldır bu işin içindeydi. Bunların yanı sıra bütün öğretmenler aynı iş yüküne sahipti; yani 15 saat ana ders 9 saat de dil becerileri dersleri veriyorlardı. Ayrıca, 10 öğretmenden 2’si erkek, 8’i kadındı. Katılımcı öğrencilerin büyük çoğunluğu 27 yaşın üstündeydi ve 30 ila 35 yaşındaki öğretmenler katılımcılar içindeki en küçük grubu oluşturuyorlardı (%15).

3. Bulgular, Tartışma ve Sonuç

Anket sorularına cevap veren katılımcıların, dil öğreniminde sorumluluk alanlarıyla ilgili görüşlerini ortaya çıkarmak üzere Wilcoxon Eşleştirilmiş Diziler testi uygulanmıştır. Soru listesinde yer alan 11 maddeden üçü öğrencilerin daha fazla sorumluluk alması gerektiğini ortaya koyarken, sekizi öğrencilerin öğretmenlerin daha fazla sorumluluk alması gerektiğini düşündüğünü bulgulamıştır. ($p < .05$). Fakat öğrencilerin öğretmenlerini “İngilizce derslerinde ne öğrenilmesi gerektiğine karar verilmesi”, “derslerde İngilizce öğrenmek için hangi faaliyetlerin seçileceği”, “sınıftaki her faaliyete ne kadar vakit harcanacağı” ve “öğrencilerin öğrenme durumunun değerlendirilmesi” hususlarından sorumlu tutmasıyla ilgili sorulara verilen cevapların sıra ortalaması öğretmenlerin öğrencileri bu konularda sorumlu tutmakla ilgili cevaplarının sıra ortalamasından anlamlı ölçüde düşüktür ($p < .05$). Bir başka deyişle, hem öğrenciler hem de öğretmenler dersin içeriği, vaktin değerlendirilmesi

ve öğrencilerin öğrenme durumlarının sınanmasıyla ilgili sınıf içi kararları verme hususunda esas sorumluluğun öğretmenlerde olduğunda hemfikirdirler.

Öğrencilerin ve öğretmenlerin öğrenci özerkliğiyle ilgili genel algıları arasında herhangi bir fark olup olmadığını bulmak için, parametrik olmayan Man Whitney U testi kullanılmıştır. Sonuçlara bakılırsa, “sınıfta yapılan her faaliyete ne kadar zaman harcanacağına karar verilmesi” ve “öğrencilerin öğrenme durumunun değerlendirilmesi” sorularına istatistikî olarak anlamlı bir fark olduğu bulunmuştur. ($p < .05$)

Bunun yanı sıra öğrencilerin İngilizce sınıftaki faaliyetlerden ne ölçüde sorumlu olduklarının düşünüldüğünün ölçülmesi amacıyla, öğrenciler soruların beşinde öğretmenlerden daha yüksek skorlar yaparken, öğretmenlere öğrencilere kıyasla on bir sorunun altısında daha yüksek ortalamaya sahip olmuşlardır. Aynı zamanda, öğrencilerin sınıf içindeki faaliyet ve kararlara ilişkin daha az sorumluluğa sahip olduklarını düşündükleri görülmüştür.

Yukarıda bahsedilen bulgular doğrultusunda, sınıf içinde ve dışındaki öğrenme faaliyetleriyle ilgili “öğrencilerin derslerde kaydettiği ilerleme”, “öğrencilerin sınıf dışında kaydettiği ilerleme”, “öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenmeye ilgisi” gibi sorular 4.0’ın fazla ortalama bir skorla öğrencilerin asıl sorumluluğu aldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Fakat “sınıfta yapılan her faaliyete ne kadar vakit ayrılacağına karar verilmesi” maddesinde olduğu gibi öğrencilerin sınıf içi kararlara dair algıları nispeten daha az anlamlıdır. Sınıf içi ve dışındaki ilerleme ve öğrenmeyle ilgili olarak, her iki grup da öğrencilerin öğretmenlerden daha fazla sorumluluğu olduğu konusunda hemfikirdir. Çalışmada, öğretmenler ve öğrencilerin her bir sorunun ortalama skorlarında fark olup olmadığını bulmak için, parametrik olmayan Mann Whitney U testi kullanılmıştır. Öğrenci sorumlulukları bağlamında, test sonuçları 5 önemli farklılık olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. ($p < .05$).

Bunların dışında, öğrenci ve öğretmenlerin öğrenci özerkliği kavramı hakkındaki algılarına ve bu özerkliği geliştirip sürdürmeye çalışırken karşılaştıkları zorluklara ilişkin derinlemesine bilgi edinmek için, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yürütülmüştür. Bu görüşmeler sonucunda, öğrencilerin dil öğrenimi görürken kendiliğinden ya da dışarıdan motive eden farklı faktörler olduğu açıktır. Ayrıca, bulgular öğrencilerin öğretmenlerin varlığına değer verdiklerini ve onlardan öğrenme sürecinde önemli bir rol oynamalarını beklediklerini göstermiştir. Öğrencilerin, öğretmenlerinin alması gerektiğini düşündükleri sorumlulukları arasında en fazla söylenen mentörlük yapmaktır. Bazı öğrenciler, öğretmenlerin kontrolü doğrultusunda, İngilizce pratiği yapmak için fırsat yaratma konusunda sorumluluk paylaşımına istekli olduklarını gösterdiler. Bu bulguların yanı sıra, öğretmenlerle görüşmelerden elde edilen bulgular beş ana tema altında analiz edilmiştir; bu temalar, öğretmenlerin öğrenci özerkliğine dair görüşleri, öğretmenlerin öğrenci özerkliğini artırmaya yönelik uygulamaları, öğretmenlerin kendi rol ve sorumluluklarına ilişkin görüşleri, öğretmenlerin öğrencilerin beklenti ve kabiliyetine ilişkin algıları ve son olarak öğretmenlerin Türkiye’de öğrenci özerkliğine dair görüşü şeklinde sıralanabilir.

Katılımcı öğretmenlere öğrenci özerkliğinden ne anladıkları sorulduğunda, öğretmenlerin büyük çoğunluğunun, özerk davranışları geliştirmek ve sonrasında geliştirdikleri beceriler üzerine daha fazlasını inşa etmek üzere esas sorumluluğu öğrencilerin alması gerektiğini düşündükleri açıktır. Öğretmenlere, kendi öğretilerinin öğrenciler arasında özerkliği artırıp artırmadığı sorulduğunda, kendi uygulamalarının öğrenci özerkliğini desteklediğini zira öğretiler pratikleri sayesinde öğrencilere nasıl öğreneceklerini “gösterdiklerini” iddia etmişlerdir. Öğretmenler öğrencilerin özerklik becerileri ve davranışlarıyla alakalı olarak kendi yollarını “bulmak” üzere daha fazla özgürlüğe ihtiyaç duydukları gerçeğinden haberdardır. Dahası, arzu edilen özerk öğrenme hedefine ulaşmak için, sınıf ortamındaki özerk öğrenmeyi artırmak üzere kullanılacak bazı yöntem ve teknikler de mevcuttur. Fakat öğretmenlerin görüşlerini dikkate alınca, belli seviyede öğretmen denetiminin hem öğrenciler hem de öğretmenler için kendi başına çalışma alışkanlığını geliştirme ve öğrencilerden kendi öğrenme süreçleriyle ilgili daha çok sorumluluk almalarını istemeden önce bağımsız öğrenmeyle ilgili farkındalığı artırma açısından tercih edilebilir olabileceği sonucuna varılabilir.

Elde edilen bulgular ışığında, öğrencilerin sınıf içi karar prosedürlerine gelince öğretmene bağımlı oldukları öne sürülebilir. Bu durum da öğrencilerin, kendilerini gözleme, eğitime ve değerlendirme gibi üst-bilişsel stratejiler kullanmaları halinde bile, öğrenme süreçlerinde öğretmenlerini daha fazla sorumlu tuttıkları sonucuna varan Koçak’ın çalışmasından (2003) çıkan sonuçları hatırlatmaktadır. Yani, şunu iddia edebiliriz ki öğrencilerle öğretmenlerin algıları arasında niçin farklılık olduğu sorusunun cevabının bağlamla ilişkili konularla bir ilgisi olduğu kesindir. Özel olarak da öğrencilerin sınıf içi faaliyetlerden ve öğrenme süreçlerinden öğretmenlerini sorumlu görüyor olmalarının sebebi bugüne kadar alışık oldukları öğretmen profili ile direkt ilişkili olabilir. İkinci araştırma sorusu da özel olarak, katılımcı öğrenci ve öğretmenlerin öğrenci sorumluluklarına dair algılarını bulmayı hedeflemiştir ve belirli farklılıklar olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu farklılıkları göz önünde bulundurunca, katılımcıların kendi gruplarına ve dış gruba farklı düzeylerde sorumluluk atfettiği çeşitli durumlar olduğu iddia edilebilir. Bunun yanı sıra, son araştırma sorusu katılımcıların öğrenci özerkliğini artırırken yaşadığı zorlukları ele almaktadır ve bulgular belirli zorluklar olduğu tespit etmiştir. Sonuçlara göre, başlıca zorluklar öğrenciler, öğretmenler ve genel anlamda eğitim sistemiyle ilgilidir fakat kurumla ilgili faktörler de katılımcı öğretmenler

tarafından fazlasıyla belirtilmiştir. Bu bulgu, resmî öğrenim ortamına karışan ve öğrenci özerkliğinin gelişimi önündeki engeller oluşturabilecek bazı kısıtlayıcı faktörler olduğunu iddia eden bir grup ilişkili çalışmayla aynı doğrultudadır (Balçıkınlı, 2010; Balçıkınlı & Çakır; 2012, Borg & El-Busaidi, 2012. Öğrenci özerkliğinin artırılmasıyla ilgili bir başka zorluğun bizzat öğrencilerle ilgili olduğu görülmüştür. Katılımcı öğretmenler, öğrenciler motive olmadığı ve öğretmen bağımlısı oldukları için öğrenci özerkliğini geliştirmenin çok zorlayıcı olduğunu düşünmektedir. Bunların ötesinde, öğrenci özerkliğini artırmaya çalışırken öğrencilerin de yaşadığı zorluklar olduğu görülmüştür. Öğrencilerin büyük çoğunluğunun öğretmene bağımlı olduğu ve hem sınıf içinde hem de dışında ne yapacaklarına karar vermek için öğretmenlerine ihtiyaç duyduğu oldukça açıktır. Bu da zaten kendi öğrencilerinin özerk davranış ve becerilerini artırmak üzere öğretmenlerin ÖÖ (öğrenci özerkliği) kavramıyla tanıştırılması gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Bu çalışma, öğretmen ve öğrencilerin öğrenci özerkliğine dair algılarını araştırarak literatüre katkı sağlamaktadır. Ortaya çıkan sonuçlar, öğretmen ve öğrenci katılımcıların öğrenci özerkliği kavramını farklı şekilde algıladığına işaret etmektedir. Öğrencilerin asıl sorumluluğun öğretmende olması gerektiğini düşündüğü durumlar mevcuttur, fakat tam tersi yani öğretmenlerin öğrencilerin kendi kendilerine inisiyatif alması gerektiğini düşündüğü durumlar da söz konusudur. Yine de bulgular gerekli koşullar sağlandığı ve dil öğrenimi ve öğretiminde öğrenci özerkliğinin önemi anlatıldığı takdirde hem öğretmen hem de öğrencilerin öğrenci özerkliğini artırma ve geliştirmeye meyilli olduklarını ortaya koymuştur. Bunların yanı sıra, öğrenci özerkliğine yönelik çalışmaların bazı zorluk ve sorunlardan ötürü kısıtlandığı da oldukça açıktır. Özellikle, sınav odaklı eğitim anlayışı öğrenci özerkliğini artırmaya çabalarken hem öğretmene hem de öğrenciye önemli ölçüde zorluk yaşatmaktadır