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EFL instructors' perception and practices on learner autonomy in some Turkish universities

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Abstract

Learner autonomy has become a central ability to develop in learners for a fruitful language learning/teaching process in EFL classes. Particularly, in this world of knowledge, teaching learners how to access resources and how to use them for their learning needs has become increasingly important. Teachers' perception on learner autonomy is crucial because their beliefs about independent learning either intentionally or unintentionally impede the development of learner autonomy. The aim of this study is to investigate EFL Instructors' perceptions and practices on learner autonomy at the schools of foreign languages in nine geographically diverse public Turkish universities. The study was conducted with 96 EFL instructors, and the data were collected through a questionnaire and interviews. The findings of this study revealed that the instructors had highly positive views on different aspects of learner autonomy. It was also found out that they did not perceive it as much feasible as they perceived it desirable.

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Keywords: Learner autonomy; teacher perception; English as a Foreign Language (EFL); Foreign Language Teaching.

1. Introduction

Learner autonomy is defined as the ability to take charge of one's own learning (Holec, 1981). Autonomous learners are accepted to be capable of putting realistic and reachable learning goals, selecting appropriate methods and techniques to be adopted, monitoring their own learning process, and assessing the progress of their own learning (Benson, 2001; Dam 1995; Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Scharle & Szabo, 2000; Wenden 1991) with the help of teachers to a certain degree. Allwright (1984) states that when learner autonomy is considered and teaching is arranged accordingly, lessons turn out to be a joint endeavour, a joint production of all participants in a classroom. For this reason, autonomy is a social process and a mutual endeavour with all parties included. Willis (2011) supports this view by asserting that when learning is perceived as a shared responsibility of the teacher and students, autonomy is more likely to be achieved in that classroom setting.

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In developing learner autonomy, the role of teachers is substantial. Since autonomy is not innate but must be taught with formal education later on, learners need much guidance which will be enabled by teachers (Little, 1995; Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2012; Khajavi & Abbasian, 2013). A lot of researchers in the field (Al Asmari, 2013; Barillaro, 2011; Benson, 2010; Borg, 2009; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Palfreyman, 2003; Shahsavari, 2014) claim that little has been done in the field of teacher perception and beliefs on learner autonomy. They further claim that there is a gap between theoretical discussions of learner autonomy and perception and practices of teachers and further go on that although there is a large body of research carried out for learner beliefs on learner autonomy, little has been done so far to investigate what teachers' beliefs actually are. Without such insight into teachers' perceptions, the reasons for classroom practices may not be comprehended fully. Teachers play a vital role in the development of learner autonomy, and it is the only way to understand what kind of autonomy practices are implemented in classrooms. In addition, their teaching practices are underpinned by teacher perceptions and their practices resulting from these perceptions further nurture or hinder their thoughts on learner autonomy. Thus, addressing their perceptions and practices is particularly crucial. Therefore this study focuses on what learner autonomy means to EFL Instructors and what kind of practices they implement to develop it in nine different state universities in Turkey.

1.1. Learner Autonomy in Language Education

According to the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (2000), autonomy is one of the three principal needs along with competence and relatedness, and it is crucial for healthy psychological functioning. Like it is in psychology, it is a requirement for healthy functioning in educational settings, and it is not just a behavior but a fundamental sense of freedom, thus the ownership of the responsibility in educational context.

A sense of being in control of one's own destiny (O'Donnell, 2013) is another explanation of autonomy. Little (1995) bases learner autonomy as the acceptance of responsibility for one's own learning and rests learner autonomy in the notion of "cognitive universal" (Little, 2012: 13). He further advocates that autonomy is the psychological relation of the learners to the process and learning. According to Littlewood (1999), responsibility is a major dimension of learner autonomy.

In parallel with researchers, Candy (1991) has also indicated that autonomy is a process, not a product and one does not become fully autonomous, just works towards it. From this statement, it can be inferred that the life-long struggle for autonomy will never end and it is process-oriented in nature, not product-oriented. Zou (2011) further states that students will never reach the same of level autonomy; yet it is crucial to help them gain insights into learner autonomy, reflect on their learning experiences, share these experiences and reflections with others and lastly understand the factors influencing all these processes.

Kohonen (2012) defines autonomy development as a whole person approach in which learners are considered committed people with individual identities. Autonomy and to be active in one's learning go hand in hand; thus, learner autonomy means active learners who feel themselves responsible, capable and in charge of their own learning. Consequently, this creates learners who share the responsibility of learning and reject being passive learners waiting to be filled with knowledge by the teachers. Such learners, as it is expected, learn not only in class but out of class as well with the awareness of the fact that learning happens everywhere, and it is just not limited with the classroom environment. From this point of view, it can be concluded that people possess abilities and attitudes toward autonomy and can develop them to different degrees.

Feelings of autonomy result in many positive outcomes like decreased susceptibility to negative peer influences, increased popularity among peers and increased engagement with school and academics (O'Donnell, Chang & Miller, 2013). It is important to examine how learners construct the ideas on autonomy and learning as these ideas in turn influence the learning results. Here, attribution styles can be emphasized as attributions can be positive or negative, and the kind of attribution a learner has on his/her learning experience has a certain effect on the learning result. Negative attributions may lead to learned helplessness which leads to further failures while positive attributions result in increased success and autonomy of learners. So, unfortunately, a high sense of learner autonomy may not lead to success if the learner has a style of negative explanation for learning events in his/her life. The opposite is also possible in that positive attributions without autonomy and personal effort may not result in success either. White (2003) argues that learner autonomy is developed through collaborative control of learning experiences. Moreover, learners' responsibility for and control of the learning process needs to be promoted by sustained collaboration. In Furnborough's study (2012), it has been found out that lower confidence in language learners results in a greater dependence on teacher support, which indicates that in order to feel autonomous and more in control of their learning, students need a certain level of success. She further claims that while learner autonomy depends on individual decision-making of learners, it is also crucial for these decisions to be taken on an informed basis, and feelings as well as reasons are taken into account. Erten and Burden (2014) state that academic self-concept and academic achievement are both linked to and influence each other, which means that students who are autonomous and who have positive self-concept will probably be achievers when compared to those who are not autonomous and who do not have positive self-concept.

Developing learner autonomy is not an idealized aim of language teaching although it may be hard to enable the conditions needed for promoting it. Little (2004) states some of possible problems which may be confronted in developing autonomy are that teachers' pre-service education may not be arranged in a way to provide them with necessary ways to develop autonomy in their learners, and that there may be few if any opportunities to enable in-service training for teachers. What is more, teachers themselves may not be autonomous at all leading little success of developing autonomy in their learners as they will probably not be a good role model to their students in terms of autonomy. Ho and Crookall (1995) extend this idea by noting that learner autonomy often requires students to work independently of the teacher; however, it is not claimed that learner autonomy is developed without the teacher. It is true that while developing learner autonomy, teacher help is indispensable, yet, as learners get more autonomous, less teacher support is needed. Shahsavari (2014) advocates that if teachers are not aware of the ways to develop autonomy in their students, the classroom will be just a place that students attend with the only aim of passing exams fixed in their curriculum. Therefore, he goes on, it is a moral duty for teachers to help their learners be more independent and autonomous. It is interesting that Shahsavari (2014) sees autonomy promotion as a 'moral duty'.

Littlewood (1997) states that teachers' commitment to helping students develop autonomy is not enough alone, and that students' willingness and their independence are also important to be able to develop and foster autonomy. Chwo (2011) explains that self-value, preference, personality, reflection and exploration are central parts of autonomy in learning. If students lack focus, cannot find any relevance of knowledge to real life, do not grasp knowledge as a resource or a use, as Fleming and Walter (2004) say, they are trapped in that knowledge and will not have any autonomy in their learning which will eventually cause lack of motivation to take further steps.

In his seminal article, Little (1995) states that there is nothing new or mysterious about learner autonomy, and further asserts that achievers have always been autonomous. Hence, it is not about new kind of learning, yet by having put a clear goal like learner autonomy, it is to help learners achieve

(Little, 1995). He notes that the pedagogical dialogue between the teacher and students is the decisive factor in the promotion of learner autonomy while learning strategies and learners training also support the development of autonomy in learners.

1.2. Teacher's Role in Developing Autonomous Learning

In order to promote autonomy, teachers need to put a good deal of effort in the job. When learner autonomy is mentioned, it is generally thought like it is all about 'the learner'; however, without a teacher facilitating the process, nothing is ever enough to promote learner autonomy. Therefore, in share of responsibility, it is essential for teachers to be active in the process as well. Teachers who are supportive of autonomy need to raise learners' sense of control over their learning processes and should not undermine the identity of learners, their capacities and possibly their motivation levels (Lamb, 2011). It is claimed by Cotterall (1995) that in order to promote learner autonomy, perceptions of learners related to learner autonomy should be investigated, and learning settings should be arranged subsequently. In a similar vein, teachers' perceptions are also essential as their thoughts will be reflected in their teaching process and students will be affected by them to a certain degree.

Pedagogies for autonomy necessitate teachers to question their roles in teaching context, what their assumptions originally are, and what probable constraints and dilemmas need to be faced both in pre and in-service teacher education (Vieira, 2009). Dam (1995) further states that a smooth move from teacher-centeredness to learner centeredness is required for fostering learner autonomy in the classroom. Teachers need to present a variety of choices to their students to choose from so that they can feel more in control of their own learning. As what students have in their mind may not be consistent with what the teacher has in mind, they need to compromise to make the most of learning context in the classroom, and most of the job is the teacher's as expected. As Mirici, Galleano and Torres (2013) indicate, in this process, teachers need to be sure of themselves in their teaching abilities, as self-doubts may be detrimental to their teaching abilities in promotion of learner autonomy.

A teacher in support of learner autonomy needs to be intellectually motivated and professionally committed to his/ her profession to help his/ her students inquire and reflect on what they have learnt. Teacher commitment is substantial as in order for learners to develop autonomy, teacher support and facilitation are crucial. However, in a classroom context in which teacher transmits knowledge, and dominates the classroom, it gets increasingly difficult. Since learner autonomy does not mean that teacher is out of the business, it even puts more demand on the teacher to provide learners with appropriate skills for learner autonomy. Autonomy is not a product to be reached once and for all, but rather, it is a dynamic process (Candy, 1991), so it needs time and patience to develop it in learners. That is why teachers are recommended not to be discouraged after a few tries. Furthermore, individuals may differ greatly in their learning habits, needs, levels of motivation, and interests, and as a result, they may develop varying degrees of autonomy naturally (Udosen, 2014).

As Little (1991) indicates, since learners have considerable experience of institutionalized learning, they may show strong resistance to the idea of autonomy; however, teachers need to be persistent and decisive, and would not be discouraged by some first trials in search of developing learner autonomy. According to Benson (2001), in order to develop learner autonomy, students need to be given opportunities to make decisions about their own learning in a collaborative and supportive learning environment. However, as Kristmanson, Lafargue and Culligan (2013) state, well-meaning efforts to develop learner autonomy may result in unanticipated and unintended results like in the study of Inozu (2011) in Turkey, in which it was reported that the teacher's efforts to promote learner autonomy in his learners were a kind of failure and disappointment for both parts. Likewise, students may get

nervous and stressed with an unfamiliar increase in their responsibility and independence level; however, teachers need to be ready for this kind of reaction as it is not an easy endeavour to change certain habits of learning and it will surely take time and effort to develop autonomy in learners. In order to provide this kind of help to learners, dedicated and targeted instructional time on the development of 'learning how to learn', metacognitive strategies such as evaluation and monitoring and coping skills for times when an unexpected situation comes up need to be taught (Kristmanson et al., 2013).

As highlighted in Kristmanson et al. (2013), the difference between planned curriculum and received curriculum should be paid attention to and teachers should not be just interested in delivering the planned curriculum but also check what is actually received by learners. This idea is proven in the study of Kristmanson et al. (2013), in which learners' general comments focus on how curriculum and instruction should be connected to their personal interests and real life situations. Teachers' rush to catch up with the planned curriculum may hinder the development of learner autonomy because of increased teacher domination with the concern to keep up with the curriculum. Teachers need to be relieved and not to be stressed by administrations of schools. They may further use authentic texts to create real-life situations and enable relatedness for students to connect their classroom learning with real life.

If teachers differentiate the learning context and add more enjoyable and different activities for the same subjects learned before, it can be more motivating and autonomy supportive for learners. Kohonen (2012) stresses the meaningful and experiential learning are the focal points for teachers who intend to build learner autonomy. Kristmanson et al. (2013) also state that to enable learners to value self-assessment and also to teach them how to self- assess themselves are necessary for autonomous development of learners. They further state that it is important to explore and learn digital means more, and it is especially important for being able to reach the digital native students of this age.

According to Spratt et al. (2002), teachers need to build their teaching activities on the ones that learners have already engaged in, rather than the ones that will require them to change their attitudes and behaviours; however, always having students to engage in learning activities in the same way they have been accustomed to will not widen their perceptions and will cause them to insist on their ill-habits if they have any too. Moreover, this kind of attitude that will bring nothing new to the classroom may bore some students as they will probably perceive these activities the same and all over again. However, Spratt et al. (2002) are not totally wrong as when moving from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness, these kinds of familiar activities will help students have a supportive environment in which there is nothing new or threating to them. Another point is that, Nunan (1997) focuses on five steps to promote learner autonomy which are 'raising awareness' of learners, 'involving' them in selecting their goals, having them 'intervene' in to modify their goals according to the rising needs of their programme, enabling them to 'create' their own learning materials and lastly 'transcendence' which means enabling learners to go beyond their roles as learners and participate in the learning process as teachers and share their experiences with other learners.

Since learners' beliefs about themselves and their learning may be based on invalid assessments, to help them know their underlying beliefs can be of help to prepare them for learner autonomy. Since learner confidence goes hand in hand with academic achievement and is a characteristic of autonomous learners, teachers need to create a learning environment that considers affective sides of learning. Teachers further need to support and facilitate learners even when they encounter such experiences that will cause them to lose confidence and enthusiasm. Since learning a language is a long way, there will certainly be times learners need this kind of support. Moreover, learners' previous experiences may hinder their further achievement as they are reflected in the beliefs of learners, and inhibit their confidence leading them to draw back from taking initiatives and even to give up learning

the language altogether. Teachers, therefore, need to detect these myths that learners have for themselves and remedy them.

Benson (2010) indicates in his study that teachers complain about mandated English curriculum, the pressures put by examination system, the culture of schools, high workload and their students in their struggle to promote learner autonomy. However, as cited in Benson (2010), Breen (2007) recommends that teachers will either perceive themselves as teachers of language unconnected to wider social, cultural and political processes and further contribute to marginalization of their profession or they will accept responsibility of their role and confront the possibilities for betterment of the intercultural work they do. Hence, it is suggested to act against possible constraints however hindering they may be, and to work towards developing learner autonomy with a consideration of the process and cultural, psychological, sociological and pedagogical factors. Benson (2010) maintains that teachers are required to acquire a degree of freedom from these constraints which they may confront frequently in order to do their work effectively and in a more autonomous way because, he continues, more professional capacity is parallel to the idea of promoting learner autonomy.

Gipps (2002) notes that sharing learning goals and learning criteria with learners gives them experience in self-assessment and helps them be more self-regulated and autonomous learners (as cited in Willis, 2011). Willis (2011) states that AfL (assessment for learning) practices help learners form an autonomous identity for themselves and provide them a feeling of belonging to classroom community in which they practice. Since AfL means the evaluative practices conducted in everyday classroom settings to enable deeper insight of learning processes, it is suggested that it can be used to enhance learner autonomy by teachers (Willis, 2011). It includes formal checks for comprehension of learners and peer and self-assessments, and these kinds of assessment help learners reflect on what they have done and learned further promoting learner autonomy. Chan (2003: 49) concludes the process of support by teachers that teachers who want their students to be autonomous "have to learn 'let go'" after they have created an autonomy supportive environment for learners, and wait for the results constantly assessing the process.

1.3. Some Sample Studies on Perceptions and Practices of Learner Autonomy

There are some qualitative, quantitative and mixed method studies conducted on the perceptions of both learners and teachers abroad and in Turkey. In one of them, Yıldırım (2012) conducted a qualitative study by interviewing four 20 to 22 year-old male Indian students who were studying civil or computer engineering at a university in the USA in 2006. Three main categories were identified which were the aspects of language learning that the teacher had more responsibility, the aspects of language learning that the student had more responsibility and the aspects of language learning that the teacher and students shared responsibility.

Results of Yıldırım's study (2012) revealed that students generally considered the teacher as the main figure in language classroom. They stated that the ideal teacher they had in their mind was everything in the class who knew everything, told what to do, where they were wrong and what they could do for that. These students further reported that correcting grammar mistakes, ensuring accuracy, planning the course, setting the objective of the course, deciding on the course content, activities and evaluating the course were the issues teachers had more responsibility on than students themselves. On the other hand, they further acknowledged that deciding on what to learn outside the classroom and evaluating what had been learned were the areas that they were more responsible than the teacher. Lastly, the areas of language learning that both teacher and students shared responsibility were stated by students as increasing students' interests to language learning and making sure students improved in language learning process. In terms of what teachers could do to raise interest in their

students, they answered that the teacher should provide them with interesting, enjoyable and meaningful ways of language learning.

Shahsavari (2014) conducted a study with the same instrument adopted from Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) as in this study. The results found indicated that teachers were of the opinion that learners did not take responsibility for their learning and did not act autonomously because of the fact that they thought their teachers were the main figure in classrooms and the main role in learning was theirs. If teachers tried to hand over some of the responsibilities in the classroom, she went on, learners thought that those teachers were not active, well experienced teachers and that is why they were trying to give their responsibilities to learners. Here, it can be seen that, classroom culture and dynamics in the society play a crucial role in perceptions of both teachers and learners. The last point in the same study was that, some teachers stated that they were not allowed to be creative in their teaching, and that is why, in order not to have any problems with the administration, they followed the rules. As stated before in this study, if teacher autonomy is not provided, there is little room for learner autonomy to be developed, and Shahsavari's study (2014) also proves this observation.

In her study Camilleri (1999) investigated 328 teachers' views on learner autonomy and carried out the study with teachers from Malta, The Netherlands, Belorussia, Poland, Estonia and Slovenia. The questionnaire she applied consisted of 13 items and teachers' view on in what areas and to what extent learners should be involved in decisions was asked. Her study revealed that teachers were willing to change and to develop practice for learner autonomy; they supported involving learners in material selection, areas of classroom management, learning strategies and styles; however, they were reluctant to involve learners in defining aims and in methodological decisions; they found it hard to encourage and to develop learner autonomy and to provide more learner choice because of constraints they were confronted from higher authorities.

Another study is Chan's (2003) in which she searched teachers' perspectives on learner autonomy in Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Results of her study indicate that teachers felt that main responsibility for methodological decisions was theirs, they were quite positive about learner autonomy as a teaching goal and students' right to make decisions for their own learning. On the other hand, however, they stated that they were restricted by curriculum constraints and time management problems to catch up with the curriculum and that is why, they did not provide learners with opportunities to develop decision-making skills and to develop autonomously. Another interesting point in Chan's study (2003) is that, teachers who perceived their students as less capable felt more responsibility and gave less autonomy support increasing their controlling behaviours.

And lastly, Al Asmari (2013) conducted a study at Taif University English Language Center to find out teachers' practices and prospects of learner autonomy in their classrooms. The sample group in the study consisted of 60 teachers teaching English to students at university level. It is indicated in this study that it is important to provide students with learner training and to make it an integral part of teaching to develop learner autonomy.

2. Method

In the study, mixed methods design was adopted in order to better understand what teachers' perception and practices on learner autonomy were and how they could be investigated more. The rationale for such a research design was to provide a deeper comprehension for and to strengthen the quantitative data with the qualitative ones. Kagan (1992) indicates that, in questionnaire responses, teachers' unconscious beliefs may not be expressed and their responses to short answer questionnaires

may be influenced by social desirability factor. To eliminate such risks, and to have a deeper understanding on teachers' beliefs, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected.

2.1. Research Questions

In this study, the following research questions were investigated:

1. What are the perceptions of EFL Instructors on learner autonomy at different state universities based in different geographical regions of Turkey?

2. To what extent, according to the EFL Instructors, does learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?

3. How desirable and feasible do EFL Instructors feel it is to promote learner autonomy?

4. To what extent do EFL Instructors feel their learners are autonomous?

5. To what extent do EFL Instructors say they actually promote learner autonomy?

2.2. Instruments

English Language Teachers' Beliefs about Learner Autonomy Questionnaire implemented from Borg & Al Busaidi (2012) had five major sections (see Appendix 1). Section 1 consisted of 37 Likert-scale items addressing 10 constructs which were technical perspectives on learner autonomy, psychological perspectives on learner autonomy, social perspectives on learner autonomy, political perspectives on learner autonomy, the role of the teacher in learner autonomy, the relevance of learner autonomy to diverse cultural contexts, age and learner autonomy, proficiency and learner autonomy, the implications of learner autonomy for teaching methodology and the relationship of learner autonomy to effective language learning (Borg& Al Busaidi, 2012). In the 2nd section of the questionnaire, teachers' views on the desirability and feasibility of student involvement in decision-making and learning to learn skills in students were focused on. Section 3 was based on teachers' beliefs about how autonomous they perceived their learners were and to what extent they thought they promoted learner autonomy in their teaching. In the 4th Section of the questionnaire, demographic information of teachers was gathered. In section 5, teachers were asked if they would volunteer to take part in the second phase of the study. Finally, 17 interviews were conducted with the teachers who volunteered to participate.

Out of 96 EFL Instructors, 20 of them volunteered to do an interview. However, 1 of them did not include his/her contact information, and could not be reached while the other 2 instructors did not respond to 3 notification emails sent by the researcher to do an interview. Finally, there left 17 EFL Instructors who volunteered to do an interview, and they were personally contacted. Qualitative thematic analysis (Newby, 2010) was used to categorize the information gathered from interviews. In this process, the data were read carefully, crucial factors and issues were identified, and lastly, the information found was classified into broader categories. In answering the research questions of the study, interviews enabled the confirmation and clarification of the preliminary findings. As a result, interviews provided insight on what teachers' perception and practices actually were on learner autonomy, and they enabled the researcher to verify the findings in the quantitative analysis.

2.3. Data Analysis

A mixed methods approach was adopted in this study. Therefore, both quantitative data, from the questionnaires, and qualitative data from the interviews were gathered in the data collection procedure

of the study. The closed questionnaire data were analyzed statistically by using the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS 15.0). Descriptive statistical procedures were used to examine the data and to draw conclusions.

The open-ended questionnaire responses and the data gathered from interviews were categorized with qualitative thematic analysis (Newby, 2010). In this process the data were read carefully, some key issues were identified, and these key issues were organized in a set of broader categories. In conducting interviews, the questions in the questionnaire enabled an initial structure under which some specific answers could be then categorized. In order for intercoder reliability to be provided, together with the supervisor, an independent coder evaluated the interview data with the researcher and the coding of content with the same coding scheme was agreed on by the researchers and the same conclusion was reached for the study (Tinsley and Weiss, 2000).

Since mixed methods approach was adopted in this study, a comparison of the questionnaire and the interview data were also done to illustrate quantitative findings with qualitative findings. This led to further insight to understand why EFL Instructors responded the questionnaire in the way they did, and what their underlying thoughts were.

3. Findings

3.1. Findings on the Perceptions of EFL Instructors on Learner Autonomy

In the 1st section of the questionnaire, 37 Likert-scale items addressing 10 constructs were employed to find out teachers' overall perceptions of learner autonomy regarding technical, psychological, social, political perspectives on learner autonomy, the role of the teacher in promoting learner autonomy, the cultural universality of learner autonomy, age and learner autonomy, proficiency and learner autonomy, learner-centeredness and learner autonomy and the benefits of learner autonomy to language learning.

When the addressed constructs in the questionnaire were analyzed, it was found out that the majority of the instructors believed autonomy could be developed outside the classroom by independent study in a library and by independent work in a self-access centre. Learner autonomy, they believed, could be developed through learning outside the classroom and with out-of-class tasks. Instructors were in support of self-access centres and libraries for independent studies of students.

Instructors indicated in the study that confident and motivated language learners could develop autonomy more easily than learners who were not confident and motivated that much. Moreover, while some of the instructors believed that, to become autonomous, learners needed to monitor and to evaluate their own learning and they needed to learn how to learn, some others stated that they were unsure with these statements which indicated that instructors were not sure for students' monitoring and evaluating their learning as they were sure for the effects of confidence and motivation on learner autonomy.

According to some instructors, giving regular opportunities to students such as small tasks with which they could find the chance to study by themselves enhanced learner autonomy, and they stated that they regularly used small tasks in their teaching practices for this purpose:

"Throughout the term, I give small tasks to students that they can do by themselves."

"We can give them tasks that may lead them to do some research."

Instructors had differing views on the centrality of learning to work alone to the development of learner autonomy. While there were instructors who stated their suspicion, results also indicated that a great majority of the instructors shared the idea of collaborative work in pairs or groups helped them in the development of learner autonomy. Therefore, it can be concluded from the findings that, according to the instructors, learning to work alone was as important as learning from each other for the development of learner autonomy. This finding is also in line with the literature, as autonomy is thought to be best developed in a collaborative environment but not on one's own.

It can be concluded from teachers' perception on political perspectives on learner autonomy that although instructors thought and agreed that involving learners in decisions and providing them with choices in learning settings were crucial; they were either not sure or in disagreement with the idea that learners should be involved in decisions for material development and assessment. From the interviews done with the instructors, it was indicated that some instructors thought their students were not capable of making decisions on their learning, and thus must be helped. For example, one of the instructors stated that "My students are not autonomous. They just attend classes to pass them. They are not intrinsically motivated and they do not care about it either, so I do not think that they are that capable of making decisions for their learning either." Either it is the result of teachers' perception of their students' capability, or students' capability is the result of teachers' perception is a controversial issue; however, in order for students to feel themselves capable of making choices regarding their learning, teachers need to trust in their students' abilities and skills, and need to reflect this in their teaching practices too.

In another interview, one of the interviewees said: "Although everybody claims that they want to have learner-centred classes, and they want to put the learner at the centre, I do not know if it is related to culture or what, but they do not want to draw themselves back." If teachers do not stand back, and let students be free to decide on their learning and to make choices regarding it, it may not be possible to involve students in decisions and to provide them with chances for how their learning will be assessed and what kind of learning materials can be chosen. Moreover, without giving them such opportunity, teachers may not know how capable and able their students are in their choices for their learning. Thus, students must be given opportunities, and supported in the process. In conclusion, the instructors thought that it was necessary to provide learners with opportunities in decision-making processes and these chances for choice could help them develop learner autonomy. However, although they thought that considering their choices in some of the activities was preferable, they did not prefer involving them much in the assessment and in the choice of learning materials.

According to the instructors in the study, in the development of autonomy, the main responsibility was teachers' and it was their responsibility to create a learning setting which helped learners be autonomous by firstly making them aware of the notion of autonomy, and then training them explicitly to be autonomous:

"The responsibility is ours in developing learner autonomy. A classroom setting which nurtures autonomy should be created."

"I think, at least 50% of students have never looked at the issue of autonomy in our classrooms. That's why teachers need to train them explicitly on learner autonomy."

The results revealed that although there were some disagreements, the majority of instructors believed that in the development of autonomy, teachers had responsibility, and learner autonomy could not be promoted without the help of teachers. In the literature, it is also indicated that although

learners certainly need some independence, the idea that total independence of the teacher can lead to autonomy is not supported.

Most of the instructors believed that autonomy could be developed with any learner, and autonomy was not a concept which was suited to Western culture, they were nevertheless in the belief that the culture in Turkey was a hindrance for the development of learner autonomy. They also stated in the interviews as shown below that in learning and teaching, culture was an effective factor, and together with the culture, educational system, students' prior experiences, even the quality of lives of students were all influential in the development of learner autonomy. Instructors generally hold the belief that Turkish culture was not suitable for the promotion of learner autonomy and one of them even stated that Turkish students "are not simply coded for it" which showed how strong beliefs some instructors held for learner autonomy in relation to culture:

"When developing autonomy, we learn and teach depending on recitations. Cultural factors are also effective in this."

"Life quality, income level, culture, all are related in achievement of language learning."

"If I talk generally for all learners I teach to, unfortunately they are not autonomous because we have some deficiencies in our educational system. Culture is another reason. The education that family provides, their prior experiences… All are effective in this."

While most of the instructors indicated in the study that there was no age limit for promoting learner autonomy, some of them also believed that it got more difficult to foster autonomy with age in reference to habits. According to one of the instructors, age, motivation and autonomy were bounded to each other, and she believed that motivation was lessened by age which further triggered the lessening of autonomy as a result. This was an interesting point as autonomy was viewed to be decreased with the increase of age and decrease of motivation respectively:

"I believe that as students get older, their motivation for learning is lessened, but younger learners are not like that, so it is easier to promote learner autonomy with them."

In another interview, one of the instructors stated that: "We need to provide learner autonomy in all educational steps. Learners need to normalize the idea of autonomy. After a certain age, it gets harder to develop autonomy, because habits resist change." Although this instructor believed the importance of the promotion of learner autonomy in all ages, he indicated that when it came to learner autonomy, the sooner was the better for students to normalize the idea of autonomy. He focused on habits further expressing that they were hard to change after some time, so in order not to handle with resisting habits in the development of autonomy, students needed to be provided autonomy support from early ages on.

While some instructors stated that they were unsure if proficiency level and autonomy development were connected, some instructors also thought that proficiency level was a strong indicator of learner autonomy. One of the interviewees stated that "Proficiency level of learners is important, as it decreases, autonomy decreases too." From this statement, it can be concluded that although as the results indicated, most of the instructors stated that they were not sure about the relationship between proficiency and learner autonomy; in the interviews conducted, some of them stated that they saw a certain connection between proficient learners and their autonomy levels.

Instructors generally shared the idea that the ideal classrooms for the development of autonomy were the learner-centred ones. However there were also some instructors who disagreed which indicated that some of the instructors did not agree that learner autonomy could not be promoted in a teacher-centred classroom. On the contrary, participants agreed that in learner-centred classrooms, ideal conditions were created for learner autonomy. From these results, it can be concluded that while teachers believed learner-centeredness was central to learner autonomy, they were not of the idea that learner autonomy could be improved without teacher-centred classrooms contradicting in their beliefs.

As for the contribution of learner autonomy to language learning, instructors stated that they believed learner autonomy positively contributed to language learning:

"I believe that there is a direct relationship between learner autonomy and language learning."

"If a learner is learning language, learner autonomy is directly related to its success. We cannot say that non-autonomous learners cannot learn a language but I am sure that the effectiveness of it will decrease."

While one instructor further stated that "being an autonomous learner is easiness for language learning." some interviewees also stated that although learner autonomy meant learning language more effectively, the role of the teachers should not be underestimated either: "There is certainly a relationship between language learning and learner autonomy, but the role of the teacher cannot be undermined." In conclusion, it can be inferred from the responses that most of the instructors were of the same opinion that learner autonomy contributed greatly to effective language learning. Thus, it can be concluded from the statement of instructors that by developing learner autonomy, it is highly possible to have achievers in language learning as a result.

3.2. Findings on the Extent to which Learner Autonomy Contributes to L2 Learning

The responses to the questionnaire revealed that 90.6% of the participants agreed that learner autonomy had a positive effect on success as a language learner, while 81.3% agreed that learner autonomy allowed language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would have. It can be concluded from these results of the questionnaire that instructors held strong positive views about the contribution of learner autonomy to language learning.

In order to acquire more specific ideas, the interviewed instructors were asked to elaborate on the positive views they held for autonomous learners in language learning. Emerging themes in the responses of the instructors are listed below with supporting quotes for each:

- Autonomous learners are more efficient learners:

"Autonomous learners learn more effectively because they are independent."

"When we ask how a good language learner should be, learner autonomy is certainly one of the elements."

- Autonomous learners are more self-aware:

"They try to learn with an awareness of themselves as a learner. They observe their own improvement."

"Autonomous learners are conscious; they know what they are capable of and what they are not."

"Autonomous learners know what their negative and positive features are in their learning of a language. So, they can find solutions for their weaknesses and improve better."

- Autonomous learners are more motivated:

"Autonomous learners are responsible, motivated, self-regulated. The more autonomous a learner is, the more motivated she is, and this affects learners' language learning abilities."

- Autonomous learners are more self-confident:

"Autonomous learners are self-confident. They do not expect everything from the teacher, they are liable to group activities, and they are more responsible learners."

"They are more self-confident. We can say that they can make decisions on their own about their learning."

- Autonomous learners are life-long learners and critical thinkers:

"It means life-long learning. An autonomous learner keeps that window open in her mind. They learn by doing."

"Learners should not believe what teacher says is always true. They need to be critical thinkers. It is ok that we do not teach them something wrong, but they need to think critically all the time. I think that autonomous learners are critical thinkers"

- Autonomous learners are good researchers:

"They are good researchers, they like studying by themselves, and that's why, they learn more effectively and permanently."

"Autonomous learners look for conferences, symposiums, trainings; they do research on an issue they are interested in, they check their learning, and they are open to criticism."

3.3. Findings on the Desirability and Feasibility of Learner Autonomy Promotion

Table 1.: Desirability of Student Involvement in Decision-making

Items	**Undesirable**		**Slightly Desirable**		**Quite Desirable**		**Very Desirable**		$\overline{X}$	SD
Learners are involved in decisions about:	***f***	***%***	***f***	***%***	***f***	***%***	***F***	***%***		
1. The objectives of a course	5	5.2	23	24.0	47	49.0	21	21.9	2.88	0.81
2. The materials used	4	4.2	15	15.6	47	49.0	30	31.3	3.07	0.80
3. The kinds of tasks and activities they do	2	2.1	12	12.5	46	47.9	36	37.5	3.21	0.74
4. The topics discussed	1	1.0	16	16.7	41	42.7	38	39.6	3.21	0.75
5. How learning is assessed	9	9.4	35	36.5	34	35.4	18	18.8	2.64	0.90
6. The teaching methods used	6	6.3	24	25.0	44	45.8	22	22.9	2.85	0.85
7. Classroom management	14	14.6	25	26.0	35	36.5	22	22.9	2.68	0.99

Table 2.: Feasibility of Student Involvement in Decision-making

Items **Learners are involved in decisions about:**	**Unfeasible**		**Slightly Feasible**		**Quite Feasible**		**Very Feasible**		$\overline{X}$	SD
	f	***%***	***f***	***%***	***f***	***%***	***F***	***%***		
1. The objectives of a course	27	28.1	31	32.3	30	31.3	8	8.3	2.20	0.95
2. The materials used	17	17.7	37	38.5	32	33.3	10	10.4	2.36	0.90
3. The kinds of tasks and activities they do	6	6.3	32	33.3	39	40.6	19	19.8	2.74	0.85
4. The topics discussed	6	6.3	24	25.0	46	47.9	20	20.8	2.83	0.83
5. How learning is assessed	36	37.5	31	32.3	21	21.9	8	8.3	2.01	0.97
6. The teaching methods used	24	25.0	31	32.3	31	32.3	10	10.4	2.28	0.96
7. Classroom management	27	28.1	29	30.2	27	28.1	13	13.5	2.27	1.02

By means of the second section of the questionnaire, the instructors' responses to the question how desirable and feasible they felt it was to promote learner autonomy were explored. This section comprised two issues the first of which was teachers' views on the desirability of involving learners in decision-making while the second of which was teachers' views on the feasibility of involving learners in decision-making. The responses of the instructors were illustrated in tables 1 and 2.

It can be concluded from the responses that instructors were generally more positive about the desirability of student involvement than they were about its feasibility. However, decisions on 'how learning is assessed' were not found to be desirable by instructors. Student involvement in decision making was seen to be most feasible in topics discussed and the kind of tasks and activities students did, and it was seen least feasible in relation to how learning is assessed, the objectives of the course and the classroom management. On the other hand, student involvement in decision making was seen to be most desirable in relation to materials used, topics discussed and activities, and it was seen the least desirable in relation to objectives, the assessment of the course, and classroom management.

Table 3.: Desirability of Learning to Learn Skills in Students

Items **Learners have the ability to:**	**Undesirable**		**Slightly Desirable**		**Quite Desirable**		**Very Desirable**		$\overline{X}$	SD
	f	***%***	***F***	***%***	***f***	***%***	***f***	***%***		
1. Identify their own needs	0	0	14	14.6	33	34.4	49	51.0	3.36	0.73
2. Identify their own strengths	0	0	11	11.5	31	32.3	54	56.3	3.45	0.69
3. Identify their own weaknesses	2	2.1	10	10.4	28	29.2	56	58.3	3.44	0.77

4. Monitor their progress	1	1.0	9	9.4	30	31.3	56	58.3	3.47	0.71
5. Evaluate their own learning	2	2.1	14	14.6	26	27.1	54	56.3	3.38	0.81
6. Learn co-operatively	0	0	12	12.5	25	26.0	59	61.5	3.39	0.71
7. Learn independently	2	2.1	7	7.3	28	29.2	59	61.5	3.50	0.73

Table 4.: Feasibility of Learning to Learn Skills in Students

Items	**Unfeasible**		**Slightly Feasible**		**Quite Feasible**		**Very Feasible**		$\overline{X}$	SD
Learners have the ability to:	***f***	**%**	***f***	**%**	***f***	**%**	***f***	**%**		
1. Identify their own needs	9	9.4	30	31.3	36	37.5	21	21.9	2.72	0.91
2. Identify their own strengths	6	6.3	33	34.4	35	36.5	22	22.9	2.76	0.88
3. Identify their own weaknesses	6	6.3	35	36.5	32	33.3	23	24.0	2.75	0.89
4. Monitor their progress	11	11.5	29	30.2	38	39.6	18	18.8	2.66	0.92
5. Evaluate their own learning	10	10.4	27	38.5	37	38.5	12	12.5	2.53	0.85
6. Learn co-operatively	4	4.2	24	25.0	44	45.8	24	25.0	2.92	0.82
7. Learn independently	6	6.3	29	30.2	34	35.4	27	28.1	2.85	0.91

In the second part of the section teachers were asked how desirable and feasible they felt it was for their students to develop a range of abilities that were commonly accepted as indicators of learner autonomy. In tables 3 and 4 the results for this comparison were indicated. As it was in the previous part, desirability of learning to learn skills in students was consistently higher than its feasibility, and in all cases the differences between the two ratings were statistically significant. In contrast to the previous set of items, though, all items apart from 'identifying their own weaknesses, monitoring their progress, evaluating their own learning, and learning independently' listed here were considered desirable for learners by a large percentage of instructors. On the other hand, the skills 'learning co-operatively and independently' were perceived as the most feasible skills in learners. The skills which were seen as the least feasible in learners were 'evaluating their own learning' and 'monitoring their progress.'

3.4. Findings on Teachers' Feelings about Their Learners' Autonomy

In the questionnaire teachers were asked about the extent to which they felt their students were autonomous and in the open-ended part of this question in the questionnaire they were asked to comment on why they felt in the way they did. In the analysis of the open-ended parts of the questionnaire, it was aimed to examine why instructors particularly taught that their students had a fair degree of autonomy.

Some instructors explained that their students were autonomous because they encouraged them to do so by guiding and facilitating them in the process. Another reason was that they taught to adult learners, and they perceived adult learners as more autonomous in their learning. Instructors also felt that their students were autonomous when they had a certain kind of relationship with them which nurtured their students' learning by chatting about their learning experiences and their independent study outside the classroom settings. Teachers believed that learners' awareness of their weaknesses, strengths, and their own learning, their motivation, collaborative decisions taken on which methods to use, their independent study skills were some of the reasons which showed that their students' had a fair degree of autonomy.

However, the results indicated that 36.5 percent of the instructors did not feel their learners had a fair degree of autonomy. The examples they provided why they thought in the particular way they did were various. The themes emerged from the open-ended part of the questionnaire on why instructors felt their students did not have a fair degree of autonomy are given below with quotes for each:

- Traditional teacher-centred classrooms and Teacher Domination

"Maybe it is because of the learner profile. No matter how much I try hard to encourage their self-monitoring their own progress in language learning; only few can achieve this. So I feel what I do is by imposing them to monitor their own learning. I also try to change the way they learn in general sense. Turkish students are culturally taught in teacher-centred approach as we all know, so it is not easy to do reverse. However, it is definitely worth it."

- Spoon Feeding as a metaphor recurring in the study

In all 17 interviews conducted, 'spoon feeding' was stated by all instructors several times. They complained from their students and as for their not taking responsibility for their learning, they referred to this term and blamed their learners for not taking responsibility and waiting everything from the teacher.

"Turkish students at university are used to being spoon-fed. So, it takes a lot of time and effort to have autonomy in learning..."

- Passive, noncritical students

"I feel so, because they always tend to passivize themselves as learners. For example, whenever they talk about their English learning history, they talk about teachers, materials, socio-economic difficulties etc. They ignore themselves at the very beginning. They don't think they can make the difference needed."

When all these are summed up, lack of motivation, self-awareness, self-confidence, independence; too much dependence on teachers, no desire for taking responsibility, unawareness of their weaknesses, strengths and their own learning, their prior educational experiences, time management problems and curricular constraints were also some of the reasons which instructors felt contributed to lack of autonomy in their students.

3.5. Findings on Teachers' Thoughts on How They Promote Learner Autonomy

Instructors were asked about the extent to which they felt they promoted learner autonomy in their teaching. Instructors who felt they promoted learner autonomy were also asked to state the kind of strategies they used to do so in the open-ended part of the questionnaire. More than 80% of the instructors felt that they provided their students with opportunities to develop autonomy in their teaching, while 14.6% of them were unsure and only 3.1% disagreed with the statement. In open-ended part of the questionnaire and interviews, the instructors commented on how they promoted learner autonomy or if not why they could not do so. Some examples from instructors who stated that

they could not develop learner autonomy in their classroom settings were shown under the emerging themes as follows:

- Traditional Turkish Educational System

"I would really want to provide learners with autonomy but it is impossible for me to do that in Turkey. First, students of Turkish background are conditioned to be spoon-fed by the teacher. It is really difficult to end this vicious cycle. Second, we have too many hours of classes... Even if I want to apply some communicative activities inside class that is also impossible because there is no time to prepare and produce some new activities which will encourage students to like and appreciate English language... Students only care about passing their courses and some teachers also only care about teaching their hour and leaving the classroom right away..."

- Student boredom for long years of learning English

"I try to show them some methods on how they can improve themselves, and I tell them to realize their own learning method but it is really difficult to persuade them. Most of them do not like learning English because they have been learning English for almost 12 years. However, their level is still Elementary and they still can't speak English."

- Lack of teacher autonomy

"As I was also trained in a traditional way just like my students, I could not promote autonomy in my classes as much as I desire."

On the other hand, some examples from instructors who stated that they could develop learner autonomy in their classroom settings and how they did it were asked both in the open-ended part of the questionnaire and in the interviews too. The analysis done suggested that there were four broad strategies through which teachers felt they encouraged autonomy. They are listed as follows with an illustrative teacher quotation for each:

- Encouraging learners to be engaged in autonomous behaviours

"I try to promote my students' autonomy in my classes because I want them to be independent learners. To promote learner autonomy, I encourage them to (a) do project work, (b) do self-study either at home or in the library beyond the classroom context."

- Getting learners to realize their own strengths and weaknesses

"Some surveys and can do statements; learning diaries are helpful for students to be aware of themselves to be more autonomous."

- Presenting out of class activities which promote learner autonomy

"I generally make them keep a kind of diary outside the class on which they write anything they love, hate or experience in English. It may be even a song, an aphorism or saying of a famous person...etc. I also form groups in social media to improve their English (English only zone groups). What I try to do at all is to create a kind of awareness in my students to get the idea that they can do things to learn this language outside the class and look at things from a different perspective."

- Talking to students about the value of autonomy

"The first thing I do for my students is that I always try to build self-confidence to learn the language. In our context they generally have bad experiences from primary school till present time. Therefore changing their attitudes is of vital importance for me. That's why I try to explain the importance of autonomy at the outset of the classes."

When overall results were investigated, both the percentage of instructors who felt they promoted learner autonomy in their teaching and the variety of examples they provided for how they tried to do so demonstrated that the instructors had favourable impressions on learner autonomy and they tried hard to promote it to have high-achieving language learners.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study and the insights of EFL Instructors gathered into perception and practices on learner autonomy are thought to be an addition to the literature in terms of seeing an overall picture of the situation in Turkey regarding perception and practices instructors hold on learner autonomy. As mentioned before, in spite of the substantial amount of research conducted for 30 years and more, little has been done to reflect how teachers theoretically and practically perceive this issue, and how they make learner autonomy an important aspect of their work.

In parallel to the literature (Al Asmari, 2013; Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012; Camilleri, 1999; Chan, 2003; Shahsavari, 2014; Yıldırım, 2012), the results indicated that instructors were positively disposed to learner autonomy, and they held strong beliefs on its benefits to language learning. Instructors' definitions and opinions of learner autonomy were similar to those prevalent in the literature like responsibility, awareness, control, freedom, choice, curiosity for further improvement and independence. Like in the study of Borg and Al Busaidi (2012), the 'learning to learn' dimension of learner autonomy was supported the most in the responses given to the questionnaire, and instructors reported that the promotion of learner autonomy was possible with the mastering of skills and abilities to learn independently.

It has been found out in the study that there was a significant gap between the desirability and feasibility of involving learners in decision-making. Although instructors found it desirable to involve students in decision-making process, they didn't find it as much feasible as it was desirable to involve them in decisions regarding how learning is assessed, the objectives of the course and the classroom management. In a similar vein, there was a significant gap between how instructors perceived it was desirable and feasible to promote learning to learn skills in students. While learning co-operatively and independently were perceived as the most feasible skills in learners, evaluating their own learning and monitoring their progress were seen to be the least feasible although they were perceived desirable. This gap between what instructors had in mind theoretically and what they actually practiced confirms insights acquired from other studies on teachers' perception and practices on learner autonomy (Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012; Camilleri, 1999; Chan, 2003; Shahsavari, 2014).

Among the highlighted factors which instructors thought hindered the promotion of learner autonomy were spoon-feeding as a recurring metaphor throughout the study, the passivity of students and their non-critical stance towards learning procedure. Particularly, spoon-feeding was referred frequently by instructors both in the open parts of the questionnaire and interviews. Traditional Turkish educational system as Balçıkanlı (2010) also observed and student boredom for long years of learning English were other emerging themes from this study which were thought to limit the promotion of learner autonomy.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

From this study, it is concluded that most of the EFL Instructors participated in the study were positively disposed to learner autonomy in theory, and mostly familiar with what learner autonomy is

and what it is related to. However, they were less positive when it came to the extent to which learner autonomy could be fostered productively and practically. Instructors reported that there were ways to promote learner autonomy like encouraging learners to be engaged in autonomous behaviours, getting them to realize their own strengths and weaknesses, presenting them out of class activities which promote learner autonomy and talking to them about the value of autonomy. However, there was a consensus that learners generally lacked the capacity to study independently, to take responsibility of their learning, and were not willing to further their studies autonomously. Nevertheless, more than 80% of the instructors in the study felt that they provided their students with opportunities to develop autonomy.

To develop autonomy, there are lots of ways to be practiced. Discussing how to regulate students' learning in the class is one of them to promote learner autonomy. Since most of the teachers work with a fixed syllabi and they certainly need to assess learners for what has been enabled to them, examinations are inescapable; however, as indicated in the study, the pressure put on the students to be prepared for the examination distracts not only them but also their teachers as well and this unfortunately causes students to perceive the language like a lesson to study, rather than a subject to be learned both in and outside the classroom. This pressure of examination can be lessened by teachers to have students think that they are more in control of the process. What is more, it can be pointed by this way that it is not the product but the process of learning which is of value.

Since students have a more clear focus once they have set their own goal, they need to be allowed to fulfil this purpose. As some students may prefer specific types of classroom activities, teachers need to be in close relationship with their students and work collaboratively with them. As Cotterall (2000) also suggests, learners need to be encouraged to set personal goals, monitor and reflect on their performance throughout the learning process, and modify what they have learnt in the classroom as reflection is what makes classes in which learner autonomy is promoted distinctive. Thanasoulas (2000) also suggests activities, which were also employed by some instructors in this study, such as keeping learning diaries and evaluation sheets for reflection. Both ways enable learners reflect on their learning process and enable them to decide whether it has been as fruitful as it was expected until then. Teachers also need to provide learners with choice to make them feel that they are actually in control and have them participate actively to the process in spite of the constraints they stated in the study because in a teacher-centred class, individual differences of learners may easily be missed out. That is why, teachers need to provide a more learner-centred classroom and to create a learning environment in which decision-making of learners is encouraged. What is desired is that teachers find the involvement of learners in decision making processes feasible in the way they find it desirable. For this purpose, teachers need to spare from class time to raise awareness in their learners of what is going on in classroom.

As Little (1991) puts it, autonomy is the psychological relation of the learners to the process and learning. This relatedness is an important part of learner autonomy and for this reason, in a classroom setting; learners need to be supported to create a meaning, a relatedness of newly learned things with past and future learnings. To create this relatedness, teachers need to include learners in decision-making processes, and by this way, learners are helped with personally relevant learning experiences which will help them internalize the process of learning. If learners are denied of this opportunity of choosing, we will result in denying their intellectual identity together with their social and personal benefits that come together with that identity (Heron, 2003). Moreover, choice increases intrinsic motivation and helps learners be more self-regulated.

It was also indicated in the study that, some instructors were doubtful about the share of responsibility in their classrooms. The power shift from teacher-centred classes to learner-centred classes may create concern among teachers for losing the control of their classrooms; however,

learners who are given more control on their learning will be more effective in their learning which, in turn, helps teachers in their teaching more.

In the study Porto (2007) conducted, she reported that students valued classroom activities when they were offered choice about the pace of their study; however, they were very critical when they felt hurried with the activities she presented no choice for pace. It can be concluded from here that students desire to have a say not just in the type of activities but also for the time allocated for those activities as well. Curriculum and time constraints were issues that were strongly indicated by instructors for their failure to develop autonomy in this study. However, in their struggle to catch up with the curriculum, teachers need to "achieve a balance between a dynamic and a fast class" as it is indicated here (Porto, 2007: 689).

Another issue that is crucial is that, the extent to which learners develop autonomy and a host of skills and knowledge that are necessary for developing autonomy depend on both learner's and teacher's views of their relationship and roles (Ho and Crookall, 1995). That is why; both sides need to know what their roles are in developing autonomy and how they can achieve this in a shared setting. As instructors in the study also emphasized, students need to know that not just teachers are responsible for learners' learning, but learners have a big share in taking initiatives and responsibility for learning too. By this way, some possible problems that may be created in the learning process may be prevented beforehand.

Lastly, in developing learner autonomy, mutual trust between learners and the teacher is crucial. A classroom setting which is cooperative and which takes learners' affective filters into account is a must for students to feel themselves secure, and trust their teacher to take initiative in developing learner autonomy. Besides, students who do not feel threatened in their classrooms will feel more courage in their attempt to share the responsibility of learning. As Erten and Burden (2014) suggest, learners can be provided with support and encouragement to help them change negative and unhelpful attributions they have of themselves while at the same time developing their skills and learning strategies contribute to their improvement as well.

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Appendix A. The Questionnaire

Section 1: Learner Autonomy

Please give your opinion about the statements below by ticking ONE answer for each. The statements are not just about your current job and in answering you should consider your experience as a language teacher more generally.

		Strongly disagree	**disagree**	**unsure**	**agree**	**strongly agree**
1	Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy.					
2	Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy.					
3	Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.					
4	Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.					
5	Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.					
6	Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.					

7	Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.					
8	Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.					
9	It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners.					
10	It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults.					
11	Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.					
12	Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.					
13	Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.					
14	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.					
15	Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centred classrooms.					
16	Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.					
17	Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching.					
18	Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher.					
19	Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together.					
20	Learner autonomy is only possible with adult learners.					
21	Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access centre.					
22	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.					
23	Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners.					
24	Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher.					
25	Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy.					
26	Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners.					
27	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.					

28	Learner-centred classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.					
29	Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.					
30	Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy.					
31	Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy.					
32	The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.					
33	Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.					
34	The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy.					
35	The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.					
36	Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner.					
37	To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.					

Section 2: Desirability and Feasibility of Learner Autonomy

Below there are two sets of statements. The first gives examples of decisions LEARNERS might be involved in; the second lists abilities that learners might have. For each statement:

a. First say how desirable (i.e. ideally), you feel it is.

b. Then say how feasible (i.e. realistically achievable) you think it is for *the learners you currently teach most often*.

You should tick TWO boxes for each statement – one for desirability and one for feasibility.

		Desirability					**Feasibility**			
		Undesirable	**Slightly desirable**	**Quite desirable**	**Very desirable**		**Unfeasible**	**Slightly feasible**	**Quite feasible**	**Very feasible**
	Learners are involved in decisions about:									
1	The objectives of a course									
2	The materials used									
3	The kinds of tasks and activities they do									
4	The topics discussed									

5	How learning is assessed									
6	The teaching methods used									
7	Classroom management									
	Learners have the ability to:									
1	Identify their own needs									
2	Identify their own strengths									
3	Identify their own weaknesses									
4	Monitor their progress									
5	Evaluate their own learning									
6	Learn co-operatively									
7	Learn independently									

Section 3: Your Learners and Your Teaching

This section contains two open-ended questions. These are an important part of the questionnaire and give you the opportunity to comment more specifically on your work at The School of Foreign Languages.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Choose ONE answer:

In general, the students I teach English most often to at The School of Foreign Languages at my current university have a fair degree of learner autonomy.

Strongly disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly agree	

Please comment on why you feel the way you do about your students' general degree of autonomy:

2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Choose ONE answer:

In general, in teaching English at The School of Foreign Languages at my current university, I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy.

Strongly disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly agree	

Please comment. You may want to explain why and how you promote autonomy, if you do, or to explain why developing learner autonomy is not an issue you focus on in your work:

Section 4: About Yourself

Please tell us about your background.

3. Years of experience as an English language teacher (Tick ONE):

0-4		5-9		10-14		15-19		20-24		25+	

4. Years of experience as an English language teacher at your current institution. (Tick ONE):

0-4		5-9		10-14		15-19		20-24		25+	

5. Highest qualification (Tick ONE):

Certificate		Diploma		Bachelor's		Master's		Doctorate		Other	

6. Nationality:

7. Gender (Tick ONE):

Male		Female	

Section 5: Further Participation

6. In the next stage of the study we would like to talk to individual teachers to learn more about their views on learner autonomy. Would you be interested in discussing this issue further with us?

Yes		No	

If you answered YES to question 1 above, please write your name and phone number here.

Name	
Phone Number	

Bazı Türk Üniversitelerindeki İngilizce Okutmanlarının Öğrenen Özerkliğine Yönelik Algı ve Uygulamaları

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı coğrafi olarak farklı bölgelerdeki dokuz üniversitenin Yabancı Diller Yüksek Okulundaki İngilizce okutmanlarının öğrenen özerkliğine yönelik algı ve uygulamalarını araştırmaktır.

Bu çalışmada, karma yöntemli bir yaklaşım benimsenmiştir. Çalışma, 96 İngilizce Okutmanı ile gerçekleştirilmiş ve çalışmaya ait veriler anket ve röportajlar aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Çalışmadaki anket, ilk bölümü öğrenen özerkliğine ait 10 yapıyı kapsayan 37 maddelik beşli likert ölçeğinden oluşmaktadır. İkinci bölümde öğrencilerin karar aşamalarına katılmaları ve öğrenmeyi öğrenme becerileri konularını öğretmenlerin ne kadar arzu edilir ve

gerçekleştirilebilir bulduklarına odaklanılmıştır. Üçüncü bölüm, öğretmenlerin öğrencilerini ne kadar özerk buldukları ve dil öğretiminde özerkliği ne ölçüde desteklediklerini konularına ayrılmıştır. Anketin dördüncü bölümünde ise, öğretmenlerin demografik bilgileri toplanmıştır. Beşinci bölümde, öğretmenlere, çalışmanın ikinci aşamasında yer alıp almak istemedikleri sorulmuştur. Son olarak, katılmaya gönüllü olan 17 okutmanla röportajlar gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Bu çalışmanın bulguları, okutmanların, öğrenen özerkliğinin farklı açılarına yönelik oldukça olumlu görüşlere sahip olduklarını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Öğrencilerin alınan kararlara katılmaları aracılığıyla öğrenme süreci içerisinde öğrenen özerkliğinin geliştirilmesi gerektiğini ve öğrencilerinde öğrenen özerkliği geliştirdiklerine inandıklarını dile getirmişlerdir. Öğrenen özerkliğinin neredeyse bütün yönleriyle arzu edilebilir olduğu konusunda olumlu olmalarına karşın, onu arzu edilebilir buldukları kadar gerçekleştirilebilir bulmadıkları saptanmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Öğrenen özerkliği; öğretmen algısı; yabancı dil olarak İngilizce; yabancı dil öğretimi.

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