

## Examining Learner Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning and Instruction

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### Abstract

*Problem Statement:* In the field of 21st Century education, curriculum designers are increasingly focusing their attention on quality of learning and learner development in foreign language instruction. The movement towards learner-centred approach has led to an emphasis on the value of learner autonomy in promoting learner development. According to Cottorall (2000), although learner autonomy is a vital part of language learning, it is not sufficiently supported in language learning program designs.

*Purpose of Study:* The purpose of this case study is to examine freshman Law students' perceptions as regards their autonomy in writing classes and their teachers' perceptions of the writing skill area of the curriculum in promoting learner autonomy in the Foreign Language and English Preparatory School. The investigation of the existing situation in these classes provided a comprehensive analysis of the instructional processes in promoting autonomy in writing skills and shed light upon the themes to be reconsidered in the writing skill area of the curriculum.

*Method:* Two-hundred freshman Law students enrolled in English I course and six English language teachers teaching these students formed the study group of the research. As a research method, mixed-method approach was adopted and data were collected through a questionnaire and interview protocols. The validity of the questionnaire was ensured through expert opinion and pilot testing. The factor analysis for the questionnaire was done and the Cronbach's Alpha reliability was measured as .92. The data gathered via interview protocols were subjected to content analysis through thematic coding. The credibility and objectivity of the

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qualitative data were sustained through method triangulation, expert opinions, and an inquiry auditor.

*Findings:* The findings exhibited that students tend to have positive attitudes towards language learning, yet they do not perceive themselves as autonomous learners in both learning and writing skill. As far as teachers' perceptions are concerned, instructional environment, materials and strategies were found to be inhibiting students' autonomy. What is more, students' problems in language use and their dependence on teachers were reported to be impeding their autonomy in learning.

*Conclusion and Recommendations:* Although students reported having positive attitudes towards language learning, the data triangulated from students' and teachers' perspectives suggest parity in that students are not autonomous learners of English. In this regard, the writing skill area of the curriculum and the instructional processes were reported to embrace problems in promoting students' autonomy in learning and writing. Further studies, through qualitative research methods should be conducted for the thorough examination of learner autonomy in language learning and the problems students face during this process through qualitative research methods.

**Keywords:** *English language curriculum, writing skill, learner autonomy, autonomy in language learning.*

## Introduction

In the field of 21st Century education, curriculum designers are increasingly focusing their attention on quality of learning and learner development in foreign language instruction. The movement towards learner-centred approach, in which students acquire foreign language proficiency more quickly and effectively (Kajiura, 2006), has led to an emphasis on the value of learner autonomy in promoting learner development. Learner autonomy is one of the key goals of higher education (Baume, 1992). Research shows that development of learner autonomy positively influences the growth of target language proficiency (Little, 2008).

Since 1970, learner autonomy in English language learning has been debated among teachers as regards the ways of promoting learner autonomy and increasing learner independence. According to Esch (1996), learner autonomy is developed if supportive circumstances and contexts are provided to learners. Breen (1984) states that this support can only be given with the process syllabus and learner centred approach.

There are a great number of definitions for the term autonomy and, as Gremmo (1995) suggests, the debates on its definition is still alive. For example, Little (1991) describes autonomy as a capacity - for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. It is an ability which learners should act independently, reflect on their needs critically and make their own decisions. Candy (1991), on the other hand, states that autonomy is an essential way of effective learning. She says that it is not the total detachment of the teacher, but the teacher and student col-

laboration to meet students' needs. For Nunan (1995), ability is essential for learner autonomy. He suggests that learners who have reached a point where they are able to define their own goals and create their own learning opportunities have become autonomous. Littlewood (1999) divides autonomy into two: proactive and reactive autonomy, whereas Scharle and Szabo (2000) suggest that becoming autonomous is a process which is divided into three stages: raising student awareness, changing attitudes, and transferring roles. Among all these, the most widely-used definition of autonomy is "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" as Holec (1981) defines it. His concept of learner autonomy consists of five essential parts: learners' setting of their own learning objectives, their definition of content and progressions, their selection of methods and techniques, their observation of the learning process, and their evaluation of learning outcomes.

Since learner autonomy is one of the key goals of higher education (Baume, 1992), students at tertiary level should be involved in processes where they can be self-governing, make choices about what is to be learned, and take significant responsibility for their own learning. According to Baume, by being involved in their own learning process, students can connect their beliefs, ideas, and thoughts with the world outside the classroom. In that way, learning becomes lifelong rather than a way of memorization. Researchers like Little (1991) and Dam (2000) believe that students should take the control of their learning, have a high meta cognitive awareness in order to address their weaker points easily, and take precautions accordingly to be more successful.

Cottorall (2000) believes that learner autonomy has a wide impact on curriculum since it has philosophical (the right to make choices), pedagogical (increased learning efficiency through dialogue about learning) and practical (learning on one's own) goals. She points out that although learner autonomy is a vital part of language learning, it is not sufficiently supported in language learning course curriculum and designs.

One of the major aims of English language curriculum has been to foster learner autonomy by placing learner at the centre of instructional process. Considering the importance of the role of the learner in the learning process, language curriculum designers have endeavoured to develop autonomous and independent learners who can take control and the responsibility of their own learning. One of the means to achieve this is to base language instruction on process-oriented curriculum design since it aims to facilitate natural development (Breen, 2001). According to Littlewood (1991), the main aim of such curricula is also to create contexts to encourage natural language growth. For the conceptualization of process-oriented curriculum, it is necessary that "the objectives are defined as topics, tasks, and so forth, the syllabus offers a sequence of contexts for learning", "the materials are based on using language to exchange meaning about the tasks", and "the learning activities include the use of language for communication."

Littlewood (1991) highlights that process-oriented curriculum takes the learning process of students as a basis for their learning. According to Benson (2001), involving students in the learning process from the beginning and giving them the flexibility of change and learner choice promote learner autonomy. For him, learner in-

volvement in decision-making process exists at the level of curriculum and that puts significance on the concept of curriculum in autonomous learning environment.

A comprehensive review of scholarly articles on learner autonomy in language learning was conducted. Some studies incorporate a number of definitions of learner autonomy (Benson, 2001; Cotterall, 1995; Dickenson, 1987; Holec, 1985; Kenny 1993; Little, 1991). Within the context of education, that there have been different characteristics of autonomous learners was suggested by many researchers (Benson, 2001; Bren & Mann, 1997; Candy, 1991; Chan, 2001; Dickinson, 1987; Thanasoulas, 2000). Beside the in-depth examination of the importance of learner autonomy (Benson, 2006; Cotterall, 1995), the ways of promoting autonomy have been the focus of investigations for a long time (Bayat 2007; Benson, 2001; Crabbe, 1993; Little, 1995; Nation & Macalister, 2010). A number of studies showed that there is a causal relationship between motivation and autonomy (Benson, 2001; Dickinson, 1995; Garcia & Pintrich, 1996; Littlewood, 1996; Wu, 2003). There has been a large number of studies focusing on the roles associated with teachers and learners in an autonomous learning environment (Benson 2001; Cotterall, 1995; Dickinson, 1995; Oxford, 1989; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Skehan, 1989; Wright, 1987). A number of studies conducted on the beliefs and attitudes of learners demonstrated positive effects of learners towards learning and autonomy (Cotterall, 1995; Horwitz, 1999; Perclova, 2003; Savingnon & Wang, 2003). Besides, the research on autonomy showed that students' perceptions of teaching and learning process is very important (Areti, 2006; Biggs, 2006; Clayton, 2004; Thiagarajan & Jacobs, 2001; Trinidad & Pearson, 2004). What is more, a large number of studies focused on the positive effects of portfolios in fostering autonomy in writing skills in second language learning (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Hirvela & Pierson, 2000; Khodadady & Khodabakhshzade, 2012; Muller-Verweyen, 1999; Weigle, 2002; Yildirim, 2005).

The literature review on autonomy demonstrated that learner autonomy in language learning and writing skills has not received much attention as much as both students' attitudes and teachers' perceptions in a particular context are concerned. The review also yielded no empirical research with regard to learner autonomy in writing skills at either secondary school education or tertiary levels in Northern Cyprus.

One of the major goals of the English program offered by the School of Foreign Language and Preparatory School (FLEPS) at the Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) is 'to develop an autonomous and self-directed approach to learning' (ENGL155 Course Description, Fall 2012-2013). The informal observations, as a teacher with thirteen years of experience in the Faculty of Law, and the informal dialogues I had with the colleagues teaching English courses have displayed that the current instructional framework fails to achieve the course objective set and, therefore, the existing curriculum inhibits the development of learner autonomy. In this regard, students are not considered autonomous enough in writing skills. Despite this, examination of learner autonomy has not received much attention as far as the writing skill area of English language courses are concerned at the FLEPS. Consequently, there seems to be a need for the thorough examination of the existing situation to find out how students and teachers experience the writing skill area of the current curriculum with respect to learner autonomy at the FLEPS.

To this end, this study aimed to examine learner autonomy in writing classes from freshman Law students' and their teachers' viewpoints. The investigation of the present situation is expected to provide a comprehensive analysis on the instructional processes of being autonomous in writing skills.

To achieve the aim of the study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How are the students' attitudes towards language learning?
2. How do students perceive their autonomy in language learning?
3. How do students perceive their autonomy in writing skills?
4. How do teachers perceive their students' with regard to "attitudes towards learning English, "autonomy in language learning", and "autonomy in writing in English?"

## Methods

### *Research Design*

The study adopted case study to examine the setting intensively through quantitative and qualitative data (Bryman, 2004). Mixed method design was ensured via a questionnaire, to examine students' perceptions related to learner autonomy, and interview protocols with teachers, to elicit in-depth data about their own perceptions related to the implementation of autonomous learning and instructional process in the program.

### *Research Sample*

Although the voluntary based questionnaire was administered to all freshmen students (n=231) enrolled in ENGL155 course (English 1), it was completely filled in by 200 respondents, all of whom were included in the study. Among the nine English language teachers at the Faculty of Law, only six were willing to participate in the study. Due to the nature of the study, the findings can be generalized only to this particular context of study (Bryman, 2004).

### *Research Instrument and Procedure*

Multiple data were collected through a student questionnaire and semi-structured teacher interview protocols. The items in the questionnaire are grouped in four sections and are based on a five-point Likert scale (5 = "Corresponds exactly, 1 = "Doesn't correspond at all"). The first group of statements (1-4) collected demographic information about the participants. In the second group of statements (5-18), students' attitudes towards learning English were investigated. Statements in this section were developed by examining several questionnaires on attitudes in second language learning (Gan, 2004; He & Li, 2009; Matsuda, 2000; Young, 2006). The third group of statements (19-54) was to collect information about how students perceive their own level of autonomy in language learning. The third group of items was adjusted from Deniz Karagöl, who adapted it from Egel's Autonomy Learner Questionnaire (ALQ) for her study (Karagöl, 2008). The last group of statements (55-78) collected information on the students' perceptions of their autonomy in writing in English. Due to the lack of learner autonomy scales focusing on writing process

specifically, attention was given to examine the previous empirical studies which identified the characteristics of autonomous language learners (Sert, 2006; Thanasoulas, 2000; Usuki, 2002; Wu, 2003).

Interview protocols were administered to teachers to collect in-depth data on their own reflection of the concept of learner autonomy and their views of promoting autonomy in writing classes. The interview questions were developed through the themes and areas of investigation related to the aim of the study (He & Li, 2009; Matsuda, 2000; Sert, 2006; Thanasoulas, 2000; Usuki, 2002; Wu, 2003; Young, 2006).

The questionnaire, which took approximately 25 minutes for completion, was administered to the freshmen students in their classrooms by their own class teachers. The interviews were held with English language teachers, teaching these students since the beginning of the semester, in their own offices personally. Each interview took approximately 60 minutes and recorded upon the permission of the teacher. Necessary permission for the study was received before the implementation of the instruments.

#### *Validity and Reliability*

Two experts' opinions were taken to improve the content and face validity of the student questionnaire. Having had their comments and suggestions, modifications were done accordingly before administering the questionnaire. Factor analysis was used to statistically establish the construct validity of the questionnaire. The factor analysis was employed separately for each group of statements in the questionnaire to examine the overlap among the statements. Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO), which should be over .50, was employed to ensure the capability of the questionnaire with the factor analysis. KMO test was found to be .84 for the second group of statements, .79 for the third group of statements, and .86 for the last group of statements. Barlett's Test of sphericity was significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) for all these group of statements.

A pilot study was conducted, on the 7th of June in 2012, to measure the reliability of the questionnaire items. To do so, 170 students were randomly chosen from the freshmen students, who were not involved in the actual study. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient test was done and it was measured .84 for the second group of statements, .85 for the third group of statements, and .89 for the last group of statements. Therefore, it can be said that the items were completely appropriate for the research goal and the questionnaire was reliable to be administered to Law students, whose native language was Turkish. As the final step, back-translation of the questionnaire was made by an expert to remove the mismatches between the Turkish and English versions of the questionnaire and improve the quality of the questionnaire. Modifications were made in accordance with the feedback received.

To improve the trustworthiness of qualitative data, first, experts' opinions were obtained on the interview protocols developed. With their reviews and comments, the protocols were improved. These interview protocols were also piloted with two English teachers and, because of certain questions overlapped, some revisions were made. Verifications of the transcriptions of the interviews as well as the coded data by an inquiry auditor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and triangulation helped to ensure the objectivity and credibility of the qualitative data.

### *Data Analysis*

The quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS (18.0) program to answer the first three research questions. To answer them, descriptive statistics were conducted to resolve the frequency, the mean, the variance and the standard deviation of the data gathered. One-sample t-test was conducted on the students' attitudes towards language learning, their autonomy in language learning and writing skills, to evaluate whether their mean was significantly different from 3, the accepted mean value on a five-point Likert scale. Since the items in the questionnaire were examined through a five-point Likert scale (5 = Corresponds exactly, 4 = Corresponds a lot, 3 = Corresponds moderately, 2 = Corresponds a little, and 1 = Doesn't correspond at all), the mean value accepted is 3, which is the moderate level and can be the level of comparison.

As far as the qualitative data are considered, after all interviews were transcribed, they were subjected to content analysis by coding the teachers' names from T-1 to T-6. This process yielded themes which were coded in light of the research questions. In addition to the themes derived from the literature, more themes and sub-themes emerged as the researchers proceeded (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Creation of codes and sub-codes on matrices enabled the researchers to cluster segments under meaningful categories and set the preliminary phase for drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A comprehensive strategy of data and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978b quoted in Patton, 2002) was employed to better understand the phenomenon under examination.

## **Results**

The data triangulated provided invaluable findings with regard to students' attitudes related to their autonomy in language learning and writing skills and teachers' perceptions related to the instructional factors influencing learner autonomy in writing skills.

### *Students' attitudes towards language learning*

Regarding the first research question, "How are the students' attitudes towards language learning?", the mean of attitude scale was  $M=3.7$ , with a standard deviation of  $.8$ . This was statistically significantly higher than a rating of 3 on the five-point scale,  $t(199)=12$ ,  $p<.001$ , as is shown in Table 1 below. In other words, the results showed that students have a more positive attitude towards language learning than average level.

**Table 1***T-test for the Students' Attitudes towards Language Learning*

<i>Test value = 3</i>							<i>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</i>		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
Mean Attitude	200	3.7	.8	11.998	199	.000	.67522	.5642	.7862

As far as qualitative data are considered, as for the teachers, students have positive attitudes towards learning English. One of the teachers (T-1) said that at the beginning of the semester students had a prejudice towards learning English since all of the courses at the Faculty were conducted in Turkish. However, towards the end of the semester, they became positive learners of English and they didn't have that prejudice anymore. Another teacher (T-4) mentioned that the students were positive towards learning English since "they attend the class, and participate actively and do their homework."

***Lack of students' autonomy in language learning***

The quantitative findings showed that the mean of students' perception of their own autonomy in language learning was  $M=2.77$ , with a standard deviation of .48. This was statistically lower than a rating of 3 on the five-point scale,  $t(199) = -6.6$ ,  $p<.001$ , as shown in Table 2 below. In other words, students have lower level of autonomy in language learning than the average level.

**Table 2***T-test for the Students' Perceptions of Autonomy in Language Learning*

<i>Test value = 3</i>							<i>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</i>		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
Mean Attitude	200	2.77	.48	-6.621	199	.000	-.22474	-.2917	-.1578

Considering qualitative findings, all teachers said that their students are not autonomous in language learning. All of them reported that learner autonomy is significant because it is "half of success" (T-1). One of the teachers underlined the impor-

tance of autonomy because, according to her/him, "Learning autonomously is a skill that can be the lifestyle of a person" (T-6). The findings also illustrated that all of the teachers give importance to foster autonomy in their classes as far as they can because they believe that being an autonomous learner is important in language learning. One teacher said that s/he gave importance to promote learner autonomy in class but it could not be applied in her/his class because her/his students did not give that much importance to it.

#### *Students' lack of autonomy in writing*

Regarding the third research question, the mean of attitude scale was  $M=3.2$ , with a standard deviation of  $SD=.76$ . This was statistically significantly higher than a rating of 3 on the five-point scale,  $t(199)=3.8$ ,  $p<.001$ , as shown in Table 3 below. In other words, the results displayed that students are just above the average level of perceiving themselves as autonomous in writing in English.

**Table 3**

*T-test for the Students' Perception of Autonomy in Writing Skills*

Test value = 3							95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig</i>	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Mean Attitude	200	3.2	.76	3.818	199	.000	.20729	.10002	.3144

The qualitative data also showed that all of the teachers did not consider their students autonomous in writing in English. All of them said that their students mostly depend on the teacher while most of them stated that students depend on the course book. Only a few of them stressed students dependence on the model used in writing. According to half of the teachers, the most important reason for the students' lack of autonomy is that students are being spoon-fed. Two of the teachers said that educational system in high school was the reason why students are not autonomous. They added, "Because they are not used to learn independently, they become passive learners". T-6 stated, "They get used to memorization and that's because of the curriculum in educational system."

#### *Problems inhibiting students' autonomy in language learning and writing*

The most important problem students face in language learning is the inappropriate instructional environment, as all of the teachers emphasized. They all complained about the fixed tables and chairs in the classroom which constituted problems for collaborative work. The qualitative data showed that since the physical environment was not suitable to move chairs, sitting arrangements conducive for group works could not be designed. The curriculum was considered as the second major problem inhibiting students' autonomy in language learning. That the material used

does not promote learner autonomy and the methodology adopted in class is not sufficient enough to develop students' autonomy was underlined by four of the teachers, respectively. Besides, half of the teachers mentioned that they were not able to develop students' autonomy through using autonomy-promoting strategies because of the time constraint. As another major problem in language learning, half of the teachers mentioned about the state of students' being passive because of the educational system they had gone through till now. As to T-5, teachers should help students "develop their skills in taking the responsibility for their language learning because they are not used to it, especially in high schools. They [teachers] do lecturing and students are not used to be responsible for their own learning much."

According to the qualitative data gathered, the major problem preventing learner autonomy in writing skill is the students' problems in language, including vocabulary and sentence structure. Half of the teachers said that their students had problems in language use because they depended on the teacher and the course book too much. They also added that since students did not use dictionaries, they did not do free writing exercises. T-3 stated: "*My students do not trust themselves. They show me every single sentence they write and get my approval before writing the second sentence. When they start seeing that the sentences they write are correct, and get the teachers approval, in time they will become independent, but not yet.*"

On the same point, T-6 stated that students mostly depend on the teacher "then the course book, and then the information in the course book ... This is because of the curriculum because it doesn't develop their autonomous learning skill, thus they need to depend on something else but not themselves." One of the teachers (T-3) said that the students became more autonomous if their thinking skills were developed. She said, "A few of my students became more independent in writing. Those were the ones who adopted the skills of criticizing, questioning, and reading between the lines." The curriculum was reported as another major problem by the majority of the teachers. Two of the teachers expressed that since the material used by the teachers was not used properly, learner autonomy was not developed. T-4 said, "The materials promote autonomy only if they are used correctly and autonomously by the teachers."

## Discussion and Conclusions

The findings for the first research question displayed that students have a positive attitude towards learning English. Learners' active participation and responsibility are essential in the field of foreign language learning and learners need to be willing to act independently, and in cooperation with others, as a socially responsible person (Dam, 1995). And, also as the teachers mentioned before, positive attitude towards learning English is a good motivation for students. Thus, motivation is the essential part of autonomy. Learners become successful if they take responsibility of their own learning by having the ability and willingness to learn on their own (Lowes & Target, 1999).

The findings triangulated displayed that although students have positive attitudes towards language learning, they do not perceive themselves completely autonomous in English language learning and in writing skill. Regarding the second

and third research questions, the quantitative-qualitative findings supported the idea that students lack autonomy in language learning; however, learner autonomy is considered a vital part of learning process. As the teachers also mentioned, autonomy is important in language learning since, as Holec (1985) stated, 'if students are able to foster their level of autonomy, they become better language learners.' One of the key concepts of learner autonomy is to centre the focus on learning rather than teaching. However, as Little (2000) highlights, moving the focus from teacher to learner requires the organization of lessons in collaboration with learners taking into account both materials and methods rather than being in collaboration with the instructional material and the teacher. Teachers still play a significant role in students' learning process since, according to Little (1995), students do not become automatically autonomous in the classroom. Teachers are the ones who provide learners with the appropriate tools and opportunities to practice using them. But that does not mean total dependence on the teacher. Teachers have risky roles in the class regarding autonomy because there has to be a balanced relationship between teacher and students in order to make students autonomous, independent from the teacher. Teacher should be a guide, not a spoon-feeder.

The findings suggested that the teachers do not perceive their students as autonomous learners of English. Although the teachers stated that it is important to promote learner autonomy, most of them complained of the time constraint and insufficiently qualified material in promoting autonomy in the curriculum. The writing skill area of the curriculum was also found to be insufficient in promoting learner autonomy. Students' lack of confidence was considered as the reason inhibiting learner autonomy in writing and promoting her/his dependency on the teacher. According to the teachers, the origin of this problem was the educational system, not the students. Therefore, if the curriculum does not promote autonomy, teachers have to find practical ways of implementing it instead of following it as prescribed.

Regarding the problems inhibiting students' autonomy in language learning and writing, the most mentioned one, physical environment - as supportive circumstances and contexts - is one of the main elements facilitating effective learning process and promoting learner autonomy (Esch, 1996). When the instructional environment is not proper, it makes learning in collaboration difficult. However, collaborative work is very important in fostering autonomy. Rüschoff (1999), basing his suggestion on Vygotsky's constructivism theory, highlights that learning should be considered as an active and collaborative process of constructing knowledge. The problem of curriculum, as mentioned by the teachers, is another substantial problem to be resolved. In implementing learner autonomy in the classroom, as the focus moves from teachers to learners, the problem of fulfilling the demands of the curriculum may rise (Dam, 2000).

The findings of the study highlight a number of areas for further inquiry into the topic of learner autonomy in language learning. Firstly, it is obvious from the results that there is a need for an in-depth investigation of the issue to find out the reasons of freshmen students' low level of learner autonomy in the Faculty of Law. One of the areas requiring in-depth investigation is the existing English language curriculum. A comprehensive examination of the writing skill area of the current curriculum would

shed lights upon the teachers' concerns with regard to learner autonomy. A further large scale study can also be conducted to investigate learner autonomy in language learning and writing in the other faculties at EMU. An in-depth qualitative study through action research can also be conducted via in-class observations, interviews and students' self-reflective reports to gain more insights in understanding how Law students take control over what to learn, why to learn and how to learn.

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## Yabancı Dil Öğrenim ve Öğretiminde Öğrenen Özerkliğinin İncelenmesi

### Atıf:

Tanyeli, N., & Kuter, S. (2013). Examining learner autonomy in foreign language learning and instruction. *Eğitim Araştırmaları-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 53/A, 19-36.

### Özet

*Problem Durumu:* 21. Yüzyıl eğitim bilimleri alanında, program geliştirme uzmanları dikkatlerini yabancı dil öğretiminde öğrenci gelişiminin ve öğrenmenin niteliği üzerinde giderek daha çok yoğunlaştırıyorlar. Öğrenci merkezli yaklaşım öğrenci gelişimini desteklemede öğrenen özerkliğinin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Cottoral (2000)'a göre, öğrenen özerkliği dil öğreniminin vazgeçilmez bir parçası olmasına rağmen, yabancı dil program tasarımlarında yeterince desteklenmiyor. Yabancı dil program tasarımlarının en önemli amaçlarından biri öğrenciyi öğrenme sürecinin merkezinde tutup öğrenen özerkliğini desteklemektir. Öğrenme sürecinde öğrencinin rolünün önemi düşünüldüğünde, dil program tasarımcıları öğrenmenin sorumluluğunu ve kontrolünü alabilen, bağımsız ve özerk öğrenciler geliştirmeyi amaçlamışlardır. Öğrenen özerkliği alanında yapılan çalışmalar İngilizce dil öğrenimi ve yazı yazma becerisi konularına değinilmediğini göstermiştir. Ayrıca, özerklik alanında yapılan çalışmalar hem öğrenci hem de öğretmen algılarının birlikte ele alınmasına pek önem vermemiştir. Bunun yanı sıra, alanyazın taraması Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'nde ortaöğretim ve yükseköğretimde yazma becerisi alanında öğrenen özerkliğiyle ilgili araştırmaların yapılmadığını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Resmi olmayan gözlemler ve deneyimler Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi öğrencilerinin İngilizce yazma dersinde problemler yaşadıklarını göstermiştir. Yaşanılan problemlerin hala devam etmesi öğrenen özerkliğine yeterince önem verilmediğini göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda, yazı yazma dersinde öğrenen özerkliğinin kapsamlı olarak incelenmesi gerekmektedir.

*Araştırmanın Amacı:* Bu durum çalışmasının amacı Yabancı Diller ve Hazırlık Okulu 1. sınıf Hukuk öğrencilerinin İngilizce yazma dersindeki özerkliklerine ve öğretmenlerinin öğretim programının yazma beceri alanının özerkliği artırmasına ilişkin algılarını incelemektir. Bu durum incelemesi yazma becerilerinde özerkliği etkileyen öğretim süreçlerinin kapsamlı analizini sağladı ve öğretim programının yazma beceri alanında yeniden gözden geçirilmesi gereken konulara ışık tuttu. Çalışmanın amacına ulaşmak için dört araştırma sorusu oluşturulmuştur:

- 1) Öğrencilerin dil öğrenimine ilişkin tutumları nasıldır?
- 2) Öğrenciler dil öğrenimindeki özerkliklerini nasıl algırlarlar?
- 3) Öğrenciler yazma becerisindeki özerkliklerini nasıl algırlarlar?
- 4) Öğretmenler öğrencilerinin dil öğrenimine ilişkin tutumlarını, dil

öğrenimindeki özerkliklerini, ve yazma becerisindeki özerkliklerini nasıl algıladılar?

*Araştırmanın Yöntemi:* Bu araştırmanın çalışma grubunu ENGL155 dersine (İngilizce I) kayıtlı 200 birinci sınıf Hukuk öğrencisi ve bu öğrencilere ders veren altı öğretmen oluşturmuştur. Çalışmanın yöntemi gereği, sonuçta elde edilen bulgular sadece çalışmanın yapıldığı ortama genelleştirilebilir (Bryman, 2004). Araştırma, karma araştırma yöntemine dayandırılıp, veriler anket ve görüşme soruları aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Geniş kapsamlı alanyazın taramasından sonra geliştirilen anketin kapsam ve yüzey geçerliliği, pilot deneme yapıldıktan sonra, uzman görüşler doğrultusunda sağlanmıştır. Daha sonra 78 maddeli beşli Likert dereceleme ölçeğinden oluşan anketin yapı geçerliliğini incelemek için faktör analizi yapılarak, Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) katsayı ve Barlett's Sphericity testine tabii tutuldu. Anketin Cronbach's Alpha güvenilirlik değeri .92 olarak ölçülmüştür. Tüm kategoriler için KMO değerinin .79'dan yüksek ve Bartlett testinin anlamlı çıkması verilerin faktör analizi için uygun olduğunu göstermiştir. Geçerlilik ve güvenilirlik çalışmalarından sonra, anket yalnızca öğrencilere uygulanıp, onların öğrenen özerkliğiyle ilgili algılarını ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflemiştir. Görüşmeler ise öğretmenlerin öğrencilerinin özerklikleriyle ilgili algılarını ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamıştır. Görüşmelerden elde edilen nitel veriler, tematik kodlanarak, içerik analizine tabii tutulmuştur. Nitel verilerin güvenilirlik ve nesneliliği yöntem çeşitlemesi ve katılımcı teyidi yapılarak ve uzman görüşü alınarak sağlanmıştır.

*Araştırmanın Bulguları:* Hukuk fakültesi birinci sınıf öğrencileri üzerinde gerçekleştirilen bu çalışmada, öğrencilere verilen tutum ölçeği sonuçlarına göre, öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenmeye yönelik olumlu tutumlara sahip oldukları ortaya çıkmıştır (M=3.7). Öğrencilerin kendi özerkliklerine ilişkin algıları ortalamasının altında çıkmıştır (M=2.77). Sonuç olarak öğrencilerin kendilerini dil öğreniminde yeterince bağımsız ve özerk olarak algılamadıkları sonucuna varılmıştır. Aynı şekilde, yazma becerisinde öğrenci algılarının ortalamasının altında (M=3.2) çıkması kendilerini yazma becerisinde bağımsız ve özerk olarak algılamadıklarını göstermiştir. Öğretmenlerle yapılan görüşmelerden elde edilen bulgulara göre, öğrenciler, Hukuk Fakültesi'ndeki tüm bölüm derslerinin Türkçe olmasından dolayı, İngilizce öğrenmeye karşı bir önyargıya sahip olarak döneme başlıyorlar. Ortaya çıkan bulgular öğrencilerin önyargılarının dönem sonuna doğru azaldığını gösterdi. Bunun sebebi, öğretmenlere göre, öğrencilerin İngilizce dersine aktif olarak katılmaları ve ders dışında da ödevlerini yapmalarıdır. Bulgular, ayrıca, öğretmenlerin de öğrencilerini dil öğreniminde ve yazma becerisinde bağımsız ve özerk öğrenen olarak algılamadıklarını gösterdi. Öğretmenlerin algıları göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, öğretim ortamı, araç ve gereçler, ve stratejilerin öğrenen özerkliğini engellediği vurgulandı. Ayrıca, öğrencilerin dil kullanımındaki problemlerinin ve öğretmenlere bağımlılıklarının onların öğrenme süreçlerindeki özerkliklerini kısıtladığı belirtildi.

*Araştırmanın Sonuçları:* Öğrenciler dil öğrenmede olumlu tutumlara sahip olduklarını ifade etmelerine rağmen, öğrenci ve öğretmen görüşleriyle çeşitlenen veriler öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenmede özerk olmadıkları yönünde benzerlik gösterdi. Bu bağlamda, öğretim programının yazma beceri alanının ve öğretim süreçlerinin öğrencilerin yazma ve öğrenmedeki özerkliğini artırmada problemler içerdiği vurgulanmıştır.

Bulgular, ayrıca, öğrencilerin dil kullanımındaki özgüven eksikliklerinin yazı yazmadaki özerkliklerini engellediğini ve onların öğretmene bağımlılıklarını artırdığını göstermiştir. Fakat, bunun esas nedeninin öğrenciler değil de öğretim sistemi olduğu ifade edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, bulgulara göre, İngilizce dersi öğretim programının öğrenen özerkliğini desteklemediği durumlarda, öğretmenlerin amacı öğrencilerin özerkleşme sürecinde yaşadığı problemleri pratik yollarla azaltmak ve öğrencileri daha bağımsız ve özerk olacak şekilde yetiştirmektir. Bu çalışmada elde edilen bulgular doğrultusunda, Hukuk Fakültesi öğrencilerinin İngilizce dil öğreniminde ve yazı yazma dersinde kendilerini neden özerk olarak algılamadıklarının sebeplerinin derinlemesine incelenmesi önemli bir husustur. Bu alanda yapılacak kapsamlı bir nitel çalışma İngilizce dersi öğretim programının ve öğrencilerin yazı yazma becerilerinin geliştirilmesine katkı sağlayacaktır.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* İngilizce dersi öğretim programı, yazma becerisi, öğrenen özerkliği, dil öğreniminde özerklik