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**PERCEPTIONS AND REPORTED PRACTICES OF ENGLISH
TEACHERS IN MUĞLA REGARDING LEARNER AUTONOMY**

ASLI AYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI

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ASLI AYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI


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Supervisor : Asst. Prof. Dr. Suat CAKOVA

Committee Member : Prof. Dr. ŞEVKİ KÖMÜR

Committee Member : Prof. Dr. Turan PAKER



Institute Manager: Prof. Dr. AYŞE REZAN ÇEÇEN EROĞUL

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Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Suat CAKOVA

Tez Danışmanı



Prof. Dr. ŞEVKİ KÖMÜR

Üye



Prof. Dr. Turan PAKER

Üye

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Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Tez Yazım Kılavuzuna uygun olarak hazırlanan “Perceptions and Reported Practices of English Teachers in Muğla Regarding Learner Autonomy” başlıklı Yüksek Lisans tez çalışmasında;

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ÖZET

MUĞLA'DAKİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ÖĞRENEN ÖZERKLİĞİNE İLİŞKİN ALGILARI VE BİLDİRDİKLERİ UYGULAMALAR

ASLI AYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI

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Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, Muğla'daki İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğrenen özerkliğine ilişkin algılarını ve uygulamalarını araştırmaktır. Çalışma karma metodlu araştırma modelinde planlanmış olup anket uygulaması ve mülakattan oluşmaktadır. Araştırma 2017-2018 Eğitim Öğretim Yılı ikinci döneminde, Muğla, Mentеше'deki ilkokul, ortaokul ve liselerde görev yapan 90 İngilizce öğretmeni ile gerçekleştirilmiş ve veriler bir anket ve akabinde gönüllü katılımcılarla yapılan bir ropörtaj vasıtasıyla toplanmıştır.

Çalışmanın ilk kısmında, Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) tarafından İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğrenen özerkliği ile ilgili inancaç ve uygulamalarını araştırmak için geliştirilen “İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Öğrenen Özerkliği İle İlgili İnançları” anketi kullanılmıştır. Toplam 5 bölümden oluşan anketin son kısmında, öğretmenlere kısa bir ropörtaj için gönüllü olup olmadıkları sorulmuştur. Araştırmanın ikinci safhasında, 10 gönüllü ile ropörtaj yapılarak onların öğrenen özerkliği algıları ve özerkliği geliştirmeye yönelik uygulamaları, küçük yaştaki öğrenciler, mevcut İngilizce ders kitapları hakkındaki detaylı görüşleri alınmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları öğretmenlerin öğrenen özerkliğini bir “öğrenmeyi öğrenme” meselesi olarak gördüklerini ve yabancı dil öğreniminde başarı getirdiğine inandıklarını göstermiştir. Öğretmenlerin çoğu öğrencileri özerklik kazanmaları için desteklemeye çalıştıklarını, küçük yaştaki öğrencilerde özerklik geliştirmenin mümkün olduğunu, mevcut İngilizce ders kitaplarının özerkliği pek desteklemediğini belirtmişlerdir.

Keywords: Öğrenen Özerkliği, Öğrenen Özerkliğini Geliştirme, Yabancı Dil Öğretimi

ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS AND REPORTED PRACTICES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN MUĞLA REGARDING LEARNER AUTONOMY

ASLI AYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI

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Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. SUAT CAKOVA

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The main purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions and practices of English teachers' in Muğla regarding learner autonomy (LA). The study was planned in a mixed method research design which included both questionnaire and interview. It was conducted with 90 English teachers working in primary, secondary or high schools in Menteşe, Muğla in the spring term of 2017-2018 Academic Year and data were collected via a questionnaire and follow-up interviews with the volunteer participants.

In the first part of this study “English language teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy questionnaire” was used which was developed by Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) to investigate the beliefs and practices of EFL teachers. It consisted of five sections and in the last section, teachers were asked if they volunteered to participate in a short interview. In the second phase of the study, interviews were made with 10 volunteers to collect data about their insights on learner autonomy, their practices to promote it, young learners and the present English textbooks. The results revealed that teachers perceive LA as a matter of “learning to learn” and they believe that it brings success in L2 learning. A majority of teachers reported that they tried to support their students to become autonomous, they believed that it’s possible to promote LA with young learners, they do not feel much positive about the existing English coursebooks in terms of supporting LA.

Keywords: Learner autonomy, promoting learner autonomy, foreign language teaching.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Sayfa
ÖZET.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
LIST OF APPENDICES	xv

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study	1
1.2. Purpose of the Study.....	3
1.3. Problem and Research Questions	3
1.4. The Significance of the Study	5
1.5. Assumptions	8
1.6. Limitations of the Study	8
1.7. Definitions	8

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The origins of “Learner Autonomy” concept.....	10
2.2. Definition of Learner Autonomy	14
2.2.1. What is Learner Autonomy?	15
2.2.2. Common Misconceptions about Learner Autonomy.....	18
2.3. Approaches that Help the Development of Learner Autonomy	19
2.3.1. Resource-based Approaches	24
2.3.2. Technology-based Approaches	24
2.3.3. Learner-based Approaches	25
2.3.4. Classroom-based Approaches	26

2.3.5. Curriculum-based Approaches	26
2.3.6. Teacher-based Approaches	27
2.4. Roles of the Teacher and Learner in an Autonomy Supportive Classroom	28
2.4.1. Teacher’s Roles in Autonomous Learning.....	29
2.4.2. The role of Learner in Autonomous Learning.....	32
2.5. The Importance of Fostering LA in Turkey	35
2.6. The new Curricula of ELT in Turkey and Learner Autonomy.....	37
2.7. Research Studies Conducted on LA in Language Teaching.....	41

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design	50
3.2. Setting	51
3.3. Participants	52
3.4. Instruments	54
3.4.1. English Language Teachers’ Beliefs about LA Questionnaire.....	55
3.4.2. Follow up Interviews.....	57
3.5. Data collection Procedure	57
3.6. Data Analysis	58

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

4.1. Findings for Research Question 1.....	60
4.2. Findings for Research Question 2.....	66
4.3. Findings for Research Question 3.....	70
4.4. Findings for Research Question 4.....	73
4.5. Findings for Research Question 5.....	76
4.6. Findings for Research Question 6.....	79
4.7. Findings for Research Question 7.....	80

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Discussion.....	83
5.1.1. English Teachers’ Perceptions of Learner Autonomy	83
5.1.2 English Teachers’ Views on Desirability and Feasibility of Promoting LA... ..	85
5.1.3. English Teachers’ Opinions about the Autonomy Level of Their Learners.....	86
5.1.4. To What Extent do English Teachers Promote LA?.....	87
5.1.5. Reported Practices of English Teachers to Promote LA	89
5.1.6. English Teachers’ Reflections about Young Learners’ Autonomy.....	90
5.1.7. English Teachers’ Reflections about the Existing English Coursebooks in Schools.....	91
5.2. Conclusion and Implications	93
5.2.1. Summary and Conclusion of the Study.....	93
5.2.2. Implications of the Study.....	96
5.2.3. Recommendations for Further Research.....	97
REFERENCES	98
APPENDICES	106
CV	115

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1. The Distribution of Research Questions According to Data Collection Instruments.....	5
Table 2.1. Research on Teachers’ Beliefs about L2 Learner Autonomy.....	45
Table 3.1. Demographic Information of Participants.....	53
Table 3.2. Total Sampling of Interview Volunteers.....	54
Table 3.3. Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Coefficient of Desirability and Feasibility Scales about Learners’ Involvement in Decision-making.....	55
Table 3.4. Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Coefficient of Desirability and Feasibility Scales on Learning to Learn Skills of Students.....	56
Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers’ Beliefs about L2 Learner Autonomy....	61
Table 4.2. Teachers’ Responses for Interview Question 1.....	63
Table 4.3. Teachers’ Responses for Interview Question 2.....	64
Table 4.4. Desirability of Student Involvement in Decision-making.....	66
Table 4.5. Feasibility of Student Involvement in Decision-making.....	67
Table 4.6. A Paired Samples T-test on the Desirability and Feasibility Scales of Student involvement in Decision-making.....	67
Table 4.7. Desirability of Learning to Learn Skills in Students.....	68
Table 4.8. Feasibility of Learning to Learn Skills in Students.....	69
Table 4.9. A Paired Samples T-test on the Desirability and Feasibility Scales of Learning to Learn Skills.....	69
Table 4.10. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers’ Opinions about the Statement; “My students have a Fair Degree of Learner Autonomy”.....	70
Table 4.11. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers’ Opinions about the Statement “I give my students opportunities to develop LA”.....	73
Table 4.12. Teachers’ Answers Related to Their Practices to Support LA.....	76
Table 4.13. Teachers’ Comments Related to Young Learners’ Autonomy (Positive View).....	79

Table 4.14. Teachers’ Comments Related to Young Learners’ Autonomy (Negative View)..... 80

Table 4.15. Teachers’ Opinions about the English Coursebooks’ Suitability to Promote LA..... 81



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. Levels of Autonomous Learning (Nunan, 1997).....	20
Figure 2.2. Developing Autonomy through Teaching (Littlewood, 1997, p.83).....	22
Figure 2.3. Approaches to Foster Learner Autonomy (Benson, 2011).....	23

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR : Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CoE : Council of Europe

CPLA : Centre for Promoting Learner Autonomy

ELT : English Language Teaching

EFL : English as a Foreign Language

LA : Learner Autonomy

SPSS : Statistical Package for Social Sciences

MEB : Ministry of National Education

TTK : Board of Education and Discipline

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Etik Kurul Kararı	106
Appendix 2. Etik Kurul Kararı Aydınlatılmış Onay Formu	107
Appendix 3. İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Öğrenen Özerkliği ile İlgili İnançları Anketi.....	108
Appendix 4. Anketin Birinci Bölümüne İlişkin Betimsel Veri Tablosu.....	112
Appendix 5. Mülakat soruları.....	114



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

World is changing too fast, so do the educational approaches. These changes undoubtedly have a significant effect in the domain of foreign language teaching too. Over the last century, foreign language education went through many processes and during these processes various approaches, methods and techniques were deeply investigated in the academic field. Some of them were largely abandoned and became old-fashioned while others replaced them very quickly. In traditional approaches of ELT there were; rote-learning, memorization, teacher-centeredness, short term study habits and grammar based structures as a course content. In contrast to this, recent approaches have some new principles such as; teaching English as a means of communication, teaching authentic English, creating learner-centered classroom environment, promoting autonomy, raising awareness, using technology and the internet while teaching. Many of these principles are directly linked to learner autonomy which can be considered as a crucial component of a successful learning in today's educational world.

1.1. Background of the study

Due to the attention learner autonomy (LA hereafter) attracted in the field of education, it has gained a considerable importance over the last few decades. There have been many studies on LA, but the first researcher who focused on this notion was Holec (1981) who defines learner autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one's own learning” (p.3).

According to Holec (1979), an autonomous learner is capable of determining the objectives, defining the contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking and evaluating what has been acquired (p.3). In a retrieved definition of The Sheffield Hallam University, on the website of Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), Moore (2018) indicates that;

“The Sheffield Hallam definition of learner autonomy starts with the premise that an autonomous learner takes responsibility for his/her own learning. In doing this:

- They can identify:
 - their learning goals (what they need to learn)
 - their learning processes (how they will learn it)
 - how they will evaluate and use their learning
- they have well-founded conceptions of learning
- they have a range of learning approaches and skills
- they can organize their learning
- they have good information processing skills
- they are well motivated to learn”

(Retrieved from homepage of CPLA, 04.11.2018)

In order to have all these qualifications, a person should be supported to gain a sense of responsibility, control and consciousness. When we consider it in educational settings of today, this process can mostly be managed with the gradual help of a guide/teacher and this is the only possible way to become an autonomous learner. In other words, teacher’s role is very important in the process of gaining autonomy. That is why this study focuses on teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding LA.

In the field of foreign language learning LA has gained importance for over the last forty years. As the theory and practice of language teaching and learning have changed in recent decades helping learners to gain autonomy has become a crucial part of foreign language learning process.

Learning a new language is undoubtedly a multifaceted matter which is affected by many factors such as teacher, material, learning environment, motivation and so on. But it is also a matter of personal interest which depends on eagerness of individuals from many aspects. Within this context learner needs to have desire, motivation, ambition and readiness for a successful language learning process and only these prerequisites may help them to gain autonomy in their learning. As they gain autonomy they become more conscious learners who have control on their own learning to some extent and this enables them to succeed. Thus they experience a more prosperous teaching-learning process. In

short, autonomous learners play the most important role in their own learning process.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to reach an elaborative definition of learner autonomy from the English teachers' points of view and tries to explore their practices on LA with their students. In other words; the purpose of this research is to find out English teachers' beliefs and practices about learner autonomy in Muğla, which will provide valuable information about our cultural perspective on LA in foreign language teaching in basic education. The study also investigates the answer of the question to what extent do the English teachers in basic education encourage their students to become autonomous learners during the lesson and/or outside the classroom. The interview questions will help to collect further information about their real practices to promote LA, to gain detailed insights of teachers about the possibility of developing autonomy for young learners in our education system and to learn their opinions about existing English coursebooks in schools in terms of supporting LA. And their perceptions of themselves will give clues about the existing situation - whether they support LA or neglect it.

1.3. The problem and Research Questions

Learner autonomy within the context of foreign language learning has been drawing attention for many decades. According to Scharle and Szabo (2000), teachers' efforts alone will not be enough for language learning and it is only possible if the learners also want to learn. The students who are eager to learn will also feel responsible for their language learning process and this kind of responsibility can be directly related to their autonomy since it leads them to involve actively.

Similarly, Ertürk (2016) points out the problem of teacher-centeredness in the context of

Turkish educational system. She states that actually teachers themselves are the most active learners in their lessons with a great deal of preparation before their lessons by planning various activities, choosing suitable texts for their students etc., while their students do not do much preparation at all. Changing this traditional passive learner model in Turkish culture into a model with a learner who takes charge of his/her own learning, giving student much more responsibility than teachers themselves undertake is not an easy process. Many scholars support the same view about the educational system in Turkey. In their arguments they mention the points which hinder autonomous language learning and state that it is teacher-centered, it covers traditional teaching methods, authority is not shared, individuality and creativity are not encouraged much. As a result, learners do not take responsibility for their own learning in their educational life. Hence, it is necessary to improve LA in language teaching in Turkish context (Balçıkanoğlu, 2008; Yumuk, 2002).

One should have the ability to identify his/her own purposes and set some goals independently, decide on the materials, methods and techniques, organize the learning process suitably for him/herself and make a self-assessment in order to become an autonomous learner. However, it is a challenging job to manage all these, because it seems utopic to make it real in the Turkish educational system owing to some constraints that teachers and learners face.

The purpose of this study is to find out English teachers' beliefs and perceptions about learner autonomy, to explore their real practices regarding learner autonomy and to reach an elaborative definition of LA from their points of view. The interview questions help to understand the existing situation at school in terms of age factor and English coursebooks.

Within this context, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are English teachers' perceptions regarding learner autonomy?
2. How desirable and feasible is it to promote learner autonomy according to English teachers?
3. To what extent do English teachers feel that their learners are autonomous?
4. To what extent do English teachers say they actually promote learner autonomy?
5. What are the practices of English teachers to support learner autonomy, if they say they do?

6. How do English teachers feel about the young learners' autonomy?
7. What are the reflections of English teachers about existing English textbooks in schools in terms of supporting learner autonomy?

The table 1.1 illustrates the distribution of the questionnaire sections and the interview questions with regard to the research questions.

Table 1.1: The Distribution of Research Questions According to Data Collection Instruments

Research Questions	Instruments
1. What are English teachers' perceptions regarding LA?	* Questionnaire (Section 1) * Interview question 1 and 2
2. How desirable and feasible do English teachers feel it is to promote LA?	* Questionnaire (Section 2)
3. To what extent do English teachers feel their learners are autonomous?	* Questionnaire (Section 3) * Following open-ended question
4. To what extent do English teachers say they actually promote LA?	* Questionnaire (Section 3) * Following open-ended question
5. What are the practices of English teachers to support LA, if they say they do?	* Interview questions 4
6. How do English teachers feel about the young learners' autonomy?	* Interview question 3
7. What are the reflections of English teachers about existing English textbooks in schools?	* Interview questions 5

1.4. The Significance of the Study

For most of the teachers it is hard to engage the students with the lesson in a language class because they avoid participating, they are not eager to work cooperatively, they do not keep on practicing outside the classroom. A big majority of our students act as passive figures in the classroom who are in need of being guided by the teacher in all phases of

the learning process. There is no doubt that this spoon-fed student model is a result of our grammar based, mechanical way of teaching of the last few decades. When we look through our educational background we need to confess that foreign language teaching has always been teacher-led which means that it was predominantly under the control of teachers. That is why most of our students are still far from being self-confident and independent language learners.

Teachers need to use effective methods and techniques in classroom to encourage students to be more independent and autonomous. Becoming an autonomous learner removes the place and time limitations of classical way of learning which only takes place in the classroom. As they gain autonomy they start using the classroom time to practice what they have learnt before and they try to be well-prepared learners for the following classes. As they constantly do this preparation for the lessons, it makes students more responsible and therefore more autonomous.

In the domain of foreign language learning, becoming an autonomous learner requires to learn how to learn a new language. Every single student may have a different way of comprehending, so they should find their own way to learn a new language. For instance; autonomous language learners can keep on improving themselves by practicing four skills outside the classroom via extensive reading, writing, listening or speaking, by learning time management, by perpetual repetition inside and outside the classroom. Thus they can gradually become more motivated and independent learners with the increasing level of responsibility in their own learning. All these qualifications contribute to a successful language learning process and make them proficient language users. In this sense, LA in language teaching and learning has currently attracted more and more attention in the academic field, which leads to search for new ways and methods to promote it with innumerable research studies.

There has been much research on learner autonomy but most of them are focusing on the issue from the learners' aspect. But language teachers' perspectives on the description of autonomy have not drawn much attention (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). This study is significant among others because it focuses on LA from the teachers' perspectives by analysing their beliefs and perceptions, in other words what autonomy means to them. These beliefs are so crucial that they may either foster or hinder the development of learner autonomy intentionally or unintentionally. Defining the perceptions of teachers may help them to reflect on the ways of enhancing and sustaining autonomy of their

learners. According to Phipps & Borg (2007) teachers' beliefs influence their instructional choices. It is also widely acknowledged that an understanding of teachers' beliefs needs to be an integral part of initiatives that aim to promote change in what teachers do in the classroom (Wedell, 2009). This lack of attention to teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy triggered the motivation for this research.

This research has given participants the opportunity to think about themselves as language teachers - whether they are the teachers who support LA in classroom or not. While answering the items of the questionnaire they evaluated their own teaching in terms of LA which may bring a more successful language learning process for their students. Because most of the research in this area have highlighted that gaining LA contributes positively to students' learning. As Yagcioglu (2015) suggests; responsibility and autonomy should be developed because it creates not only better and more joyful class hours but also more successful and happier students who have self-confidence and respect. In other words, ensuring such a positive atmosphere in the classroom, creating a stress-free environment will definitely make a positive difference in the language learning process which enables a better learning experience and create more satisfied students.

This study intends to contribute to the field from various aspects. By presenting the basic notions in the literature, it helps to understand the concept of LA and by introducing the approaches which promote LA and with a closer look at the latest ELT curriculum in Turkey, and it also emphasizes the importance of fostering LA. The study also deals with the Turkish cultural perspective in LA in foreign language education by eliciting the reflections of English teachers who work in basic education.

Since there has not been a research study on LA which covered all grades in Turkish education system (primary, secondary and high schools), this study - for the first time - gives valuable information about English teachers' perceptions and real practices regarding LA. So the results serve as an overall evaluation of our basic education system in terms of LA, and they may help to discover new ways of creating an autonomous atmosphere in English language teaching.

1.5. Assumptions

It is assumed that English teachers are knowledgeable about autonomous learning and their answers to the questionnaire “English language teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy” (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012) and to the interview questions yield valuable and genuine knowledge.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to English teachers working in Primary, Secondary and High Schools. The participants of the study are limited to the number of teachers who work in these schools in Menteşe, Muğla which means it is hard to generalize the findings to the region or country.

Another limitation is that there were no classroom observations on the real practices of English teachers who are involved in this research. The only source that can be counted on are their own statements of whether they promote LA or not and their own explanations on how they do it. However, it is hard for a researcher to allocate enough time for the observation to ensure the reliability of research and it is difficult to find as many volunteer teachers as desired. Also it’s hard to arrange an equal distribution of sampling from volunteer participants who have different demographic profiles such as less experienced or the most experienced teachers. Even if they accept being observed during their lessons it is not generally possible for them to act as naturally as usual because they may feel stressful.

1.6. Definitions

Learner Autonomy: a capacity to take charge of, or take responsibility for, or control

over your own learning (Benson, 2013).

Autonomous Learner: Learners who are capable of identifying what their learning objectives are, what they need to do to reach these objectives and how they need to do that in a collaborative way with their teachers and peers (Dickinson, 1995).



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of seven parts which supplies detailed information regarding main concepts and theoretical background of the study. The origins of “Learner Autonomy” concept, the definition of LA and misconceptions about it, approaches that foster LA, roles of the teacher and learner in an autonomy supportive classroom, the importance of fostering LA in Turkey, the new curricula of ELT in Turkey and the research studies conducted on LA in language teaching are the subjects presented here.

2.1. The Origins of the “Learner Autonomy” Concept

The term autonomy can be considered as an innate part of all human beings which we all have from the very early childhood. Whether consciously or uncounciously, we control our own developmental stages by choosing what to learn during our lifetimes. For instance; Jurikova (2015) claims that autonomous behaviours can be clearly seen in childrens’ choices to learn particular undesirable behaviours such as saying inappropriate words. So we might say that the notion of autonomy is not a modern-age invention which has recently emerged, but it has always been existing in human life naturally.

Even though the growing interest about “learner autonomy” has been a matter of the last forty years, the idea of learners’ directing and controlling their own learning can be encountered even in the ancient history in China around the year 1100. A Chinese scholar Chu Hsi notes: "If you are in doubt, think it out by yourself. Do not depend on others for explanation. Suppose there was no one you could ask, should you stop learning? If you could get rid of habit of being dependent on others, you will make your advancement in

your study” (Pierson, quoted in Benson 2001, p. 56). It can be concluded from these words that independency was regarded as an important feature of autonomous learner even in the old times.

Benson (2001) highlights the wise sayings of great thinkers in history as the evidence that they believed in autonomous learning. Galileo Galilei’s famous sentence; “You cannot teach a man anything: you can only help him find it within himself.” is one example of these. He also shares some parts of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1712-78) *Emile*, his classical work on education, which demonstrates a model of education that respects learner’s natural stimulations and predispositions and let the learner experience the natural consequences of their actions (Benson, 2001, p.23-24). And he had a great impact on later thinkers and educators. Rousseau believed in the presence of the innate goodness and abilities of individuals and so did the philosophers as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). They can be seen as a basis of the modern view of autonomy (Benson 2011: 50).

When we look through the closer history, at the beginning of the twentieth century we see that the ideas of the American philosopher and educational reformist John Dewey (1859-1952) set the groundwork for the development of the learner autonomy concept. According to him, the aim of education is participation in social and political life, which is learned in the collaborative environment of a classroom. In his publication *Democracy and Education* he pointed out the necessity of a collaborative teaching environment which fosters a child’s continuous development in learning rather than the pure acquisition of knowledge. In other words he stressed the importance of interaction with the authentic environment and problem-solving as a source of learning. And this, problem-solving, method laid a foundation for constructivist theories which are now considered as the theoretical basis for autonomy in language education (Benson, 2001,p.25-27).

Besides philosophy, the field of psychology has also had a remarkable effect on the concept of learner autonomy. Many psychologists focused on this notion in the educational field. The humanist psychologist Carl Rogers (1902-87) claims that learning is a unique, individual process that is affected by individual experiences and results in changes in behaviour; the teacher’s role is to facilitate this natural process of self-actualising (Benson 2011:35). Another psychologist Vygotsky (1896-1934) called learning as an active, social process in which the implicit inner processes become externalised showing the reflective nature of learner autonomy (in Benson 2011:42).

In addition to the philosophical and scientific roots, there have been political and social developments which triggered the emergence of learner autonomy. In their work that examined the historical background of LA, Gremmo and Riley (1995) listed a variety of factors related to the political turmoil in Europe in the 1960s which influenced the emergence of learner autonomy.

- The minority movements
- Increase in the school and university population
- The reaction against behaviourism
- Development of adult education
- Increased internationalism and rising demand to learn foreign languages
- Easier availability of educational technology
- The commercialization of much language provision (p. 152-154).

Firstly, the increasing minority rights movements of such social groups as sexual, ethnic and linguistic minorities revealed that people need more individualistic approaches in education. They contributed to the emergence of "autonomy" as an educational ideal and had a direct influence on the development of adult education in Europe. (Gremmo & Riley 1995: 153). Especially for the language needs of immigrants, the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project was established in 1971, which led to the foundation of CRAPEL (*Centre de Recherches et d'Applications en Langues*), the centre of research and application in language teaching, run by Henri Holec (Benson 2011: 9). His report to the Council of Europe suggests providing life-long learning opportunities for adults which can be considered a key element for learner autonomy. For the diversity of needs of adult learners, flexibility was expected from the programmes and autonomy from the learners.

Next to these developments, the idea of equality spread and enabled wider access to education which led to an increase in school population. Due to the rapidly growing diversity among students, the number of educators remained inadequate. These factors accelerated the search for new educational ways and self-directed learning emerged, which brought more flexibility and autonomy by allowing students to choose when, where and what to study (Gremmo and Riley 1995:154).

As thirdly mentioned above, the roots of LA can be seen in the historical shifts in the psychology of learning. As a reaction to the behaviouristic view which defines learning

as a simple, mechanic process of responding to external stimuli, the humanistic and cognitive psychology has emerged. According to these psychologists, learning is a process affected by the individual's subjective experiences and internal states; in short; they regard learning as something learners do, not something done to them. With the development of sociolinguistic disciplines, it was admitted that learning and language are both active and interactive and these views have resulted in the emergence of more learner-centred methodologies in education that contributed the development of learner autonomy (Gremmo & Riley 1995: 152-153)

Owing to globalisation, especially adults' demand for learning foreign languages has grown significantly. With the improvements in the technological world, studying and learning outside the classroom has become more common. Subsequently the commercialization of language provision began through technology-based innovations such as cassette and online language courses. The adaptation of more flexible learning programmes advanced learner-centeredness and self-direction inevitably. Hence publishers quickly responded to this demand, by providing the materials "suitable for autonomous study" and by providing a wide range of self-instructional materials in the form of weekly magazines and cassettes. Subsequently, the autonomous view appeared that sees learners as consumers, who need to be able to make conscious choices on the learning materials they buy (Gremmo & Riley 1995: 154).

To sum up, although the focus on the term "*autonomy*" in philosophy and psychology dates back to centuries ago, the major development of the research on LA emerged only a few decades ago. While the history of learner autonomy is dominantly composed of theory and ideology, recent research tends to focus on more practical, applicable knowledge that will help to meet the needs of everyday life. Due to the latest technological developments, globalization, universal travelling and migration, rising speed of information exchange, autonomy in foreign language learning has naturally become a must which proved the necessity of updating oneself in order to catch up with the rapid changes of today's world. As it has been researched more often in the educational field, it seems that it is going to gain more importance and turn into a more multidimensional structure which will lead to a search for new ways and models to foster learner autonomy in practice.

2.2. Definition of Learner Autonomy

An ancient proverb asserts, "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish and he eats for a lifetime". Many scholars today are emphasizing the importance of learner autonomy by citing this old saying of Confucius (551 – 479 B.C.) as the evidence which shows that the idea of autonomy was existing even in ancient times. Ellis and Sinclair (1989) are among those scholars who emphasized the importance of the term by referring to this prominent statement and have substantially contributed to the development of the notion of learner autonomy in educational field. Currently learning is considered to be a lifelong process rather than a period restricted to the school life. So the necessity of autonomous learning is becoming more and more popular for the large majority of the academic world in the educational field. Especially in the domain of foreign language learning people are in need of sustainable learning which will enable them to keep on learning beyond the classroom without time and place restrictions. Because learning a new language is a complex, demanding process in which the learner should be highly motivated and active in order to keep on learning anytime anywhere. Contrary to these necessities, the traditional way of teaching with spoon-fed learner model is still dominant in Turkey (Ertürk 2016). Teaching and learning English is unfortunately limited to "giving our students a fish" (prepackaged knowledge) and far from "teaching them how to fish" (learning how to learn). Balçıkanlı (2008) points out that the learners are not able to perform actively in the learning process as they lack the knowledge of how to manage this by themselves and undoubtedly it requires guidance to some extent. Learning how to learn, thereby learner autonomy, has turned into a pivot element that educators should bear in mind to catch up with the latest educational trends of today's world.

The following part will focus on the term learner autonomy with various definitions provided in the literature so far and some misconceptions about its meaning.

2.2.1 What is Learner Autonomy?

Learning is a complex issue that is affected by many factors and it can only happen if the learner himself makes an effort to get it. Each person has a different way of learning depending on his character which causes experiencing different learning processes. Fenner and Newby (2000) state the same point by emphasizing that each person has a unique way of constructing his or her own world. Learning is a process of searching for meaning and if we let people construct their own meaning, instead of forcing them to memorize another person's meaning, we can lead them to experience it successfully. In order to actualize this in educational settings, we should let the learners create their personal learning spaces according to their goals and needs. If they are given a chance to share responsibility in the decisions about a course content and planning, learning could be "more focused and purposeful, and thus more effective both immediately and in the longer term" (Little, 1991, p.8). The situation might be the same when considered in terms of language learning autonomy shows its essentialness in the field. As Benson (2001) claimed, "the key idea that autonomy in language learning has borrowed from constructivism is the idea that effective learning is active learning" (p. 40).

The notion of learner autonomy was first associated with adult education and self-access learning systems at the beginning of 1980s and regarded as a matter of learners doing things on their own. By the end of 80ies, with the emergence of learner-centered theories in education, it began to be discussed in the field of language teaching. Through the 1990s several national curricula started to cover learner autonomy as a key goal. This altered the sense of learner autonomy and after that it did not necessarily mean learners doing things on their own, but for themselves (Little, 2007). From the beginning of the 21st century, more and more curriculum designers have been focusing on learner development and the learner autonomy concepts especially in foreign language education. Gaining autonomy has become an inevitable part of a successful learning process since then and its meaning and frame have gained more and more attention in the educational field.

There have been various definitions of learner autonomy since its first appearance in the literature of educational field. In a broad sense, learner autonomy is "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." This well-known definition was offered by Henri Holec in his report called *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*, which was published by

the Council of Europe in 1979. It was covering the general context of the Council of Europe's work on the adult education with the principle that 'developing individual's freedom by developing those abilities which will enable him to act more responsibly in running the affairs of the society in which he lives' (Holec, 1981: 1). He reports five vital abilities under the definition of learner autonomy. These are; determining learning objectives, defining the content, choosing the methods to be used, monitoring the learning process and evaluating the learning outcomes (Tanyeli & Kuter, 2013). Similarly Benson (2003) mentions the abilities which are involved in its definition by many researchers;

"...various kinds of abilities can be involved in control over learning. Researchers generally agree that the most important abilities are those that allow learners to plan their own learning activities, monitor their progress and evaluate their outcomes." (p: 290)

Holec's definition of learner autonomy has remained the most widely cited in the field but of course there are lots of definitions with little variations of his definition such as; 'capacity' instead of 'ability' or 'take responsibility for'/'take control of ' instead of 'take charge of ' one's own learning (Benson, 2007).

There are many other definitions of learner autonomy provided by prominent scholars of educational field. One of these definitions belongs to Little (1991) who describes autonomy as "a capacity - for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action" (p.4) and it is "a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning". In other words, it's the ability of learners to act independently, to reflect on their needs critically and to make their own decisions. Similarly Dickinson (1987) asserts that it is the learner's ability to take all decisions for his or her learning and he/she believes that learning autonomy is a "situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his or her learning and the implementation of those decisions" (p.11).

Additionally, the term autonomy can be used to define the states that Benson and Voller (1997) listed below;

- "for situations in which learners study entirely on their own;
- for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning;
- for an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education;
- for the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning;
- for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning"(p.2).

In addition to the well-known definitions above, there are some others which highlight the social dimension of learner autonomy. One of the most significant definition underlying this dimension was made by a group of academicians in Bergen (Norway) workshop, in 1989. In 'Bergen definition' learner autonomy is identified as "...readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a socially responsible person" (Dam, 1995: 1). In contrast to the common belief that autonomous learning only takes place in isolation, this definition has expanded new horizons in the field since it emphasizes the social dimension of LA especially in language learning context. Although the term independence was used as a synonym for autonomy in many definitions in the literature, it actually covers both independence and interdependence, which means not only working for one's own, but also constructing a learning environment where responsibility is shared by working cooperatively and deciding collectively. Another definition that emphasizes the social dimension of LA, was suggested by Jiménez Raya, Lamb and Vieira (2007) which identifies the term as "the competence to develop as a self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in (and beyond) educational environments, within a vision of education as (inter)personal empowerment and social transformation" (p.1). This definition also underlines the democratic dimension of gaining autonomy. By developing the sense of social responsibility and consciousness it serves democracy in a way. Because it helps individuals to manage not only their educational lives but also their social lives with active participation and conscious choices (Jimenez Raya et. al. 2007, as cited in Vazquez, 2016).

Passing through various phases during its definition, LA has turned into a well-rounded concept today, which implies both independence and interdependence in the social context of classroom. Depending on the latest pedagogical changes in education, the learner- rather than the teacher- has come to the focal point of learning process. (Smith, 2015). Especially in the foreign language learning, LA cannot be regarded as merely independency, because it takes place in a social context for communicative purposes (Vazquez, 2006). Then it can be said that LA has an extensive definition consisting of various requirements. And in order to develop some particular abilities through independent and/or collaborative work, learners should be guided and supported for a certain period of time.

2.2.2 Common Misconceptions about Learner Autonomy

Besides the prevalent definition of learner autonomy - “the willing capacity to take control of one’s own learning”- there are some additional considerations which are supposed to define it more particularly by listing what it is or what it is not. To make a better understanding of its definition, it will be beneficial to mention those statements of some scholars regarding the misconceptions about the term. According to Little (1990), autonomy:

- is not a synonym for self-instruction or learning without a teacher.
- is not a single, easily described behavior.
- does not necessarily mean teacher’s avoidance of responsibility; it is not a matter of letting the learners get on with things as best as they can.
- is not something that teachers do to learners
- is not another teaching method
- is not a steady state achieved by learners.

By covering those items mentioned above Esch (1998) and Sinclair (2000) additionally stated that autonomy;

- has degrees which are unstable
- is not necessarily innate
- does not only mean placing learners in situations where they have to be independent
- is not just teaching learning strategies
- is not an identifiable behavior

In Candy’s (1991) view; autonomy is not the total detachment of the teacher, but the teacher and student collaboration to meet students’ needs (as cited in Tanyeli & Kuter, 2013).

All these statements about the misconceptions of LA dominantly point to the same aspects related to the degree of learner’s independence and the teacher’s responsibility or involvement in the learning process. On this basis, it may be inferred that autonomous

learning is still an interactive process which inevitably requires both learner's consciousness and teacher's guidance to some extent. It is undeniable that gaining autonomy entails allocating time to all processes of learning; from setting goals to making own decisions, from sharing the responsibility to evaluating the learning outcomes. Thus, it could be concluded that all these issues are interconnected and learners need to accomplish them to become autonomous.

2.3. Approaches that Help the Development of Learner Autonomy

Developing autonomous behaviours while learning a new language has become a must for every single learner, which will lead them to success. As Dickinson (1992) asserts; what teachers want to do, is to raise their students' awareness on how to learn a foreign language on their own, while they are training them on language learning strategies. Fostering learner autonomy can simply be defined as scaffolding learners to become more independent by teaching them language learning strategies and how to use these effectively, hence making them responsible learners who can take the control of their own learning (Ceylan, 2014). To promote learner independence Dickinson (1992) suggests six ways to the teachers:

1. Legitimizing independence in learning and encouraging students accordingly by showing them we approve it;
2. Persuading learners that they are able to become independent in learning by making them experience it successfully;
3. Giving learners chance to practice independent activities;
4. Helping learners to develop their own learning strategies independently;
5. Making learners more aware about the language as a system so that they can understand the useful learning techniques and learn sufficient grammar;
6. Sharing with learners something of what we know about language learning in order to develop a better understanding of what to expect from the language learning task and how to react to problems to remove learning barriers (p. 330).

All six ways point to the same matter from the teachers' aspect. They need to demonstrate to the learners how to manage acting independently in their learning process by letting them experience necessary steps successfully to see they actually work. If, as teachers, we encourage them to accomplish those activities by using their own learning strategies they eventually feel more confident and they will be eager to try new ones and to become more independent learners.

Becoming an independent, hence autonomous learner is not a simple process which could lead to success instantly. And it can only be realized step by step with the inclusion of both teacher and the student. Otherwise it will take a great time to gain all those abilities and to become conscious learners who are able to manage his/her own learning process. So it is necessary for learners to experience this process with the guidance and assistance of a mentor, who will gradually motivate them towards being autonomous learners. Nunan (1996) deals with a gradually increasing degree of autonomy by identifying some levels to encourage LA. He offers a programme consisting of five levels shown as follows:

Level	Learner action	Content	Process
1	Awareness	Learners are made aware of pedagogical goals and content of the materials they are using	Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred styles/strategies
2	Involvement	Learners are involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives	Learners make choices among a range of options
3	Intervention	Learners are involved in modifying and adapting the goals and content of the learning program	Learners modify and adapt tasks
4	Creation	Learners create their own goals and objectives	Learners create their own learning tasks
5	Transcendence	Learners go beyond the classroom and make links between the content of classroom learning and the world beyond the classroom	Learners become teachers and researchers

Figure 2.1. Levels of Autonomous Learning (Nunan, 1997)

Source: <https://www.slideshare.net/irwyn12/approaches-to-learner-autonomy-in-language-learning-presentation-786825>

In Nunan's model, Level One is for raising the learners' awareness regarding the pedagogical goals and the content of the sources they use by enabling them to identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and choose their own learning strategies via sections on planning, learning styles and strategies.

In Level Two, learners are presented a variety of alternatives on goals and they are involved in choosing their own goals among the options they are offered.

Level Three allows learners to make some modifications for adapting the goals and content of the learning program.

In Level Four, learners gradually move from being dependent on the predetermined learning routes to being capable of creating their own goals and objectives.

And Level Five shows that learners are able to transfer their learning beyond the classroom by linking up the classroom learning content and the world outside.

As shown in the model above, the gradual movement from being teacher-dependent learners towards becoming autonomous learners requires working on a systematical path step by step with a great deal of teacher's effort. In the domain of language learning the situation is the same and learners need to fulfill all the requirements of becoming independent with the help of teacher, so the teacher's role is undeniable here. In Littlewood's (1996) view, teachers need to focus on the following three things in order to develop their learners' autonomy;

- a) aiming to develop students' ability to operate the language independently and communicate with it in the unpredictable situations in real life.
- b) aiming to help students to develop their ability to take responsibility for their own learning by actively applying their personal strategies inside and outside the classroom.
- c) helping students to increase their ability to communicate and learn independently

(Littlewood, as cited in Ceylan 2014)

The variety of the theories on the promotion of learner autonomy clearly shows how multidimensional it is. In Littlewood's (1996) framework for developing autonomy in foreign language teaching we can see this multidimensional structure since it is associated with two ways of capacity in three different domains. First he names two things

necessary to promote autonomy, which are *ability* and *willingness*. And second he offers three domains/kinds of autonomy that learners can develop;

- as a *communicator* (autonomy on a task level),
- as a *learner* (autonomy on learning level),
- as a *person* (autonomy on a personal level).

To be an autonomous language learner in any of the three domains, one should have the ability (skills and knowledge) and willingness (motivation and confidence). The six labels around the circle illustrate the ways autonomy are expressed in the process of language learning.

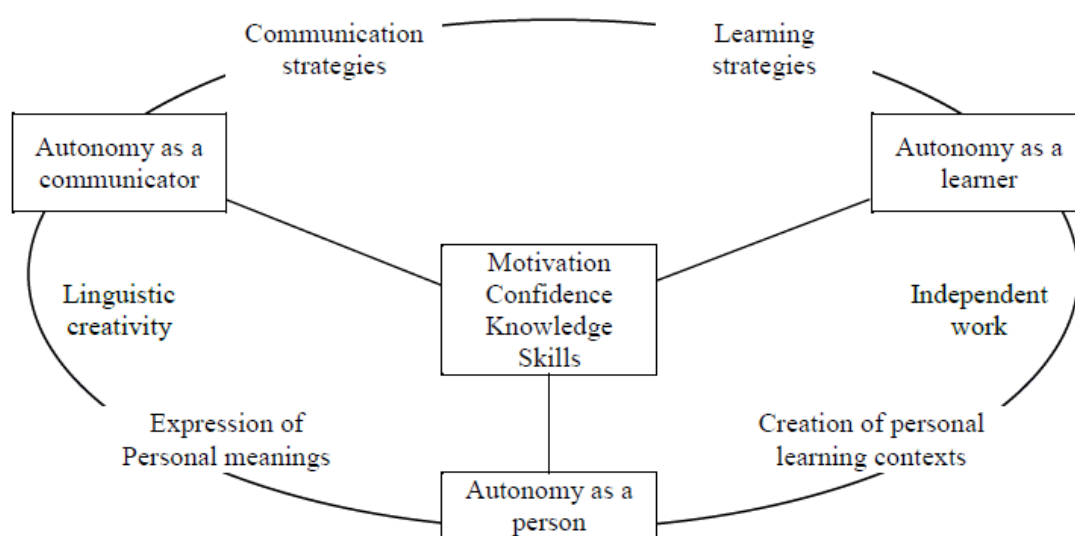


Figure 2.2. *Developing Autonomy through Teaching* (Littlewood, 1997, p.83)

Source: Çakıcı, 2015 p:33

The framework shows teachers how to promote learner autonomy by combining different components with these three domains. It can be managed either separately or totally; for example, by building up the learners' confidence in communication, or by resorting to knowledge involved learning strategies (Ikonen, 2013). It can be seen clearly in the framework how miscellaneous it is to foster LA and what a challenging job teachers need to accomplish in order to create autonomous learners in teaching-learning process.

While autonomous learning attracted attention by many scholars and educators, various theories and approaches have been asserted which promote the growth of autonomy in practice. Undoubtedly promoting learner autonomy does not necessarily mean that

teachers leave their learners alone in the learning process, but rather they still need to be active who guide and assist learners to take control of their own learning according to the goals that learners themselves have determined before.

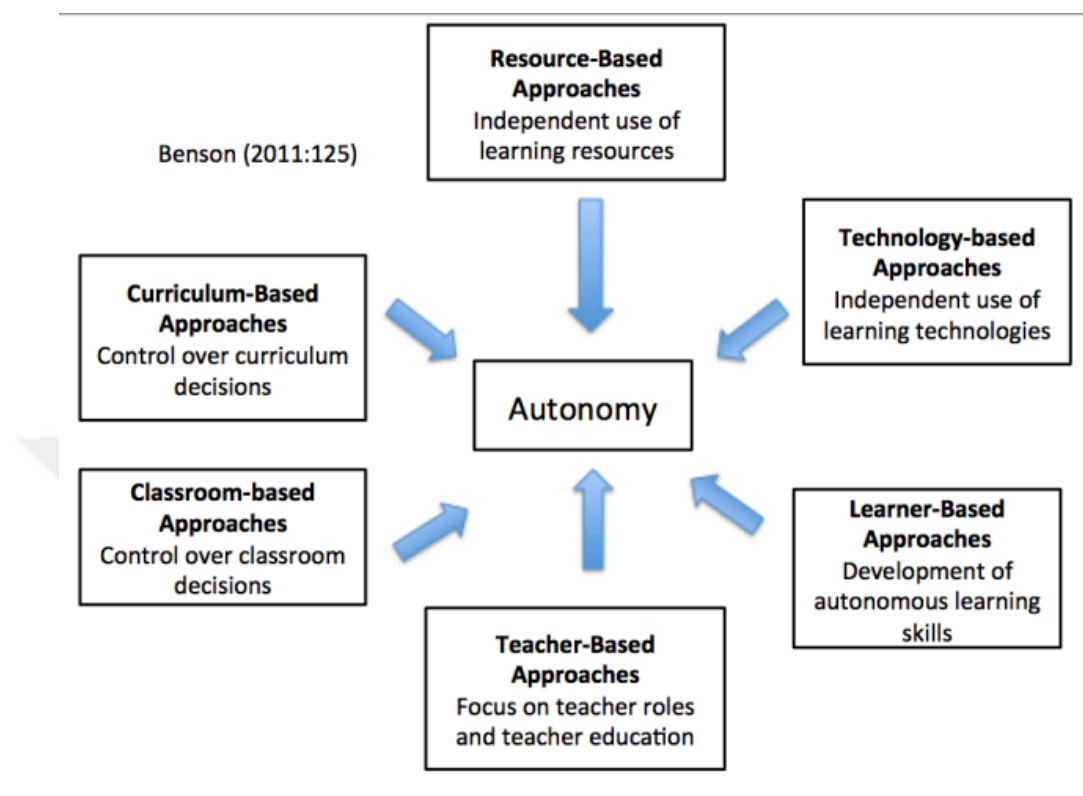


Figure 2.3. Approaches to Foster Learner Autonomy (Benson, 2011, p.125)

Source:<https://reflectiveteachingreflectivelearning.com/tag/learner-autonomy/>

There are a multitude of theories suggested in the literature to promote learner autonomy and although they differ from one another in some ways, they also have common underlying assumptions. For example these theories assume that with certain strategies, learner autonomy can be fostered in institutional level. Also they all view learner autonomy as the learner's *innate capacity* that can be either suppressed or promoted, as opposed to something that is done to the learner (Ikonen, 2013). To clarify and categorize the theories which foster the development of LA, Benson (2011: 125-126) identifies these approaches under the following six interdependent headings: resource-based, technology-based, learner-based, classroom-based, curriculum-based, teacher-based approaches.

2.3.1. Resource-based Approaches

In order to help the growth of learner autonomy, the materials empowering independent learning by giving learners opportunities to discover the sources by themselves may be the most effective ones. In this respect the resource based approaches contribute significantly to the development of autonomy which enable learners interact independently with the learning materials.

The ideal resources for promoting LA are; guided self-discovery tasks based on authentic data, questionnaires designed to help learners clarify or challenge their beliefs about language learning, study guides for language practice activities not based on didactic materials, fluency activities for pairs and groups together with checklists and guidelines for self and peer evaluation, suggestions for different ways of using learning materials, student-generated materials, and standard reading and listening exercises designed for a particular genre rather than a particular text (Sheerin, 1991, as cited in Smith, 2015).

Self access centers are another example for the resource-based approaches upon learner autonomy. They encourage learners to rely or depend less on teachers for continual direction (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2011). Inarguably they may provide a great opportunity to develop independent learning, however it is of vital importance that the learners should be trained sufficiently on how to utilize the center and it is necessary to consider details such as; the resources, the learners' profiles and their needs, the learning environment in order to reach the desirable success via self access centers.

2.3.2. Technology-based Approaches

Technology-based approaches focus primarily on the educational technologies supporting autonomy and the learners' independent interaction with them. Text manipulation, computer mediated communication applications and web authoring software are the most common and effective ones. These tools both help learners to develop their control over learning content and give them opportunities for collaboration (Smith, 2015).

There are many studies which investigate the impact of technology-based approaches on LA. These kind of studies revealed the fact that there is a strong relation between the

usage of computer mediated communication and the development of learner autonomy. Using e-mails, social media tools, blogs can contribute learners to gain autonomous behaviours like decision-making, independent action, critical reflection, and detachment. So the students' online social habits may be used for educational purposes by the teachers who want to turn this into an advantage for their learners to become more autonomous.

When viewed from the language learning aspect, it's admitted that technology plays an increasingly important role in language education. But of course it goes without saying that students need guidance from teachers in order to use the technology based tools without facing any problem. And as they gain competence on how to use these efficiently, they will eventually become autonomous language learners.

The resource-based and technology-based approaches refer mainly to the out-of-class strategies that aim at promoting LA, there are four more approaches which focus on the issue mainly within a classroom context.

2.3.3. Learner-based Approaches

Learner-based approaches are product-oriented and focus primarily on the direct product of behavioral and psychological changes in the learner, which enable them to take greater control over their learning and become better language learners. So it requires to teach learners some techniques and strategies for language-learning. They should be trained towards being a good language learner depending on the insights from cognitive psychology and they need to be supported while trying some strategies to explore the best learning way for themselves. (Cotterall, 1995).

However it is not always easy for students to carry out some strategies while learning a language. Strategies are conscious actions which enable learners to use information more forcefully. In order to make them utilize some strategies; first they need to realize that there is a problem, then teachers should serve them as a model who show how to use a strategy to solve it and lastly, they need to see that it helped to overcome that problem. Hence, the students are persuaded to use it repeatedly, they internalize it and begin to take independent action which develops their autonomy.

2.3.4. Classroom-based Approaches

Classroom-based approaches foster autonomy through the cooperative learning in classroom context. Besides, they help learner to have control over planning and to evaluate the learning process which takes place in the classroom. To make the learners accomplish it, teachers should discuss with the learners issues such as setting the goals of learning process and determining assessment criteria. Learner autonomy can be promoted in classroom context by using portfolios, by peer correction and/or evaluation and by integrating self-assessment activities as much as possible and by creating a friendly classroom atmosphere. Teachers need to engage the students with the lesson by teaching them how to set realistic goals for themselves, how to use the best learning strategies for themselves, how to think critically about the activities they do and how to evaluate themselves and their peers. By managing all these they may easily improve their self confidence, awareness and control over their learning and eventually become autonomous learners.

2.3.5. Curriculum-based Approaches

To begin with, there are multiple definitions of curriculum in various sources. According to a number of the web based dictionaries, the term curriculum is broadly defined as “the courses offered by a school” and it refers to “the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program”. Educators mostly define it as “the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn” (edglossary.org). Smith (2015) suggests that curriculum refers to the whole process of planning, teaching, implementing and evaluating a course of study. As Snow and Kamhil-Stein (2006) stated, it is a dynamic system consisting of 3 stages which are linked to one another; these are planning, enactment and evaluating.

It is often stated that teachers feel stressful about catching up with the curriculum. They are always in a rush to give their students all targetted learning outcomes and this makes them dominate the class without receiving their learners’ reflections on the organisation

of lesson. However it is substantial for the students to get involved in decision making of the content, planning and organisation of lesson in order for gaining autonomy.

The curriculum-based approaches stand for the learner control over the curriculum. Both teacher and the students are involved in making educational decisions and they identify the content, activities and learning outcomes of the course together in a particular setting. While managing this process, it is of course inevitable to be influenced by internal and external factors such as students' expectations, educational policies, administrative norms etc. But on the other hand it is a necessity to arrange the whole flow of lesson in accordance with students' needs and expectations in order to accomplish a meaningful learning process. Because above all, the learner himself is in the focal point of education today. There should not be a huge difference between the curriculum design and students needs and expectations. Regardless of external constrains, the teacher must have the opportunity to rearrange the organization and schedule of the curriculum to serve the educational purposes that he negotiates with his students and agrees upon. This is the only possible way to support his learners' autonomy and accomplish his mission successfully in the teaching-learning process.

As the ELT curricula in Turkey (for overall grades) have recently been changed in which the concept of LA was highlighted, the involvement of both teacher and students into the decisions while implementing the curriculum has gained more importance than before in Turkish educational context. In one of the next parts (2.6) there will be a closer look at these curriculum designs to have an idea about how far we made a progress in terms of integrating the LA concept into the real practice of teaching.

2.3.6. Teacher-based Approaches

Undoubtedly the teacher's role in the process of creating an autonomous learners cannot be denied. They are the guides who can launch the process of becoming autonomous in teaching-learning environment and who will assist learners to accomplish all the steps towards being autonomous. On this basis teacher-based approaches give importance to teacher training for fostering autonomy among learners. Teacher training programmes which teach assisting learners to act independently during learning activities are essential for teachers to acquire the knowledge and ability to create opportunities for autonomous learning. According to Raya

and Sircu (2013), this assistance derives from teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy that directly influence their devotion to learner autonomy in the classroom. (as cited in Smith, 2015).

2.4 Roles of the Teacher and Learner in an Autonomy Supportive Classroom

In traditional ways of teaching, students are used to be controlled by the teacher from the beginning of the lesson till the end. They expect the teacher to enter the classroom, tell them what to do, which page they should open, which part they should read, which activity they should do and they never question why they learn it. The teacher stands in front of the class serve the knowledge, give the instructions of activities without asking their ideas, feelings or demands and they simply listen. They are the passive followers who obey the predetermined flow of the lesson. In such kinds of environment they are not supposed to find their own way of learning and develop their individual performance, because they are not encouraged to act independently or collaboratively and stay stuck to the teacher in every single step.

Unfortunately that is the case in many educational settings and the actors of the classroom are still the same; an active teacher and passive students. Most of the teachers are still far from being an autonomy supportive figure and the students are spoon-fed individuals who cannot determine anything about their learning process. Ertürk (2016) points out this fact by emphasizing that teachers make a great deal of effort for their lessons, while their students are passive like objects on which the teacher works and transmits the knowledge, then evaluates their performance and corrects their mistakes to make them learn.

However in an autonomy supportive class, the teacher's role is undeniably vital. Teachers can establish an autonomous environment in an institutional level if they follow certain steps towards leading their students to become conscious learners. Sufficient support by the teacher may easily canalize the learners to work independently and gain self confidence in their own language learning processes. That is why there is a huge need of investing teachers with the ability to create learner autonomy in teacher training programs

and this will consolidate their knowledge and skills in teaching practice towards becoming autonomy supportive figures.

2.4.1 Teacher's Roles in Autonomous Learning

Undoubtedly developing learner autonomy depends entirely on moving from teacher centered classroom model to a learner centered one. And to realize this, teachers themselves are in the key position who will lead their students to take more control over their own learning. Vieira (2009) argues that pedagogy for autonomy requires teachers to scrutinize their roles in the teaching context, in terms of their former assumptions and the possible constraints they are to face during the pre-service and in-service teacher education (Vieira, as cited in Doğan, 2015). According to Mirici et al. (2013), teachers must be confident about their teaching abilities, because self-doubts might damage their teaching ability to promote LA. Similarly Doğan (2015) states, a teacher who intends to support LA should be intellectually motivated and self-dedicated to his/her job in order to help students question and reflect upon the knowledge they have learned.

Many scholars and teacher based approaches have a focal interest on the roles of teachers themselves and the importance of teacher training which shows them how to foster learner autonomy. Benson (2001) sorted a series of teachers' roles by stating that they should perform as a facilitator, helper, coordinator, counselor, consultant, advisor, knower, and resource in their teaching practice.

As mentioned above teachers have many vital roles and in creating an autonomy supportive learning atmosphere. Voller (1997) highlights three of these roles. He considers the teacher as a source, as a counsellor and as a facilitator.

Firstly, the teacher is considered as a resource for learners. Undoubtedly all learners search for a good teacher and when they meet, are the first thing they wonder is his/her proficiency in his/her field. For most of the learners a teacher must be a well-equipped source who enables them to reach the information whenever they need it. Voller (1997) indicates that teacher's resource role is embedded in his knowledge and expertise. However, merely his/her knowledge or ability to implement diverse teaching techniques and methods is not enough while trying to promote learner autonomy, he/she should also

have obedience to the global idea of autonomy in his/her professional practice (Benson, 2001). So it can be said that a teacher should be a good educator who encourages his/her learners in terms of autonomous work, besides being a competent expert in his field of proficiency.

Secondly the teacher is a counsellor for his/her learners who is expected to have a harmonious relationship with them. Actually teacher's counsellor role is directly related with his/her characteristics and he/she need to constitute a positive atmosphere for his/her learners in order to guide them effectively. In other words, learners should not be afraid or shy about consulting him/her the issues they wonder about and they need help. When we look through the general definitions of counsellor, we see that it requires particular personal traits to be a good counsellor. In a retrieved definition by Clausen (n.d.) it is stated that:

A counsellor helps those they are counselling come to their own conclusions about any problems or issues they may be facing, and then may provide suggestions or methods for helping the person with their issues....an ideal counsellor should be; kind and caring, empathetic and understanding, positive and motivating, a good listener and communicator, trustworthy, self-aware and sensitive to others needs, interested in helping others achieve their personal goals and encourages growth ” (p.9).

From this aspect being a good counsellor as a teacher entirely depends on the personal characteristics, rather than the qualities which can be acquired afterwards. But still there is a possibility to develop these traits through teaching practice as they gain more competence and experience.

And thirdly an autonomy supportive teacher is a great facilitator for his/her students. According to Clapper (2009);

Being a facilitator of learning means that strategies and activities are included that brings the learner to a state of understanding that lead to accomplishment of the objectives. We are natural constructivist. That is, we came into this world building our own meaning and explanation for occurrences, based on our own findings, as well as through socializing with others. Therefore, including activities that ask the learner to construct their own meaning and then reflect their understanding off of other learners goes a long way in creating understanding (p.3).

In his article where he describes the steps of moving away from classical ways of teaching towards becoming a facilitator of learning, the first step is supplying well-developed objectives which are functional and easy for students to understand. To manage this for example; a facilitator teacher may organize the questions in an order shifting from closed-

ended to open-ended during the lesson (Clapper, 2009, p. 1). This will enable students to move from rote learning and memorization to constructing and internalising their own meaning.

The next step is related to evaluation. Instead of traditional ways of assessment such as end of unit tests or term exams, a facilitator teacher can make some evaluation during the lesson through feedback and observation. These ways show the teacher whether the strategies employed work or do not and whether the students are bored or engaged with lesson. (Clapper, 2009). Hence the teacher will take an immediate action to fix the problematic aspects which hinder reaching the goals of that lesson. In other words he/she will have the opportunity to rearrange the things on the way.

Another step is integrating cooperative learning activities into the lesson such as; group works, role plays and kinaesthetic activities which help students to strengthen their interpersonal and intra personal intelligence. (Clapper, 2009). These kind of activities allow students experience the learning subject and it is widely accepted that experiencing these is one of the best ways for learners to ensure a meaningful and permanent learning. Cooperative activities will definitely help the teacher to create an autonomy supportive atmosphere and raise students' success in learning. As Kohonen (2012) emphasizes, the meaningful and experiential learning are the key elements that teachers need to focus on, if they intend to build LA.

Additionally Clapper (2009, p.4-5) offers the lesson plan designed by Williams and Dunn which is consists of four phases;

- inquiry phase; is to make the subject matter relevant to previous experience,
- gather phase; is to construct meaning with the given relevant information,
- process phase; is to internalize the information by using it to create a project, presentation or demonstration with a group which means they take responsibility for the lesson,
- apply phase; is to support them to transfer the knowledge they learned to other subjects.

Teachers who are good facilitators may follow these phases to comfort their students in order to raise their active involvement. Through cooperative work and experiential learning they participate more actively and become less dependent on the teacher, which

will gradually convert them into autonomous learners. However it does not necessarily mean that they totally detach from the teacher. As Demirel and Mirici (2002) indicate, even autonomous learners may not fully control their own learning and teachers should organize their teaching according to learners' needs both inside and outside the classroom to raise their active involvement in language learning.

2.4.2. The Role of Learner in Autonomous Learning

In contrast to the classical view which sees the learner as an object to be worked on, as a passive figure to be taught, recent tendencies in educational visions highlight the capability of their active involvement in the learning process. Learning is not a sole process of acquiring the pre-determined package of knowledge given by a teacher, it is a multifaceted procedure which requires learner's awareness, consciousness and enactment over the process. Kenny (1993) argues that in order for education to take place, autonomy has to be operationalized. If it is neglected, we cannot mention the real existence of learners in an educational setting, because neglect of autonomy makes education just a conditioning procedure and some kind of imposition of a dominant opinion. So he draws the conclusion that education needs to allow students to participate autonomously in learning so that they can achieve to interpret the world and to have the possibility to change it autonomously (Kenny, as cited in Doğan, 2015).

The characteristics of an autonomous learner were identified in various academic studies and one of the most striking ones, again, belongs to Henri Holec. He (1979) describes autonomous learner in terms of his/her capabilities;

- determining the objectives
- defining the contents and progressions
- selecting methods and techniques to be used
- monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place)
- and evaluating what has been acquired (p.3).

Similarly many scholars touched upon more or less the same capabilities while defining the main characteristics of an autonomous learner;

- an autonomous learner is the person who has the ability to determine realistic and reachable goals, select suitable methods and techniques to be used, monitor his own learning process, and evaluate his progress (Little, 1991).
- an autonomous learner is an active participant in the social processes of learning and an active interpreter of new information in terms of what she/he already and uniquely knows (Dam, 1990).
- autonomous learners can take responsibility in identifying their own goals, planning practice opportunities, or evaluating their progress (Cotterall, 1995).
- learners who have reached a point where they are able to define their own goals and create their own learning opportunities have become autonomous (Nunan, 1995).
- an autonomous person has an independent capacity to make choices and carry out these choices which govern his or her actions (Littlewood, 1996).
- can take responsibility for their learning, by planning and evaluating their learning processes independent of the teacher (Hedge, 2000).

Dickinson (1994) identifies the typical features of an autonomous learner with the following abilities. An autonomous learner is able to;

- identify what is being taught (awareness of the teacher's objectives);
- formulate his own learning objectives in addition to the teacher's
- choose the most suitable learning strategies for himself and apply them;
- monitor his learning strategies and evaluate them;
- monitor his own learning.

He also highlights two things about typical autonomous learners. They are the words “willing” and “active”. Of course, both willingness and being active are highly interrelated and both have great importance, because they can be considered as prerequisites in order that learning can take place. If a student is not eager to learn and ready to accept his lead role in the learning process, he will not be an active figure of his own learning and cannot gain autonomy.

In the view of Scharle and Szabo (2000), becoming an autonomous learner is a process consisting of three stages: raising student awareness, changing attitudes and transferring roles. Since the process of becoming an autonomous learner is a matter of time, it is

essential to string out these three stages and accomplish them in a particular order. They explain the importance of the process through following statement;

The saying goes: you can bring the horse to water, but you cannot make him drink. In language teaching, teachers can provide all the necessary circumstances and input, but learning can only happen if learners are willing to contribute. Their passive presence will not suffice, just as the horse would remain thirsty if he stood still by the river waiting patiently for his thirst to go away. And, in order for learners to be actively involved in the learning process, they first need to realise and accept that success in learning depends as much on the student as on the teacher (p.4).

These words clearly show how essential it is to convince learners that success comes only if they actively participate in all stages of learning. Their realization of this fact will ease and accelerate their effective participation in the process which will lead them to become autonomous in the end.

In his master thesis study, Hořínek, (2007) summarizes the characteristics of an autonomous learner in eight items, by referring to the statements of prominent scholars in the field. An autonomous learner;

- perceives the learning as highly personal
- perceives learning as interdependent (neither individual nor depend on one person) and accept learning in a group as shared learning
- is intrinsically motivated or able to find an extrinsic motivation for himself to learn.
- acts independently in decision-making in classroom setting
- attributes his success / failure to stable or external factors and knows he is the only one who can make a change in his learning progress
- can clearly define his own goals in learning
- detect the difficulties he faces and tries to minimize them
- keeps on working independently outside the classroom (p.22-25)

To sum up, as learning is considered as a life-long process in recent educational approaches, the importance of becoming an autonomous learner should be emphasized in the newest educational settings by showing students the learning ways and strategies towards gaining autonomy. By enabling them to go through an appropriate process of

education, it is possible to create conscious learners who are well-equipped with the capabilities mentioned above and who know their capacity and responsibility to keep on learning for a lifetime.

2.5. The Importance of Fostering Learner Autonomy in Turkey

Depending on the current views in education, in the English curricula that have been prepared in reference to standards of European Union, the behavioristic approach has been abandoned and the process-oriented constructive approach have been embraced with the emphasis on communicative functions. As a result, the notion of LA has started to appear in the curriculum and material designs especially in the field of foreign language teaching. Consequently the role of teacher has become more vital than ever before while moving from the teacher-centered education models to the learner centered ones. They are the most important figures who will lead the students to gain autonomy. As the current tendencies highlight communication more than the linguistic competence, the main purpose of foreign language learning should not only be based on learning linguistic structures, but should also be based on its function which means utilizing it to meet the users' needs. So becoming a language user is much more preferable than becoming a language learner and this requires learners turn into independent language users who can communicate effectively. That is why LA has recently gained much importance in the field of ELT.

In Turkey, the Ministry of National Education first adopted learner-centered programmes depending on constructivist approach in the 2004-2005 Education year. On the basis of this approach, it was aimed to make students gain autonomy. In the context of life-long learning, students need to take full responsibility in their learning. The necessary abilities that students need to gain in order to take this responsibility are among the main objectives of English language education.

In parallel with these developments English language curriculums have recently been updated in Turkey and reconstructed according to the latest approaches which emphasize the constructive approach, communicative competence, learner-centeredness and learner

autonomy. In 2006, LA was first been addressed among the adopted theories in the Primary English Teaching Curriculum published by the Board of Education and Discipline of Ministry of National Education (TTK) and it was defined as:

Learner autonomy can be defined as learner freedom or self managed learning. Learning independency is having more control over one's own learning both inside and outside the classroom and autonomy in language learning is having more chance of choice on learning objectives and learning ways. According to literature, LA begins with accepting the responsibility of one's own learning. In order to encourage our students in terms of LA, we need to make them comprehend different ways of learning and strategies and realize different learning styles and strategies (TTK, 2006).

Additionally, it has been emphasized that LA is a desirable goal for both adults and young learners and a series of actions to be taken were suggested in order to help our learners gain autonomy. Here are the summarized forms of these suggestions;

1. Encourage your students to be independent and work cooperatively.
2. Most of the students enjoy working in small groups. They may read dialogues in pairs, fill in drills and may consult each other while doing these exercises together.
3. Ask your students to keep diaries to report their learning experiences. They can realize their learning preferences by this way of reinforcement and begin to reflect on the new ways of becoming more independent learners.
4. Explain the roles of teacher and learner at the beginning of the process. Some of them may hear the term LA for the first time and their first reaction may be negative. So it is necessary to implement the process gradually by letting them experience its benefits during learning.
5. Move gradually from collaborative work towards independent work. Do not anticipate a lot in a short period of time and allow enough time to your students for their orientation to new learning strategies.
6. Give them project tasks to do outside the class. This may raise their motivation. These kinds of projects are so crucial because most of the English learners in our country have very limited chance to practice during the class hours.
7. Ask your students to prepare course content and materials for the lesson. Additionally, you should encourage your students to gain more control about the management of course content.

8. Lead your students to use various resource centers. Most of language learning takes place outside the classroom. They can watch movies, listen to songs in foreign language in order to keep on learning.

9. Encourage your students to use only English in class. The teacher's role is to create a classroom atmosphere where his students communicate in the target language and comfort them while doing this.

10. Emphasize the importance of fluency rather than accuracy. As they become less anxious about accuracy, they may acquire more linguistic components.

11. Prepare lessons which will help to understand the students' ways of learning. If they can realize their preferences, they can keep on learning by themselves, thus their autonomy will improve.

In respect to the recommendations above teachers may possibly think that their responsibility in creating an autonomous learning atmosphere is very tough and they may find it difficult to supply all these circumstances in their present educational settings. It should not be forgotten that creating such an atmosphere will eventually help themselves and their students a lot in the learning process. According to Deci and Ryan (1987) in an autonomy supportive classroom, students perceive themselves more competent with a high degree of self-respect and their interest rise. They comprehend in a better way, they become more creative, they develop more positive feelings and also their physical and psychosocial status are better. In the light of these considerations it can be said that, no matter which administrative or institutional constraints we face, it is worth to try our best to create autonomous learners and this will bring a high quality in to the teaching learning environments in Turkey. With conscious, independent, self confident learners it would be easier to achieve our educational goals together and success would come naturally.

2.6. New curricula of ELT in TURKEY and Learner Autonomy

Being a competent English language user has become a must due to the latest technological and social changes in today's world and in order to become global citizen one should learn to communicate effectively in international level. To achieve this, people

need to experience a meaningful learning process which means that the subject material should be relevant to real life.

Many scholars who studied on communicative approach emphasized that language learning should serve for communicative purposes to become functional and meaningful. Because it is not a simple field of study, it must be used in real context for interacting with others, meeting needs, expressing opinions, otherwise it will remain as an abstract field of study with overloaded grammatical structures and linguistic functions to be learned (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Widdowson (1978); Hymes (1972); Richards, 2006).

To catch up with the latest developments, educational approaches had to be changed both theoretically and practically in accordance with the current linguistic needs of learners. Consequently a wind of change has started in Turkish Educational system. First there has been a switch from the 8+4 educational model to the 4+4+4 system in the 2012-2013 Academic year. And this made it inevitable that there should be a revision and redesign of current curriculum in accordance with the recent regulations. Along with the new system, English instruction was started to be implemented from the 2nd grade, while formerly it had been started in the 4th grade. Therefore a programme was prepared for the 2nd and 3rd grades in the new curriculum which focuses on developing the language skills and proficiency without any concrete course content.

English language curriculum for primary and lower-secondary schools has been revised in accordance with the general objectives of Turkish National Education as defined in the Basic Law of the National Education No. 1739, along with the Main Principles of Turkish National Education. Two major revisions have been made in the curriculum. The first one is in the theoretical framework including basic skills and values education and the second one is the revision of each grade in terms of target language skills, forms and functions and evaluation (Retrieved: <http://mufredat.meb.gov.tr/ProgramDetay.aspx?PID=327>)

The new English language curriculum which follows the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages focus on putting learning into real-life practice to make students become more proficient and fluent language users. Since there are various types of learners at different stages of competence, it recruits eclectic method to reach the communicative goals determined by Council of Europe in order to support

learners to become effective language users rather than being students of the language. (CoE, 2001).

Starting from the 2nd grade till the 8th, there is a huge diversity among the learners' profiles and owing to the remarkable difference in cognitive and social characteristics of primary and lower secondary groups, the curriculum considers it in syllabus design, from arranging contexts and tasks to cognitive load, from evaluation to the language skills covered. Especially for young learners, language learning should be fun with various colourful activities and in order to engage them with English lessons, this has been taken into account while designing tasks and activities appealing to them.

According to CEFR language learning should be a "lifelong undertaking" and it is necessary to create a positive attitude towards English at the early stages of education. That is why the new curriculum tends to foster an enjoyable learning environment for young learners/users of English by supporting them throughout the learning process. They need to be motivated by different activities such as drama, role play and hands-on activities with colourful authentic materials so that they can grasp communicative skills appropriate for their ages. Speaking and listening skills are highlighted for the 2nd and 3rd graders rather than reading and writing. And developmentally suitable learning tasks are adopted for them to enhance learner autonomy and problem-solving skills which are the most prominent underlying factors of communicative competence. (T.C Ministry of National Education - The English Curriculum for Primary and Lower-secondary Schools- Ankara, 2018)

As these key aspects were stressed in the new the English curriculum of Primary and Lower-Secondary schools, they were also highlighted in the latest curriculum prepared for the 9th-12th grades;

The updates and revisions done in the new 2nd – 8th Grades English Curriculum (MEB-TTKB, 2013) have called for an update in the 9th-12th Grades English Curriculum. In this sense, the 9th-12th Grades English Curriculum can be seen as a continuum of the 2nd-8th Grades English Curriculum. Following the same communicative focus in the 2nd-8th Grades English Curriculum, the curriculum designed for the 9th-12th Graders is intended to foster communicative skills in English among learners.

(T.C Ministry of National Education- 9th-12th Grades English Curriculum-Ankara, 2018)

It is accepted that English language teaching in Turkish educational context has always been grammar oriented and for the assessment priority has been given to grammatical

accuracy. This poses a problem among language learners that they cannot prevent their anxiety while using English and they restrain themselves from communicating in real life situations. The reason for this is that they don't feel confident about English as they are always focused on using it correctly. In the new 9th-12th Grades English Curriculum, it is stated that all these aspects were taken into account to make English language learning more functional:

The new 9th-12th Grades English Curriculum was designed to take all aspects of communicative competence into consideration in English classes by addressing functions and four skills of language in an integrated way and focusing on "How" and "Why?" in language rather than merely on "What?"

(T.C Ministry of National Education- 9th-12th Grades English Curriculum-Ankara, 2018)

It is also stated in the new curriculum that collaboration among students is encouraged and learner autonomy is an important principle which should be fostered. By referring to the views of many scholars, the importance of promoting learner autonomy was emphasized;

Along with the curriculum, students have a tendency to get support from their teachers, friends, learning tasks and materials and by interacting, communicating and collaborating they can develop learner autonomy gradually in a safe learning environment (Powell, 2010). As students are the most forceful managers of their own learning, they are encouraged to evaluate their learning by realizing their needs, strengths and weaknesses (Penafiorida, 2002). Including learners in the decision making process promote their autonomy and supplying additional materials for language learning materials will increase their motivation in the classroom (McGrath, 2013). Within the English curriculum of the 9th-12th grades students are encouraged to be involved in task-based activities and collaborative work that would empower learners by increasing their linguistic skills, self-respect and learner autonomy (Stoller, 2002).

And lastly, the controversy about the nature of language learning and the ways of assessing it was criticized and this was mentioned as the reason of the inefficacy of Turkish learners of English in terms of communicative competence. In order to overcome this problem authentic assesment tools were included in the assessment in which learners are asked to generate new things with the knowledge they learned instead of recalling the old knowledge.

It is obvious that by getting used to the new assessment techniques students can improve their capacity to produce authentic language and gain confidence in English language communication. And this will enable them to use it in real life situations outside the classroom and promote their autonomy.

With an overall evaluation of the recent English curricula prepared for the primary, secondary and high school students, it can be said that the latest understanding of English language learning has changed a lot. The classical ways of teaching English are considered old-fashioned and unfunctional and this made it necessary to replace them with the more functional and communicative ones. Learning a new language is now seen as a long process that should be expanded out of class which means learners need to gain a certain degree of autonomy in order to reach their learning goals. As it is listed among the key competences framed by the European Commission, “learning to learn” is one of the most important skills that all citizens must gain. Undoubtedly, the transformation to the new system will not be an easy process and it will take a long time to implement the new methods to actualize LA along with the formal education. Still the recent changes should be supported by the administrators and teachers so that students can turn into successful, independent language learners and users by gaining autonomy.

2.7. Research Studies Conducted on Learner Autonomy in Language Teaching

From its first emergence in the field of education till today, numerous studies have been conducted on LA both in Turkey and abroad. The perceptions of students and teachers on learner autonomy were examined with various researches many times. Their beliefs and thoughts dealing with autonomous learning are the key elements to understand the applicability of LA into the learning teaching environments. These studies also showed that there are many factors that affect establishing an autonomous atmosphere in language learning process some of which are; cultural background, past learning habits, motivation, readiness to take more responsibility etc.

Dafei (2007) investigated the relationship between LA and English proficiency of 129 non-English participants in a teacher college in China with a mixed method design. He

suggests that students' English proficiency is significantly and positively related to their autonomy, and there are no significant differences among the students' learner autonomy when their English proficiency is not significantly different. But there are significant differences among the students' learner autonomy when their English proficiency is significantly different.

In a qualitative study that Yıldırım (2012) conducted with four Indian university students in the USA, he aimed to contribute to the literature from the aspects of learners' by seeing whether their perceptions of LA changes depending on the cultural background or not. Findings were hoped to provide guidance to teachers in order to understand the effects of culture for the comprehension of concepts related to learner autonomy. Data gathered via interview questions were analysed according to three categories which are; 1) the aspects which participants stated that the teacher had more responsibility, 2) the aspects which participants stated that the student had more responsibility, 3) the aspects which participants stated that both teacher and students had equal responsibility. The results showed that the participants mostly consider the teacher as the main figure in the classroom who knows everything, tells what to do, corrects their mistakes. In such a teacher-dependent atmosphere it is hard to create an autonomous learning environment for these students; but, it is crucial to understand their perceptions for leading their views to a more autonomous learning atmosphere. The researcher concludes that in order to promote LA in their classes, teachers should not make a sudden change by giving the whole responsibility to the students but he/she should gradually shift it. This will encourage them slowly and increase their autonomy level in their language learning process.

In a master thesis study conducted in the ELT Department at Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus (Farahi, 2015) the perceptions LA were investigated with the participation of 69 students and 11 instructors. Results showed that their opinions about LA were mostly positive. And although they actually think that it is not totally achievable in real context at that moment, they have a significant degree of readiness to experience an autonomous learning environment.

In a survey study focusing on LA as a defensible educational goal in modern language education (Vázquez, 2016), classroom research is suggested to understand the obstacles teachers face which hinders them promoting LA in real context. Additionally, the

importance of teacher training programmes which should prepare teachers to foster LA, is emphasized. Otherwise they cannot be supposed to establish an autonomous learning environment without enactment of LA in teaching practice. It is also stated that further studies should be conducted on the long-term effects of autonomous learning and the relationship between LA and terms like motivation, identity etc.

More specifically, when we focus on the research studies investigating teachers' views on LA, we come across various studies with various results. For example; in his study called "Learner Autonomy - The Teachers Views" Camirelli (1997) collected data from the English teachers around Europe (Malta, Poland, Holland, Estonia, Slovenia and Belarus) by means of a questionnaire. He aimed to find out teachers' attitudes towards LA. Results revealed that teachers were neutral but nearly positive about sharing the responsibility with their students in deciding on course content, classroom management and self-evaluation. On the other hand, they were neutral but nearly negative about negotiating the homework, learning ways, learning tasks, objectives of lesson, material selection, the time, pace and place of studying with their students. As a general interpretation of results he stated that teachers were not strongly resistant to the concept of LA and he concluded that for a successful implementation of LA, administrators of education and schools need to support teachers.

Chan (2003) investigated teachers' perspectives about autonomous language learning. He collected data from 41 English teachers via a questionnaire. He examined the responsibilities of teachers and students from teachers' point of views, students' abilities about decision making process and how they are encouraged for autonomous activities, their views about sharing responsibility with their students. Results showed that teachers regarded themselves methodologically responsible for their students' motivation. But they thought they were less responsible about students out of class activities.

One of the most striking studies in the field belongs to Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) which is a project work that investigates the beliefs and practices of English language teachers related to LA. It was implemented at a university language centre in Oman and they invested plenty of time and effort to develop the questionnaire about English teachers' perceptions on LA. It was delivered to 200 teachers either as an e-mail attachment or as an online questionnaire via Survey Monkey and they received 61 returns of these surveys. They analysed closed questionnaire items by means of SPSS and calculated percentages

and frequencies as descriptive statistics. They did content analysis for the open-ended questions and identified main themes and categories from the participants' responses. At the last section of the questionnaire the participants were asked whether they would volunteer to make an interview and 42 affirmative responses were received. Further information was explored via these interviews. Results showed that a large majority of teachers agreed that autonomy means learners can make choices about their learning and LA has a positive effect on language learning. They were more positive about the desirability of student involvement than its feasibility. In the light of these research findings they planned some workshops on professional development for the teachers in this language centre and they benefitted from teachers' elaborative answers during the discussions in these workshop sessions.

In a more recent work of Borg and Alshumaimeri (2017) the same questionnaire was administrated to examine the beliefs and practices of teachers and to detect the obstacles they face related to learner autonomy. In total, 359 teachers working in an English Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) at a university in Saudi Arabia shared their reflections on the issue. They associated the term LA with the notions of independence and control. They also reported that it is the ability and motivation to complete tasks, individually and/or collaboratively, in and/or outside the classroom, and with no/little teacher involvement. They considered promoting LA as a desirable goal and shared how they tried to foster it, but they were less positive about the feasibility of promoting LA because of some external factors.

In their study it was also stated that there is a lack in the literature about the teacher's understandings of LA concept. They emphasized this problematic aspect by referring to the views of some scholars regarding to teachers' beliefs. Therefore teachers' beliefs on LA have a strong effect on their instructional behaviours which influence students' learning directly (Skott, 2014; Muijs et al., 2014).

They made an extensive survey of the literature regarding teachers' beliefs about L2 learner autonomy and demonstrated them in a summary table. The most significant ones are shown in the following table:

Table 2.1.

Research on Teachers' Beliefs about L2 Learner Autonomy (Replicated from Borg&Alshumaimeri, 2017)

Source&Country	Participants	Data collection	Results
Camilleri (1999), Malta, Netherlands, Slovenia, Belorussia, Estonia, Poland	328 teachers at Primary and secondary school	Questionnaire	Teachers were positive about learner involvement in particular activities such as deciding on the position of desks, but less positive in others such as selection of textbooks.
Chan (2003), Hong Kong, China	41 English teachers from Hong Kong, China, USA, Australia, UK	Questionnaire	Teachers were positive about LA but they prefer teacher's dominance. Students weren't perceived ready to become autonomous.
Al-Shaqsi (2009), Oman	120 English teachers at Secondary school	Questionnaire	Teachers mostly identified 3 basic characteristics of autonomous learners; they are able to; use computers to find information, use a dictionary, ask teacher to explain if they don't understand
Balçinkanlı (2010), Turkey	112 student teachers of English in ELT department of a university	Questionnaire	They were positive about involving learners in decisions about their learning (but responses weren't based on teaching experience)
Reinders & Lazaro (2011), Germany, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland	46 teachers at self-access centres of universities or language schools	Interviews	Autonomy was seen as equality and respect between teachers & learners and empowerment. Students were not seen to be ready for autonomy. They also stated the institutional constraints on promoting autonomy
Nakata (2011), Japan	Secondary schools 78 teachers	Questionnaires & 4 interviews	There was a gap between teachers' positive views on LA and the classroom practices they reported to support learner autonomy
Borg & Al- Busaidi (2012), Oman	61 teachers in an English language centre of a university	Questionnaire & 20 interviews	LA was mostly regarded as independent, individual learning. There was a gap between their beliefs about desirability-feasibility of LA. The institutional constraints & adverse learner attributes were stated as hindering factors of LA.
Al-Busaidi &Al-Maamari (2014), Oman	20 teachers in a language centre of a university	Interviews	Teachers defined LA in various ways; the source of their views was previous training and/or classroom practice

Duong (2014), Thailand	30 teachers of English at a university	Questionnaire	Teachers support LA in theory but not in their actual teaching
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They also shared the studies in Asian context from the edited collection of Barnard & Li, (2016). In all of these studies the questionnaire of Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) was replicated. They are remarkable as they give valuable information about the cultural aspect of Asian educational context which is - as it is perceived in the literature - not so conducive in terms of LA.

The analysis of these summary tables reveals the following findings in common;

*Teachers define LA in various ways but “control” and “responsibility” are the common terms repeated

* Teachers are theoretically inclined to LA

* The total percentages of teachers who believe their learners have a fair degree of autonomy is not so high in most of the studies

* Teachers are pessimistic about the feasibility of LA while they are more positive about its desirability.

* The most often repeated hindering factors of LA were pointed as the institutional factors and learner-related ones.

To make an overall evaluation of these findings, teachers are ideally open to the concept of learner autonomy and they admit the importance of fostering it, because they have a positive view and LA is seen as a good quality to gain. But practically they tend to be pessimistic and they name a list of reasons/excuses which make it hard to manage the process and improve their students’ autonomy. To sum up it is mostly regarded as a desirable educational goal, but it is not so easy to realize it, while there is always a possibility to face with some constraints which cast a cloud on it.

Currently learner autonomy has been drawing more attention in the Turkish academic context. The researchers have been investigating the issues related to LA from many different aspects by conducting qualitative, quantitative, mixed method design or experimental studies. Besides there are various descriptive studies of Turkish scholars, reviewing the concepts related to language learning and LA. One of these studies belongs

to Çakıcı (2015) in which she investigates these two domains - LA and language learning. She provides some hints about fostering LA in language learning process such as teaching learning strategies, using cooperative learning, creating portfolios, self-reports, diaries and evaluation sheets. Similarly Balçıklanlı (2008) in his review paper, suggests some practical ways to enhance LA in classroom, in real EFL settings. And he links LA to European Language Portfolio (ELP) by mentioning its positive effects which create “a communicative, learner-centered and action-based” learning atmosphere in language learning process.

Another study that emphasizes the positive impact of learning strategies on LA, is the work of Ceylan (2015) in which she tries to find out if language learning strategies improves students’ learner autonomy or not. It was an experimental study carried out at Kocaeli University with Prep School students in 2013. Randomly chosen four experimental and four control groups were included in the study. Pre-test & post-test and survey about LA were implemented to whole groups before and after the two weeks training on language learning strategies to experimental groups. They were also observed on their use of the language learning strategies during the lessons in the first term. The study concludes that the more strategies the students employ, the more autonomy they gain by shouldering the responsibility of their own learning

The teachers’ role is undoubtedly crucial in creating an autonomous learning atmosphere. In her qualitative study - that can be considered as a document analysis work - Ergür (2010) points to the roles of teachers as an administrator, a consultant and as a source. She advocates that teachers should be trained in order to reflect a pedagogical structure supporting LA in teaching-learning environment. Also, dependency on teacher should be reduced gradually, but should not be removed totally, as it would bring about some difficulties alongside.

Sabancı (2007) studied on the views of primary and secondary school English teachers in Eskişehir regarding learner autonomy. He used a questionnaire consisting of 31 questions as 5 point likert scale items and additionally asked teachers to name five most important factors which influenced their answers in the questionnaire. According to the descriptive analysis, the frequencies and percentages obtained from their answers showed that teachers find LA supportive for language learning process. They thought that making

their own explanations, finding their own strategies, classroom interaction and self evaluation are the most suitable domains that LA could be reflected.

There are Master thesis studies in which “English language teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy questionnaire” was employed in Turkish educational context (Yıldırım, 2014; Doğan, 2015). They aimed to reveal the perceptions of EFL instructors in different universities. The findings showed that the instructors looked positively at various aspects of LA and agreed that it should be developed in language learning process by involving learners in decision making process. They stated that they supported their learners to become autonomous. Although they were positive about the desirability of many aspects of LA, they did not feel much positive about feasibility and about their learners' efforts on development of autonomy.

Besides these, there are also Master or PhD thesis studies on LA which reveal remarkable findings for the literature. Boyno (2011) in his PhD thesis, focused on the factors influencing the autonomy of Turkish learners of English. He listed the most frequently named factors affecting LA in the literature such as; age, gender, motivation, anxiety, attitude, brain dominance, emotional intelligence, experience, language learning strategies, learned helplessness, learning styles, multiple intelligence areas, parental attitudes, performance assessment, the socio-economic back ground etc. He implemented various instruments to collect data from 116 high school students and analysed them through SPSS for findings of independent T-test samples, One Way ANOVA and correlation in accordance with the aim of his argument. The results showed that most of these factors correlate positively or negatively with LA and a statistically significant difference was found between the gender of participants and their perception of autonomy.

In the master thesis study of Ürün (2013), the practices of ELT high school teachers to foster LA were investigated through a questionnaire. The study also aimed to examine whether these teachers’ practices show significant differences according to the some back ground variables such as gender, experience, and field of certification. 118 ELT high school teachers from different parts of İzmir were included in sampling. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis and the principal component analysis revealed that ELT high school teachers use four types of practices to foster language learning autonomy; activity-based practices, material based practices, student-centered

practices and objective-based practices and they made use of objective-based practices more than they use other dimensions. MANOVA results indicated that gender does not have a significant effect on their practices. Female teachers put more emphasis on improving LA through student-centered practices. Also there wasn't a statistically meaningful difference between experience or field of certification and their practices.

Almost all studies in Turkey point out more or less the same aspects of LA, but generally they focus on learners in higher education. The surveys or experimental studies have largely been conducted on university students and/or instructors since autonomy is mostly linked to adult learners. What about younger learners in basic education and their teachers? Isn't it possible for these teachers to establish an autonomous learning atmosphere for primary, secondary or high school students? To what extent do they do it? By noticing this gap, the study here focuses on the matter from the aspect of teachers and learners who are involved in basic education. The perceptions of primary, secondary and high school teachers on LA will give us valuable information about the recent educational perspectives in our schools.

By covering the literature on LA so far, a review of the studies conducted about the perceptions of teachers/students and practices of teachers related to LA were presented in this part. Also issues such as the importance of fostering learner autonomy in Turkish educational context and a quick review to the current curricula in ELT in terms of learner autonomy were handled. In the next part, the methodology is introduced and then the findings of the study revealing the beliefs and practices of English teachers in Muğla related to LA will be shared. Additionally by touching upon the teachers' reflections on young learners regarding LA and their evaluation about present English coursebooks at schools, the study identifies the real situation they face. As the practitioners and the prominent actors of educational settings, teachers share their opinions about the reality and this gives a great deal of information about the existing situation with remarkable reflections on the concept of LA.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this study is to investigate what learner autonomy means to the English teachers in Muğla who work in primary, secondary and high schools and to discover what their practices are. This chapter consists of six sections which are; research design, setting, participants, instruments, the data collection, and the data analysis procedures.

3.1. Research Design

This study has a mixed methods research design which aimed to investigate English teachers' perceptions and practices regarding learner autonomy by both qualitative and quantitative data gathering methods. Mixed methods research design is defined as; "...the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e. g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration" (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007, p. 123).

In terms of mixed methods design strategies, sequential explanatory design was employed in this study, which is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by a collection and analysis of qualitative data (Creswell, 2003). The purpose of this design is to use qualitative results to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a quantitative study.

The survey served as the most useful data collection tool that enabled to reach a large majority of participants and it helped to understand the beliefs and perceptions of participants about LA at the first stage of the research. The interview questions helped the researcher to explore further insights of the participants which enabled to gather elaborated information about the reality. That is why a mixed method research design was adopted for this study.

3.2. Setting

The study was conducted in Primary, Secondary and High Schools in Menteşe, Muğla in the second term of 2017-2018 Academic year. It aimed to reach all English teachers working in these institutions without considering their age, gender or years of experience. In some of these schools, there were also English teachers who worked temporarily in place of the ones who were on maternity leave, on military duty, or who were assigned for a temporary job by the Muğla Provincial Directorate for National Education. The level of English that they were teaching varied between beginner to advanced depending on the school, grade and age of their students.

In Turkish National Education system students start to learn English in the 2nd year of primary school, and they keep on learning it by the end of 12th grade, which means that they learn English for 11 years, from the age of 8 till 19. If we touch upon English class hours on weekly schedule (in the 2017-2018 Academic year) depending on the regulations made by the Ministry of National Education,

in primary schools:

- 2 hours allocated for the 2nd and 3rd graders throughout the academic year
- 3 hours allocated for the 4th graders throughout the academic year

in secondary schools students weekly have:

- 3 hours of English at the 5th grade

Alternatively, in 2017-2018 academic year, there were preparation classes for the 5th graders in some secondary schools where they can have 11 hours of English in a week and additionally a 6 hour supplementary course if the families demand. (According to the

latest changes, the preparation classes for the 5th graders have become common for all secondary schools. Now they regularly have 13 hours of English a week with 4 hours of supplementary English course.)

- 3 hours of English at 6th grade
- 4 hours of English at 7th and 8th grades

In addition to these regular English classes, all students may have 2 hours more, as a supplementary course.

High schools can be divided into two groups mainly. First type is called Academic High schools such as High School of Science, High School of Social Sciences and Anatolian High Schools. The second group is called Vocational High schools, consisting of Technical and Vocational Schools, High School of Sports and High schools of Fine Arts. In the 2017-2018 Academic year there were:

- 4 or 5 hours of English for the 9th graders
- 4 hours for the 10th, 11th and 12th graders

Recently the total hours have been changed in different types of high schools and according to the latest regulations English lesson hours have been reduced 2 hours for the 10th, 11th and 12th grade students in Vocational high schools while there are still 4 hours of English lessons in Academic high schools. Hence, this will probably cause big problems in terms of the curriculum and the course book which is unique for all types of high schools while the lesson hours are not equal.

3.3. Participants

The targetted group of sampling were the English teachers, and in terms of reachability, the teachers who work at schools in Menteşe, Muğla were chosen. The research population consisted of 121 teachers according to the official records taken from the Human Resources Department of The Directorate of National Education and 105 of them were reached and delivered the questionnaire. They were selected randomly from primary, secondary and high school teachers. Both male and female English teachers were involved in the research without considering their ages or years of experience. From the ones delivered, 96 returns were received, but 6 of them were incompleted so they were

considered as invalid. Eventually the sampling number was 90 in total and there were sixty-four (N=64) female and twenty-six (N=26) male teachers who completely answered the questions in the “English Language Teachers’ Beliefs about Learner Autonomy” Questionnaire.

Table 3.1.

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Factor	F	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	64	71.1
Male	26	28.9
<i>Grades they teach English</i>		
Primary school	19	21.2
Secondary School	32	35.5
High School	39	43.3
<i>Highest qualification</i>		
Diploma	32	35.5
Bachelor’s	51	56.7
Master’s	7	7.8
<i>Years of experience as an English language teacher</i>		
0-4	2	2.2
5-9	7	7.8
10-14	31	34.4
15-19	27	30
20-24	17	18.9
25+	6	6.7
<i>Years of experience at their current institution</i>		
0-4	44	48.9
5-9	25	27.8
10-14	15	16.7
15-19	4	4.4
20-24	1	1.1
25+	1	1.1

There were 17 volunteers (7 male and 10 female) who accepted taking part in an interview and 10 out of 17 were selected non-randomly according to their years of experience. They were interviewed right after the completion of quantitative data analysis. Their interviews were made by audial record and transcribed by the researcher except for one volunteer who agreed to answer interview questions in written form and delivered it by hand.

In the 4th section of the questionnaire where the demographic information of the participants were collected, there were 6 options related to their years of experience (0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19, 20-24 and 24+) and while selecting 10 interview volunteers out of 17, the researcher picked 2 volunteers from each option except for the least and the most experienced teachers among the volunteers. There was only one volunteer who is the least experienced, and there was no volunteer who is experienced over 24 years. That is why the researcher has chosen a 22 years experienced teacher who is the most experienced one among volunteers. Table 3.2 shows the numbers of teachers chosen for sampling:

Table 3.2.

Total Sampling of Interview Volunteers

Years of Experience	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	24+
Number of Volunteers	1	2	2	2	3	0

0-4 years of experience (N=1), 5-9 years of experience (N=2), 10-14 years of experience (N=2), 15-19 years of experience (N=2), 20-24 years of experience (N=2), 24+ years of experience (N=0), instead a 22 years of experienced teacher (the most experienced interview volunteer) was chosen (N=1). Hence the total sampling was 10 (1+2+2+2+3=10) participants out of 17.

3.4. Instruments

Both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were used for this study.

3.4.1. English Language Teacher's Beliefs about LA Questionnaire

The first part of this study consisted of the implementation of “English language teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy questionnaire” developed by Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012). They conducted a study at Language Centre (LC) of Sultan Qaboos University, in Oman to investigate the beliefs and practices of 61 EFL teachers. The questionnaire was developed with a great deal of work and went through several phases of drafting, critical review and piloting, as described in detail by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012). As the target population consisted of English teachers, the questionnaire was not adapted and it was implemented in its original language.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections, the first of which included 37 five-point Likert scale items ranging from ‘*strongly disagree*’ (1) through ‘*strongly agree*’ (5). The items were searching for teachers’ views on the nature of learner autonomy in second language learning. These 37 items were formerly designed to cover various scales such as technical, psychological or social perspectives, but because of the low reliability scores of these scales, the researchers did not employ them during the data analysis phase (Borg &, Alshumaimeri, 2017). Hence only the descriptive analysis e.g frequencies, percentages were taken into consideration while searching for the answers of research questions.

The second section focused on the desirability and feasibility of LA within the context of second language learning. Through four scales consisting of seven items each, it aimed to elicit teachers’ views on the desirability and feasibility of students’ involvement in decision-making and their abilities. In the first part of this section, through seven items repeated on both the desirability scale (internal reliability using Cronbach’s alpha = 0.89) and the feasibility scale (Cronbach’s alpha 0.90) teachers responses were gathered about the involvement of students into decision making process.

Table 3.3.

Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Coefficient of Desirability and Feasibility Scales about Learners’ Involvement in Decision-making

Scale	Number of items	α
Desirability of Learners’ Involvement in Decisions	7	.89
Feasibility of Learners’ Involvement in Decisions	7	.90

The following part of section 2, again consisted of seven items on both the desirability scale (internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha = 0.94) and the feasibility scale (Cronbach's alpha 0.94) about the students' learning to learn skills.

Table 3.4.

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient of Desirability and Feasibility Scales on Learning to Learn Skills of Students

Scale	Number of items	α
Desirability Learning to Learn Skills of Students	7	.94
Feasibility Learning to Learn Skills of Students	7	.94

The third section included two items based on teachers' beliefs about how autonomous they perceived their students were and to what extent they think they promote learner autonomy in their teaching practice. Additionally their further comments were asked in an open-ended manner, to make them explain learner behaviours which were the signs of autonomy. Next, they were also asked to give examples of how they promoted autonomy in practice, if they declared they did. In the 4th section, some demographic information about the background of teachers were gathered. In section 5, teachers were asked if they would volunteer to take part in the second phase of the study. Finally, interviews were conducted with the teachers who accepted to volunteer to participate in the study.

There are case studies and master thesis studies in which "English language teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy questionnaire" was employed (Civanoğlu & Mede, 2014; Doğan, 2015; Yıldırım, 2014). They aimed to reveal the perceptions of EFL instructors in different universities. The findings revealed notable implications for integrating LA in English language teaching. The instructors looked positively at various aspects of LA and agreed that it should be developed in the learning process by involving learners in decision making process. They stated that they supported their learners to become autonomous. Although they were positive about the desirability of many aspects of LA, they did not feel much positive about feasibility and about their learners' efforts in the development of autonomy.

According to Borg and Alshumaimeri (2017), although the importance of learner autonomy is widely accepted and it is considered as a desirable goal in L2 learning, there is still a lack of analysis on the beliefs and understanding of language teachers related to

the term. As Muijs et al. (2014) indicate, this lack creates a gap in the literature, because teachers' instructional behaviours are directly affected by their beliefs and they have a remarkable impact on students' learning process. (Muijs et. al, as cited in Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017). Similarly Skott (2014) reveals teachers' beliefs affect their interpretation about the problems they face in the practice, so their understanding of learner autonomy will definitely influence their actions about fostering it (Skott, as cited in Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017). Within this context, diagnosing the teacher's beliefs and understanding of LA might give valuable clues about the the reality. That is why the researchers chose the "English language teachers' beliefs about LA questionnaire" as a data collection tool.

3.4.2. Follow-up interviews

The second part of the study was for collecting qualitative data through a semi-structured interview. It helped to gain further information about teachers' insights on the issue depending on the research questions which were being investigated. There were five questions in the interview related to the concept of LA, key characteristics of an autonomous learner, the possibility to foster LA with young learners, teacher's practices to support LA if they say they do and their reflections on the existing English coursebooks in terms of supporting LA. (See appendix 4). Expert views were taken during the preparation of these interview questions.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

For this study, data were gathered in two stages; first "English Language Teachers' Beliefs about Learner Autonomy" Questionnaire was answered by the participants and then follow-up interviews were held with the volunteers. Since it was conducted at the schools in Menteşe, Muğla, the researcher was able to reach most of the participants personally by visiting them in their schools in convenient hours or by delivering and collecting the hardcopies of the questionnaire with the help of other colleagues. All the

necessary permissions were taken from the Ethical Committee of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University and Muğla Provincial Directorate for National Education right before the implementation of questionnaire.

Since the questionnaire consisted of 58 items in total, it was supposed to take approximately 20 or 25 minutes to answer which was not so appealing for the teachers who were very busy with overloaded lecture hours and lots of paperwork. Thus, the researcher had some concerns about the participation rate and tried to attract the teachers' attention by attaching small gifts (a handmade bookmark which was made of marbling art) to the questionnaires. Also, for most of the teachers it was not possible to fill in the questionnaire immediately during their short breaktimes, so the researcher preferred to deliver them and waited for the returns in a couple of days.

On the second phase of the research which aimed to collect qualitative data covering teachers' further insights on LA, it was estimated to allocate approximately 20 minutes for one interview and most of the interviews lasted 15 minutes. The appointments were arranged with ultimate sensitivity, by negotiating the exact meeting time on the phone according to the teachers' weekly schedule. All the interviews were carried out with face-to-face meetings except for one volunteer who shared her answers in written format and delivered it as a hardcopy. The others were recorded in audial format and they were all transcribed right after the interviews.

3.6. Data Analysis

The data collected via "English language teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy questionnaire" were uploaded on SPSS (version 22) software and analysed by means of this program. As descriptive statistics; percentages, means and frequencies were calculated. There were 44 English teachers who added explanation for the open-ended questions in section 3 and basic points they referred were identified (the reasons they stated for their students' low level of autonomy and the strategies they reported that they used to promote LA).

For the interview questions; content based analysis technique, which is widely used to

analyse qualitative inquiries, was employed. The participants responses to the interview questions were transcribed from the audio records and main categories and themes were identified through the codes elicited from their answers. Saldana (2009) defines the code as following;

A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based or visual data (p.3).

And he emphasized the importance of establishing inter-rater reliability in order to determine the trustworthiness of a study while using qualitative coding techniques. According to Walther et al. (2013) interrater reliability means to “mitigate interpretative bias” and ensure a “continuous dialogue between researchers to maintain consistency of the coding” (p. 650).

To ensure reliability of this qualitative analysis, two more colleagues (one academician and one English teacher) have also performed a sample content analysis on the answers. To check the inter-rater reliability, the formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was employed;

$$\text{reliability} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{number of agreements} + \text{disagreements}}$$

and with the score 0.85 it was found reliable. For Miles and Huberman (1994), an interrater reliability of 80% agreement between coders on 95% of the codes is sufficient agreement among multiple coders.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter illustrates the results obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews in tables. The findings will be presented and discussed in parallel to research questions. The questionnaire results will be shown separately in tables related to each section and interviews which reflect teachers' further insights on LA will be presented in form of codes, categories and themes which emerged from the content analysis.

4.1. Findings for Research Question 1: “What are English Teachers’ perceptions regarding learner autonomy?”

Teachers’ beliefs have a significant impact on their instructional behaviours, which directly affect students’ learning process. As there are few studies about teachers’ beliefs on LA in the domain of foreign language teaching, this study aimed to reveal their overall perceptions on LA.

The first research question of this study tries to reveal what learner autonomy means to the English teachers in Muğla and the first section of the questionnaire which includes 37 items was employed to find an answer to this question. The descriptive statistics -the frequencies and percentages - gained from the first 37 items were presented in Table 4.1 and as in the recent study of Borg & Alshumaimeri (2017), they were presented in 3 columns as “disagree”, “unsure” and “agree” in a descending order from the item most agreed upon to the item least agreed.

Table 4.1.

Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Beliefs about L2 Learner Autonomy

Items	disagree		unsure		agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
29.Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.	0	0	6	6,7	84	93,3
16.Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.	2	2,2	6	6,7	82	91,1
36.Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner.	2	2,2	6	6,7	82	91,1
4.Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.	2	2,2	7	7,8	81	90
33.Motivated language learners are more likely to develop Learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.	1	1,1	8	8,9	81	90
11.Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.	3	3,3	8	8,9	79	87,8
14.Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.	0	0	12	13,3	78	86,7
28.Learner-centred classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy	2	2,2	11	12,2	77	85,6
35.The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.	5	5,6	9	10	76	84,4
25.Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy.	1	1,1	14	15,6	75	83,3
7.Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.	2	2,2	15	16,7	73	81,1
19.Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together	4	4,4	13	14,4	73	81,1
2.Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy.	3	3,3	16	17,8	71	78,9
12.Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.	3	3,3	16	17,8	71	78,9
37.To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.	3	3,3	17	18,9	70	77,8

The frequencies and percentages were taken from the analysis results and items with high degree of agreement were presented in Table 4.1. Only the percentages in the range of

100% - 75% were taken into consideration as the most significant findings. The analysis showed that there is a high degree of agreement on nearly half of the items with total percentages starting from 93% to 77% (15 items).

In the light of these mostly agreed statements following conclusions can be drawn related to English teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy:

- Learning how to learn and self-evaluation are the crucial metacognitive skills to grasp in order to become an autonomous learner (items 29, 37).
- Allowing students to learn from each other contributes positively to the promotion of learner autonomy, but independent study is also an important factor to develop it (items 16, 2).
- LA concept is related to involving learners in decisions and letting them make choices about learning content, learning style, activities and evaluation. These are essential elements for fostering learners to gain autonomy (items 4, 14, 7, 37).
- Psychological factors; motivation and confidence play an important role in developing autonomy. Language learners who are motivated and self-confident have the edge over the ones who are not (items 33, 11).
- Learner-centred classrooms provide the most supportive conditions for developing LA (item 28).
- The teacher has a key position in the process of supporting LA (item 35).
- Activities which allow students to work co-operatively foster the development of LA (items 16, 25,19).
- LA enables a more effective and successful L2 learning process (items 36, 12).

It is understood that English teachers are aware of the concept of LA and they highlight the most salient issues related to it such as; learning to learn, independent study, cooperative work and thus peer learning, self-evaluation, learner-centred classrooms, the key role of teacher in the process of becoming autonomous and the necessary psychological features like motivation and self confidence.

Additionally the teachers' responses to the interview questions 1 and 2 were examined and further information about their perception of LA were gathered. Their own statements to define 'what is LA' and 'who is an autonomous learner' were analysed through content analysis technique. Table 4.2 illustrates the codes, categories and themes elicited from these data:

Table 4.2.

Teachers' Responses for Interview Question 1

Theme	Category	Codes
Definition of learner autonomy	Own learning control/ involving in decisions (6)	-own control of learning process (2) -deciding objectives, materials, strategies, monitoring, evaluating (1) -deciding what, how, when and where to learn (1) -making his/her own decisions (1) -ability to decide the steps of learning (1)
	Taking responsibility (5)	-capacity to take responsibility for own learning (1) -taking charge of own learning process(1) - being totally responsible for all decisions of own learning (1) -taking responsibility in all learning process(1) -being responsible to finish the task (1)
	Awareness of own learning styles(4)	-discovering own learning style (1) -learning type (1) -being aware of their own learning strategies, styles (2)
	Freedom(3)	-having no border while learning a language (1) -production of students regardless of textbooks, grammar rules...Freedom (1) -ability to learn a skill/a language as free as he can (1)
	Evaluating oneself (2)	-monitoring and evaluating their learning process (1) -evaluating himself and developments in basic structures (1)
	One's own progress in learning (2)	-a person's progress by himself (1) -ability to learn on his own (1)

There were 10 non-randomly chosen participants out of 17 interview volunteers. As shown in Table 4.2 they used different terms and statements to define LA in their own

words. Since the study aimed to investigate their beliefs about LA with the first research question, these statements helped to understand their perceptions on the issue. The frequency of codes were shown in paranthesis and the total frequencies of those statements were again demonstrated in paranthesis under the category names. Teachers' responses to the first interview question were grouped under six categories in a descending order of frequencies. They were; own learning control/involvement in decisions, taking responsibility, awareness of own learning style, freedom, evaluating oneself and own progress in learning. The analysis showed that teachers ideally have a high degree of awareness on the concept of LA and their definitions were closely corresponding to the most highlighted defining terms referred to in the literature.

The interview question 2, was investigating how English teachers describe "an autonomous learner". Table 4.3 shows the codes, categories and the themes elicited from their responses to the second interview question.

Table 4.3.

Teachers' Responses for Interview Question 2

Theme	Category	Codes
Characteristics of an autonomous learner	Learning Characteristics (16)	-knowing how to use resources independently (2)
		-knowing their needs (1)
		-working productively (1)
		-learning inside and outside the classroom(2)
		-learning with active thinking (1)
		-learning without teacher (1)
		-choosing materials, methods, tasks (1)
		-deciding on activities (1)
		-having control of his own learning process (1)
		-being conscious about what's being taught (1)
		-being aware of his own learning startegies (1)
		-noticing their abilities about learning language(1)
		-use the language courageously(1)
		-evaluating his own skill development (1)
		- using electronics and foreign friendship extremely(1)

Personal Characteristics (12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -willing to take risks (2) -being responsible (1) -being volunteer (1) -being problem solver (1) -being free (2) -being creative (1) -being happy (1) -being enthusiastic (1) -having high self-esteem (1) -being open minded (1)
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As it can be seen in Table 3.4 the codes emerging from teachers' responses were grouped under two categories. Some of their statements were mostly describing learner behaviours which they thought as the qualities that an autonomous learner should have and they were grouped under the name of "learner characteristics". While the others were reflecting general personal traits which were supposed to be in the nature of an autonomous learner and they were named as "personal characteristics". The frequency of codes were shown in paranthesis and the total frequencies of those statements were demonstrated under the category names; learner characteristics (F=16), personal characteristics (F=12). With the elicited codes and categories from teachers' personal views, we can conclude that they attributed many good qualities to an autonomous learner which showed their high expectations from those learners. In other words, their responses indicated how hopeful they were about those learners' progress.

Regarding the recorded literature on the issue so far, it can be said that teachers touched upon the most highlighted terms for the definition of LA and the most striking features of an autonomous learner such as independency, awareness, willingness, responsibility, monitoring and evaluating own learning process etc.(Holec, 1979; Little, 1991; Dickinson, 1994; Scharle & Szabo, 2000; Benson, 2003) which means they ideally have a positive sense of perception on LA.

4.2. Findings for Research Question 2: “How desirable and feasible is it to promote learner autonomy according to English teachers?”

The section 2 of the questionnaire addresses two issues; the desirability and feasibility of LA within the context of second language learning. Through four scales consisting of seven items each, it aimed to find out teachers’ opinions about the desirability and feasibility of students’ involvement in decision-making and their abilities.

There were four options for each item in desirability scale ranging from ‘undesirable’ to ‘very desirable’ and while inserting the data, they were graded as “*undesirable*” (1), “*slightly desirable*” (2), “*quite desirable*” (3) and “*very desirable*” (4). The following table demonstrates the descriptive analysis results by giving the frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviations taken from teachers responses for the desirability of each item about students’ involvement in decision-making processes:

Table 4.4.

Desirability of Student Involvement in Decision-making

Items	Undesirable		Slightly Desirable		Quite Desirable		Very Desirable		M	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Learners are involved in decisions about										
1. The objectives of a course	4	4,4	23	25,6	36	40	27	30	2,95	0,85
2. The materials used	2	2,2	11	12,2	51	56,7	26	28,9	3,12	0,70
3. The kinds of tasks and activities they do	1	1,1	13	14,4	44	48,9	32	35,6	3,18	0,71
4. The topics discussed	0	0	16	17,8	43	47,8	31	34,4	3,16	0,70
5. How learning is assessed	5	5,6	28	31,1	32	35,6	25	27,8	2,85	0,89
6. The teaching methods used	8	8,9	22	24,4	38	42,2	22	24,4	2,82	0,90
7. Classroom management	13	14,4	19	21,1	32	35,6	26	28,9	2,78	1,02

The mean scores on Table 4.4. showed that the participant teachers mostly regarded positively to the involvement of students to these decision-making processes. This means that teachers agreed upon that these items were desirable for autonomous learners.

On the feasibility of the same seven items, again there were four options ranging from ‘unfeasible’ to ‘very feasible’ and they were graded in the same way; “*unfeasible*” (1),

“slightly feasible” (2), “quite feasible” (3) and “feasible” (4). Table 4.5 demonstrates the descriptive analysis results of each item about students’ involvement in decision-making processes:

Table 4.5.

Feasibility of Student Involvement in Decision-making

Items	Unfeasible		Slightly Feasible		Quite Feasible		Very Feasible		M	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Learners are involved in decisions about										
1. Identify their own needs	24	26,7	31	34,4	27	30	8	8,9	2,21	0,94
2. Identify their own strengths	11	12,2	27	30	44	48,9	8	8,9	2,54	0,82
3. Identify their own weaknesses	9	10	35	38,9	37	41,1	9	10	2,51	0,81
4. Monitor their progress	13	14,4	35	38,9	30	33,3	12	13,3	2,45	0,90
5. Evaluate their own learning	24	26,7	34	37,8	27	30	5	5,6	2,14	0,88
6. Learn co-operatively	23	25,6	32	35,6	28	31,1	7	7,8	2,21	0,91
7. Learn independently	26	28,9	31	34,4	24	26,7	9	10	2,17	0,96

As shown in Table 4.5, teachers responded that students involvement to these decision-making processes were not so feasible in the existing situation. The analysis results of these two scales showed that teachers were more positive about the desirability of learner involvement in various decisions than they were about its feasibility.

When these two sets of items (scales) were compared (using a paired samples t-test), the overall difference between the desirability ($M = 20.90$) and feasibility ($M = 16.25$) scores was statistically significant ($n = 90$, $t_{(89)} = 7.65$, $p < .001$):

Table 4.6.

A Paired Samples T-test on the Desirability and Feasibility Scales of Student Involvement in Decision-making

Scale	N	M	Sd	t	df	p
Desirability of Student Involvement in Decision-making	90	20.90	5.75	7.65	89	.000
Feasibility of Student Involvement in Decision-making	90	16.25				

In the second part of Section 2, teachers were asked about desirability and feasibility of some abilities. There were four options for each item in order for teachers to share their opinions and they were graded in the same way ranging from 1 to 4 in each scale. Table 4.7 illustrates the descriptive analysis results elicited from teachers' responses about the desirability of the following learner abilities. Here are the frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviations of the responses for each item:

Table 4.7.

Desirability of Learning to Learn Skills in Students

Items	Undesirable		Slightly Desirable		Quite Desirable		Very Desirable		M	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Learners have the ability to										
1. Identify their own needs	3	3,3	7	7,8	31	34,4	49	54,4	3,40	0,77
2. Identify their own strengths	2	2,2	10	11,1	31	34,4	47	52,2	3,36	0,77
3. Identify their own weaknesses	2	2,2	9	10	32	35,6	47	52,2	3,37	0,75
4. Monitor their progress	1	1,1	11	12,2	34	37,8	44	48,9	3,34	0,73
5. Evaluate their own learning	4	4,4	14	15,6	34	37,8	38	42,2	3,17	0,85
6. Learn co-operatively	2	2,2	6	6,7	37	41,1	45	50	3,38	0,71
7. Learn independently	2	2,2	13	14,4	35	38,9	40	44,4	3,25	0,78

The abilities above can be considered as the qualities that an autonomous learner need to have. In the light of the mean scores of these skills (ranging from 3.40 to 3.17), it can be said that teachers had a high degree of agreement upon the desirability of these qualities for an autonomous learner. The abilities to “identify their own needs” (M=3.40) and “learn cooperatively” (M=3.38) were the most wanted features for an autonomous learner from the view of participant English teachers. Teachers might have chosen these features as the most prominent ones since they attached more importance to learners' awareness about themselves in the language learning process and their active participation in group activities which facilitates their learning.

About the feasibility of these learner abilities, teachers responses were analysed in the same way. In Table 4.8 the descriptive statistics gathered from these responses are presented:

Table 4.8.

Feasibility of Learning to Learn Skills in Students

Items	Unfeasible		Slightly Feasible		Quite Feasible		Very Feasible		M	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Learners have the ability to										
1. Identify their own needs	11	12,2	28	31,1	36	40	15	16,7	2,61	0,90
2. Identify their own strengths	14	15,6	27	30	40	44,4	9	10	2,84	0,87
3. Identify their own weaknesses	16	17,8	26	28,9	38	42,2	10	11,1	2,46	0,91
4. Monitor their progress	20	22,2	27	30	31	34,4	12	13,3	2,38	0,97
5. Evaluate their own learning	24	26,7	27	30	33	36,7	6	6,7	2,23	0,92
6. Learn co-operatively	9	10	26	28,9	38	42,2	17	18,9	2,70	0,89
7. Learn independently	14	15,6	29	32,2	35	38,9	12	13,3	2,50	0,91

As it was seen in the previous part, the results were similar in the second part of the scale. Responses revealed that teachers' opinions about the desirability of students' abilities were more positive than their feasibility. According to the participant teachers, the most feasible skills were "identify their own strengths" (M= 2.84) and "learn cooperatively" (M=2.70), while the least feasible ones were; evaluating their own learning (M=2.23) and monitoring their progress.

In the comparison of these two scales (using paired samples t-test), it was concluded that the overall difference between the desirability (M = 23.31) and feasibility (M = 17.38) scores was statistically significant ($n = 90$, $t_{(89)} = 8.39$, $p < .001$):

Table 4.9.

A Paired Samples T-test on the Desirability and Feasibility Scales of Learning to Learn Skills

Scale	N	M	Sd	t	df	p
Desirability of Learning to Learn Skills in Students	90	23.31	6,69	8.39	89	.000
Feasibility of Learning to Learn Skills in Students	90	17.38				

4.3. Findings for Research Question 3: “To what extent do English teachers feel their learners are autonomous?”

In section 3 of the questionnaire, titled as “Your learners and your teaching”, there were 2 questions with five options to choose ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). Teachers were first asked to evaluate the autonomy level of their students from their own perspective. They were asked to what extent they agree to the statement;

“In general, the students I teach English most often at my current school have a fair degree of learner autonomy.”

Here are the descriptive statistics elicited from participants’ answers:

Table 4.10.

Descriptive Statistics of Teachers’ Opinions about the Statement; “My students have a Fair Degree of Learner Autonomy”

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Strongly Disagree	5	5.6
Disagree	21	23.3
Unsure	29	32.2
Agree	29	32.2
Strongly Agree	6	6.7
Total	90	100

Table 4.10 demonstrates the frequencies and percentages of English teachers’ responses to the first part of the question. Results showed that; 39% of participant teachers (the total percentage of teachers who agreed and strongly agreed), believed that their students had a fair degree of autonomy. Nearly 29% of them (the total percentage of who disagreed and strongly disagreed) thought that their students were not so autonomous, which means that the total rate of agreement on this statement was higher than total rate of disagreement. However, while making an overall evaluation, comparing the total rate of the teachers who were unsure or who disagreed with the rate of the teachers who agreed, will be more useful to understand the general situation. Moreover, it can be concluded that agreement on this statement was not so high which means that teachers mostly

admitted that their students were not autonomous learners.

Among teachers who disagreed or who were unsure about this statement, 25 of them gave explanations why the situation was like that in the open ended part of section 3.1. Here are the most significant reasons they stated as far as they diagnosed from their learners:

Participant 2: “I give opportunities and try to have learner-centered classrooms but couldn’t achieve it because students don’t have self confidence and adequate backgrounds.” (teaches at High school)

Participant 3: “They don’t want to study alone.” (teaches at Primary & Secondary school)

Participant 14: “They are used to having spoon-fed information. They expect the teacher to present what to learn and the struggle to learn by themselves is very weak.” (teaches at High school)

Participant 21: “- Most of the students I teach English in my current school lack learner autonomy. They have no aim, no desire to learn, So what makes us have difficulty in teaching; they lack motivation.” (teaches at High school)

Participant 22: “Because some of them aren’t effective language learners. They aren’t eager to develop themselves outside the classroom and they don’t trust in their own abilities or qualities.” (teaches at High school)

Participant 25: “As you know autonomous learners have to be responsible for all decisions that they have to make about their own learning. In other words, they are self directed in the sense that they act independently of the teacher without remaining passive or waiting to be told what to do from the teacher. At my current school learners are used to wait to be told what to do by the teacher.” (teaches at Primary school)

Participant 29: “They don’t have a tendency to have a degree of learner autonomy most probably because they are too young.” (teaches at Secondary school)

Participant 33: “Unfortunately learners do not volunteer to join the lesson generally. Of course, there are some students who are interested in learning a new language. But except for those, students don’t learn by themselves and don’t know how to promote LA.” (teaches at Secondary school)

Participant 39: “ Because they don’t want to learn. They have no aim for learning a foreign language.” (teaches at High school)

Participant 40: “Because they don’t know themselves.” (teaches at High school)

Participant 41: “Because they don’t want to learn English.” (teaches at High school)

Participant 42: “ Because they lack motivation. They don’t have any ambition to learn languages. They don’t think it will be necessary in real life.” (teaches at High school)

Participant 46: “Because of the age of learners.” (teaches at Secondary school)

Participant 50: “Ss are not aware of autonomy.” (teaches at Secondary school)

Participant 56: “When you call somebody as autonomous, they should develop without teachers. However my students usually ask me what to do. I try to overcome this situation but it takes time.” (teaches at Secondary school)

Participant 66: “Because of their young age and parent intervention their ability to develop LA is more difficult.” (teaches at Primary school)

Participant 67: “Because the students at my current school don’t like coming to school and learning. They are not interested in learning itself. They find learning boring and unnecessary.” (teaches at High school).

Participant 69: “They do not have LA because they don’t know their way of learning.” (teaches at High school).

Participant 73: “- Most of my students at my school have no opportunity or chance for having a fair degree of LA at their home. Their parents are not interested in their lessons especially in English. Because they have no idea about English or they have no time for dealing with their children.” (teaches at Primary school).

Participant 89: “They are not so autonomous because 2 hours a week is not enough to guide them to become autonomous.” (teaches at Primary school).

From the statements above, it can clearly be seen that teachers pointed different reasons depending on the level of students they teach. While primary and secondary school teachers were mostly stating the reasons such as; being of a young age, being used to spoon-fed ways of learning, high school teachers stated the lack of eagerness and motivation. The basic points elicited from that teachers’ responses will be presented in detail in the discussion part in Chapter V.

4.4. Findings for Research Question 4: “To what extent do English teachers say they actually promote learner autonomy?”

The second question in section 3 was to search for teachers’ practices to promote learner autonomy if they declared they did. First they were asked whether they were supportive for their students to develop LA or not. They were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement; “*In general, in teaching English at my current school, I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy.*” Then with the following open-ended question their explanations were elicited about how they promoted autonomy, if they said they did or why they didn’t focus on developing it, if they said they didn’t.

Table 4.11.

Descriptive Statistics of Teachers’ Opinions about the Statement “I give my students opportunities to develop LA”

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	2	2.2
Unsure	23	25.6
Agree	53	58.9
Strongly Agree	12	13.3
Total	90	100

Table 4.11 demonstrates the frequencies and percentages of English teachers’ responses to the first part of the question. The percentage of the teachers who declared that they supported their students in terms of LA (the total percentage of teachers who agreed and strongly agreed) was 72%, while the rate of teachers who were unsure was 26%. And only 2% of teachers declared that they didn’t support LA. To conclude, the majority of participant teachers reported that they gave their students the opportunities to develop learner autonomy. Nearly 1/3 of them were unsure about whether they support it or not. A minority of the participant teachers reported that they didn’t focus on developing learner autonomy but none of them gave explanation about it.

On the other hand, there were 39 teachers (35 strongly agree/agree, 3 unsure, 1 disagree) who gave further explanation in the open ended part of question 3.2. But among the participants who declared that he/she supported LA (N=35) only 20 of them explained in which ways they did it. In other words; only 20 of these answers were relevant to the question and/or were including concrete examples about their real practices, while 15 of them remained so abstract or irrelevant (participants; 3, 12, 13, 16, 19, 21, 25, 30, 33, 38, 58, 74, 80, 81, 89). In the rest of the answers teachers stated that they were unsure (N=3) or disagreed (N=1) by giving reasons.

The teachers who provided concrete examples about how they promoted LA in their classes, described the following practices and/or activities:

Participant 1: “I create channels for them to improve LA. Creation of communication channels is the first condition for a teacher to develop LA. (teaches at High school)

Participant 6: “I teach them the ways they can learn on their own.” (teaches at Secondary school)

Participant 11: “Each student has own ability to learn a new language, but he/she is not aware of this. So we, as teachers, need to give them choices about how they learn. I always listen to them and behave according to their own strenghts and needs.” (teaches at Secondary school).

Participant 14: “By providing them links to other sources of information mostly.” (teaches at High School).

Participant 17: “I promote using internet while studying English. By doing tasks on the net they learn to use electronic dictionary and they learn to watch films without subtitles.” (teaches at High School).

Participant 18: “I encourage them to watch films and read books in English.” (teaches at High School).

Participant 22: “In my classes students have an important role. There is no teacher-centered classroom. I don’t use traditional ways of teaching. I always encourage my students to show themselves.” (teaches at High School).

Participant 29: “I give my students assignments so that they can work on their own or I want them to make projects to promote their autonomy.” (teaches at Secondary school).

Participant 40: “I give info to them about learning strategies.” (teaches at High School).

Participant 41: “I generally ask questions. I want them to think about sth, I don’t give the answer. I want them to find it.” (teaches at High School).

Participant 44: “... I do activities like acting, I let them make mistakes and use smartboard by themselves.” (teaches at Secondary school).

Participant 46: “They listen to music and watch movies.” (teaches at Secondary school).

Participant 50: “I give my students individual tasks to develop LA. also I encourage them to work in groups.” (teaches at Secondary school).

Participant 51: “I try to promote autonomy in my classes by refering to all five sense of my students.” (teaches at Primary school).

Participant 56: “I let them choose their own learning material, learn independently, co-operatively. They identify their strenghts and weaknesses.” (teaches at Secondary school).

Participant 61: “I just let my students act freely (only production).” (teaches at Secondary school).

Participant 64: “I give them tasks and projects to complete which develop LA.” (teaches at Secondary school).

Participant 66: “I involve them in decision making and give them responsibilities and opportunities to develop LA.” (teaches at Secondary school).

Participant 73: “ I try to give opportunities. I try not to be authoritian in the class. For example; if I make a mistake, I accept it. I try to give positive feedback but not to ignore students’ answers. I try to promote their self-confidence by giving them chance of speaking or doing homework without hesitation of making mistake.” (teaches at Primary school).

Participant 87: “For example, it is very simple but I ask them their favourite animals and look it up in their dictionaries. I encourage them using their dictionaries.” (teaches at Secondary school).

A closer look at the the participants’ responses above revealed that some of their examples literally mean that they supported learner autonomy. Commonly they stated that they recommended students different sources that they can use outside the classroom such as; internet, movies, books etc. Some of them emphasized that they gave tasks, projects,

assignments which may contribute to students' independent learning, some stressed they focused on learning ways/strategies. On the other hand, there were still a few examples which remained argumentative in terms of supporting LA, because they were so abstract (examples of participants 1, 22, 66).

An overall evaluation of these statements revealed that, depending on their learners' profile (age, level etc.), teachers determined their own strategies to promote LA and they believed that the activities/methods they used may develop their learners' autonomy. This means it's possible - from the teachers' perspective - to construct a sense of autonomy for every kind of learners with appropriate ways and techniques.

4.5. Finding for the Research Question 5: “What are the practices of English teachers to support learner autonomy, if they say they do?”

In addition to the practices that some teachers shared in open ended part of section 3, teachers' real practices were investigated via the interview question 4. The interview volunteers (N=10) were asked about their practices to support LA, if they said they did.

Interview question 4: “Do you support your learners to become autonomous? If you say yes, how do you manage this? / what kind of methods and activities do you use? Please give some examples.”

All participants reported that they supported their learners. Table 4.12 illustrates content analysis results the codes, categories and themes elicited from their answers to the following question about how they did it / what kind of methods and activities they used.

Table 4.12.

Teachers' Answers Related to Their Practices to Support LA

Theme	Categories	Codes
<i>Teachers' practices to support LA</i>	<i>Activities like watching, listening, singing (6)</i>	-advising them to watch movies, listen to foreign songs, programmes (4) -using videos, games, singing activities (1)

	-letting them listening to songs and dancing together (1)
<i>Practicing tasks (3)</i>	-giving tasks about making practice with tourists (1) -telling them to chat with English speaking people (1) -talking to tourists and introducing Muğla as a project task (1)
<i>Giving chance to explore(3)</i>	-giving chance to explore it themselves(1) - not giving the answer directly and telling them to go find it themselves (1) -letting them use interactive board by themselves (1)
<i>Out of class tasks (3)</i>	-acting out on a stage (1) -preparing a magazine (1) -searching projects (1)
<i>Removing fears (3)</i>	-making them express themselves in English without being scared of making mistakes (1) -letting them make mistakes (1) -letting them read out bravely (1)
<i>Cooperative learning/ grouping (2)</i>	-using grouping(1) -promoting cooperative and peer learning (1)
<i>Guidance (1)</i>	-guiding them into a programme/ a new information (1)
<i>Promoting perception (1)</i>	-trying to promote their perception (1)
<i>Learning strategies (1)</i>	- trying to teach learning strategies(1)
<i>Peer assesment (1)</i>	-encouraging peer assesment (1)

As can be observed in the table above, in the view of teachers, there are many ways to support their students to become autonomous in English language learning. At the same time, they regarded these practices as the most useful ones which contribute to a

successful language learning process.

The first way they mentioned to support LA in English language learning was encouraging their students to watch or listen to foreign sources such as movies, tv series, programmes and songs. In other words, their most commonly reported practice to support LA was suggesting to students to utilize authentic sources.

Secondly, they reported that they assigned various tasks to encourage them to practice English by talking to tourists, chatting with foreign friends, so they can be categorized as “practicing tasks”.

Thirdly, teachers mentioned “giving chance to students to explore” something by themselves. They emphasized the importance of letting them think or do something by themselves which means they are all aware of the importance of allocating enough time to students.

Next, teachers believed that it helped to develop LA, was giving “out of class tasks” such as acting, preparing a magazine or searching projects. These kind of tasks may improve their autonomy by letting them work independently or interdependently.

According to participant teachers, another significant way to foster LA, was “Removing fears”. Their expressions were emphasizing the importance of comforting students while they are trying to use English. According to the participant teachers, it could be directly linked to supporting LA, since it affects students’ level of courage to use it independently. Too much interference of teachers to correct the mistakes in speaking, reading or writing will make the students refrain from using it courageously and independently.

Another category obtained from the teachers’ answers can be named as “Cooperative learning/grouping”. Teachers stated that they employed group activities to help their learners to work cooperatively. It can be claimed that, these kinds of activities promote peer learning which is an effective way to lead them in gaining autonomy, because they work together without depending on the teacher.

There were four more categories elicited from teachers answers which are; “Guidance”, “Promoting perception”, “Learning strategies” and “Peer assesment”. These categories can also be considered as supportive practices in terms of LA. An overall evaluation of the findings above, will be discussed in brief in Chapter V.

4.6. Findings for Research Question 6: “How do English teachers feel about the young learners and learner autonomy?”

With the interview question 3, the teachers’ opinions about young learners were asked:

Interview question 3 – “Is it possible to promote LA for young learners? Can we start supporting our learners to become autonomous in primary school?”

First, the frequencies as positive and negative answers were taken from teachers’ answers and then content analysis was employed according to their further comments on the issue.

Most of the interview participants reported that it was possible to promote LA with young learners (F= 8). Table 4.13 shows the content analysis results taken from the elaborated answers of teachers who had positive view on the issue. Here are the codes, categories and the theme elicited from their further comments for this question:

Table 4.13.

Teachers’ Comments Related to Young Learners’ Autonomy (Positive View)

Theme	Categories	Codes
The possibility of LA with young learners	Proper activities(1)	-choosing activities according to their ages&needs (1)
	Guidance(3)	-teaching them how to be independent at early ages(1) -should be guided (1) -guiding primary school students to search/learn by themselves(1)
	Exposition to knowledge (1)	-“when they’re exposed to they can learn”(1) - “young learners are completely grasping...they are ready to get it” (1)

A minority of interview volunteers expressed the opposite view and said “No” for the same question (F=2). They thought it was early for promoting LA in Primary schools as the students are so young to gain it. Table 4.14 shows the content analysis results taken from the answers of teachers who have negative view on the same question. Here are the codes, categories and theme deduced from the reasons why they thought so:

Table 4.14.

Teachers' Comments Related to Young Learners' Autonomy (Negative View)

Theme	Categories	Codes
The possibility of LA with young learners	Early (3)	- "they should be at least 12-13" (1) - "it's a little bit young (1) - "primary school is a bit early for gaining LA" (1)
	Lack of knowledge about how to learn (1)	- "they don't know how to learn by themselves" (1)
	The necessity of correction (1)	- "we should shape and correct them by using suitable methods" (1)

Codes above were taken as direct quotations in order to show the teachers explanations more clearly. They believed that primary school students didn't know themselves as learners and they needed guidance. So they thought it was not so possible to make the students gain autonomy at early ages. This idea might stem from the cultural perspective of teachers as they considered the issue within the context of Turkish education system. Especially in primary school students are very dependent on their parents and teachers. As commonly stated in previous academic studies, students are regarded as rote-learners, spoon-fed figures in educational settings who are used to be guided and assisted by the teacher (Köse, 2006; Balçıkanlı, 2008; Boyno, 2011; Ertürk, 2016). Hence, some teachers may think that it is very difficult to create autonomous learners from primary school students.

4.7. Findings for Research Question 7 : "What are the reflections of English teachers about existing English textbooks at schools in terms of supporting LA?"

The last research question aimed to find out teachers' reflections on the existing English coursebooks which are delivered to schools by the Ministry of National Education. The data were collected from 10 interview volunteers via interview question 5:

“What do you think about the present English textbooks at schools in terms of learner autonomy? Are they suitable to promote LA? / Do they give the opportunity to develop your learners’ autonomy? Why? Please give examples?”

The English coursebooks are written by the commission members who are assigned by the Ministry of National Education and they are undoubtedly the product of a long, devoted working period. When the teachers were asked about these coursebooks in terms of supporting LA, some of them firstly touched upon this point and emphasized that they respected to the great efforts of commissions to write elaborative sources for the students in order to make them learn English best. But almost all of them criticized the books from many aspects which they thought they hindered promoting learner autonomy. Here are the content analysis results elicited from teachers’ further comments on English coursebooks existing at schools. In addition, most of the codes were directly given in quotes to present their views in detail:

Table 4.15.

Teachers’ Opinions about the English Coursebooks’ Suitability to Promote LA

Theme	Category	Codes
English coursebooks’ suitability to promote LA	Depends on the book (4)	- “it depends on the book” (3) - “I cannot say the same for all books” (1)
	Teacher-centered learning (3)	- “with the Turkish writers’ books you need to be guided by a teacher” (1) - “they can’t learn without teacher guidance.” (1) - “teachers should teach everything students tend to be passive” (1)
	Lack of practicing activities (3)	- “there aren’t enough exercises to practice” (1) - “they should be developed in terms of listening and speaking activities by giving time more than now” (1) - “they are usually not enough for us to practice English.” (1)
	Necessity of adapting books / using supplementary sources (3)	-“I adapt the book according to my targetted gains” (1) -“We use some different books additionally” (1) -“You are to use other kinds of reasources, like textbooks from other publishers.” (1)

Overloaded books with grammar and vocabulary (2)	- “they have a strict planning or organizing that teachers have to follow” (1) - “they are overloaded with grammar and vocabulary” (1)
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The frequency of teachers who thought that the existing coursebooks were generally inefficient to support LA (F=10), showed that they had a negative opinion about them. In a sense, they all agreed upon that the books should be developed. Besides stating their negative views, nearly half of the teachers found it necessary to mention that it depended on the book, and they could not say the same for all English coursebooks. In other words, they avoided to make an overall evaluation for all existing books at schools, but their main tendency was showing that they didn't find them useful enough to promote LA. Some of the teachers emphasized the necessity of adapting them or using additional books as supplementary sources. Additionally, some of these teachers compared the coursebooks with the well-known ones and they emphasized that the existing ones in schools were not as efficient as the coursebooks printed by the globally-known publishers. Other reasons that teachers explained why they didn't find the coursebooks supportive enough for LA were, “teacher-centered learning”, “lack of practicing activities” and “overloaded books with grammar and vocabulary”.

These factors also may hinder the development of LA which showed us clearly why teachers had a negative opinion about the existing English coursebooks. But it should not be forgotten that there is no coursebook which perfectly matches to the needs of its targeted group and thus, in most cases, teachers need to adapt the materials according to the level and needs of their students.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS

This chapter starts with the discussion part in which the results are discussed related to the research in the field, and continues with the conclusion and implication parts.

5.1. Discussion

In this part, the findings of the study are discussed and compared to the results of the other studies in the field. Similar or different results are discussed regarding seven research questions.

5.1.1. English Teachers' Perceptions of Learner Autonomy

As the study aimed to investigate the English teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy and their practices to promote it, the first research question was searching for the answer of "what does learner autonomy mean to them?". There were 90 English teachers who participated in the study by answering "English language teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy questionnaire" (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). The quantitative data gathered from this questionnaire were analyzed by calculating descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages and mean scores for the items in the questionnaire. The results showed that there is high degree of agreement on nearly half of the items (15) with total percentages ranging from 93% to 77% which can be considered as English teachers' common beliefs about learner autonomy. Learning how to learn and self-evaluation were

highlighted issues by a majority of participants, they also agreed upon the positive contribution of collaborative learning. They believed the importance of involving students into decision-making processes. They agreed that the learner-centred classrooms provided the most supportive conditions for developing LA. They thought teacher had a key role to promote LA. Motivation and self-confidence were crucial psychological features for gaining autonomy. LA enables a successful L2 learning.

In the recent study of Borg and Alshumaimeri (2017), they used the same instrument to examine the beliefs of teachers on LA, the practices they reported and the limitations they faced with. The study was conducted with 359 teachers at English Preparatory Year Programme of a university in Saudi Arabia and the results showed that, while defining LA, teachers mostly focused on the notions of independence and control. They regarded LA “as the ability and motivation to complete tasks individually and/or collaboratively, in and/or outside the classroom, and with no/little teacher involvement” (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017).

Looking through the recent similar studies which aimed to investigate teachers’ perceptions of LA, we encountered some studies especially in Turkish cultural context (Civanoğlu & Mede, 2014; Dede, 2017; Doğan, 2015; Farahi 2015; Yıldırım, 2014). When we compare the findings, we can say that we obtained similar results for the first research question; teachers of ELT have positive views on LA (it contributes to a successful language learning process) and they mostly associate it with terms like independency, responsibility, awareness, involvement in decision making and they also underline the importance of motivation, self confidence, willingness and activeness in the learning process.

For example, in the case study of Civanoğlu and Mede (2014), in which the same instruments of Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) was employed at an English Preparatory Program of a university in Istanbul, the answers of the English instructors with the agreement percentages between 70% - 100% were taken into consideration. While defining LA, the key terms that the participant instructors agreed upon were; (in a descending order of percentage) motivated language learners (96%), supportive teacher’s role (92%), self-evaluation (92%), learner-centered classrooms (89%) providing learners with choices in learning (89%), cooperative group work (89%) and independent study (85%). When teachers’ further insights about the term were investigated via interviews, four basic concepts came into prominence. They were; responsibility for your own

learning, motivated learner, supportive teacher and self evaluation (Civanoğlu & Mede, 2014).

There are also master thesis studies in which “English language teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy questionnaire” was employed (Doğan, 2015; Yıldırım, 2014). These studies were conducted in different universities of Tukey to reveal the perceptions of EFL instructors on LA. To present the instructors perceptions on LA, they offered the findings under the title of different perspectives such as; psychological, technical, social, political and also along with concepts like, learner centeredness, teachers’ role, age, proficiency, cultural universality and benefits of LA. The findings showed that the instructors regarded positively various aspects of LA and agreed that it should be developed in the learning process by involving learners in the decision making process.

Regarding the literature on the issue so far (Holec, 1979; Little, 1991; Dickinson, 1994; Scharle & Szabo, 2000; Benson, 2003), it can be said that the English teachers who participated in this study, touched upon the most highlighted terms for the definition of LA and the most striking features of an autonomous learner such as independency, awareness, willingness, responsibility, monitoring and evaluating own learning process etc., which means that they ideally have a positive sense of perception on LA.

5.1.2. English Teachers’ Views on Desirability and Feasibility of Promoting LA

With the second part of the instrument, teachers’ views on the desirability and feasibility of two particular domains were investigated. The first domain was the involvement of students’ in decisions about the objectives, materials, tasks and activities, topics, assesment, teaching methods and classroom management and the second one was about some certain abilities which can be named as learning to learn skills; identifying own needs, strengths, weaknesses, monitoring the progress, evaluating own learning, learning co-operatively and independently.

Teachers responses to the desirability and feasibility of these scales revealed that their opinions about the desirability of these items were more positive than their opinions about the feasibility. There was a statistically significant difference between these two aspects. In other words they see these items as derirable educational goals to promote LA, but they think they are not so achievable in their educational contexts. Similarly in the thesis

studies of Doğan, (2015), Farahi (2015) and Yıldırım (2014), the participant instructors were not as positive on the feasibility of these items as they were on the desirability. For example, in Farahi's study (2015), the majority of instructors stated that it was not so possible to involve students in every decision. However they admitted that they should work harder to promote LA, by revising the course content, by giving more chance to students to choose their tasks and assignments, by teaching learning strategies, etc.

To conclude, similar studies showed similar results about the teachers' views on the desirability and feasibility of promoting LA. Although they were positive about the desirability of decision making and learning to learn skills, they did not feel much positive about their feasibility and they did not find their learners' efforts enough to develop autonomy.

5.1.3. English Teachers' Opinions about the Autonomy Level of Their Learners

In the third part of the questionnaire, English teachers' were asked whether they agreed to the statement; "*In general, the students I teach English most often at my current school have a fair degree of learner autonomy.*" or not. The responses revealed that 32% of the teachers were unsure about their students' degree of autonomy, while 39% of participants believed that their students had a fair degree of autonomy and nearly 29% of them thought that their students were not autonomous.

When we compare the total rate of disagreement and uncertainty with the rate of agreement, it can be concluded that agreement on this statement was not so high and teachers believed that their students were not so autonomous. In addition, when we examined the explanations of teachers who were unsure or disagreed, the most remarkable reasons they stated were; lack of self confidence, eagerness and motivation, being used to spoon-fed ways of learning, tendency of being controlled or guided by a teacher, inadequate class hours, being of young age, inadequate backgrounds and unconcerned parents. Similarly, Yıldırım (2014), elicited the following reasons from the instructors' responses; lack of motivation, too much dependence on teachers, never wanting to take responsibility, being unaware of their weaknesses, strengths and their own learning, prior educational experience and curricular constraints. And in Doğan's study (2015), the themes deduced from the instructors' statements were; traditional teacher-centred

classrooms and teacher domination, spoon feed teaching, passive, noncritical students.

Drawing conclusion from these results, it can be said that English teachers or instructors mostly underlined the same problems to point to their students' low level of autonomy. Undoubtedly there are many problematic aspects which restrain our students from becoming autonomous learners. However, it is a fact that all these disadvantages can be removed gradually with the great effort and collaboration of administrators, teachers, families and students.

5.1.4. To What Extent do English Teachers Promote LA?

With the second question in Section 3, English teachers were asked whether they agreed with the statement; *“In general, in teaching English at my current school, I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy.”* or not. When the frequencies and percentages were calculated, the results showed that 72% of participant teachers reported that they gave their students the opportunities to develop learner autonomy. Nearly 26% of them were unsure about whether they support it or not. 2% of them reported that they did not focus on developing learner autonomy but none of them gave explanation about it.

Additionally, teachers' further explanations were asked in an open ended manner. There were 39 teachers who answered this part of question. 35 of them stated that they strongly agreed or agreed, 3 of them were unsure, 1 of them disagreed. But among the participants who declared that he/she supported LA (N= 35), only 20 of them explained in which ways they did it. In other words; only 20 of these answers were relevant to the question and included concrete examples about their real practices, while 15 of them were giving irrelevant answers. When we examined the teachers answers about their real practices to promote LA, we found out the following remarkable ways/strategies;

- creating communication channels,
- teaching learning strategies,
- acting according to their strengths and needs,
- providing them links of various sources of information,
- giving tasks on the internet, encouraging them to watch films, listen to songs, read books in English,

- encouraging them to show themselves,
- giving individual assignments, project tasks,
- not giving the answer directly and making them think,
- doing acting activities,
- encouraging them to work in groups, to learn independently and/or co-operatively,
- referring to all five sense of students,
- letting them choose their own learning material,
- letting them act freely, giving them responsibilities,
- trying not to be authoritarian and giving positive feedback,
- promoting their self confidence by letting them make mistakes
- letting them search something on their own

In the study of Yıldırım (2014), the basic points – practices - taken from the teachers' responses were:

- setting activities out of class which promote autonomy,
- involving them in teaching and learning process by asking their preferences,
- encouraging them to engage in autonomous behaviors by leading them to use language labs and self access centers in the school after the class,
- using activities in class which promote autonomy,
- making them aware of their strengths and weaknesses,
- talking to them about autonomy and its importance”

The differences between the two sets of findings may stem from the difference between target groups of the participant teachers worked with. The teachers who are involved in the lines of basic education work with a younger learner profile (between the ages of 7-18) and they try to choose their strategies according to their age, level and needs. The instructors, on the other hand, have young adult students at university level (older than 18) so they look at the questions from the aspect of their own students and use strategies to promote LA according to their age profile.

5.1.5. Reported Practices of English Teachers to Promote LA

In addition to the practices that some teachers shared in open ended part of section 3, teachers' real practices were investigated via the interview question 4. The interview volunteers (N=10) were asked about their practices to support LA, if they said they did.

All interview participants reported that they supported their learners (F=10) and here are the ways, methods and activities they used;

- encouraging their students to watch movies, tv series, tv programmes in English or listen to English songs, was their most repeated practice to support LA (F=6). These kinds of activity can both take place inside and outside the classroom which removes time and place restrictions of formal educational settings. Hence they contribute to the development of LA by leading students to learn by themselves anytime anywhere. Furthermore, these kinds of source can be considered as authentic materials and it is widely accepted – by both practitioners and the scholars in the field - that the usage of authentic materials always contributes to the improvement of English proficiency. As M. Belaid and Murray (2015) point out, in the literature of ELT, there are many references supporting the idea of exploiting authentic materials and it has many advantages such as developing learners' motivation and profeciency in language learning process.
- giving practicing tasks to encourage them to use English in real communication (F=3). According to the teachers as students practice the language more, they will gain more self confidence and autonomy in learning process.
- giving chance to students to explore something by themselves (F=3). This definitely requires allocating enough time for students to think or do something by themselves. So teachers should be patient while expecting their students to discover and manage something by themselves. If they find out the answer they searched for or manage something without the interference of teacher, they can feel more confident and autonomous.
- giving “out of class tasks” such as acting, preparing a magazine or searching projects (F=3). It is possible to develop students' autonomy via these sort of tasks because they lead them to work individually and/or cooperatively. In either case, these tasks may enhance the students' level of learning, because they will learn

how to get to information and how to organize it by themselves or how to act a role and how to rehearse it. As they are production-based tasks, while the students are getting prepared for a task, they will master it. In other words, they will learn best by themselves, which means they gain a certain level of autonomy.

- removing fears (F=3). This is a crucial factor especially in foreign language learning process and as the participant teachers emphasized, students need to be comforted while they are trying to use English. It is closely related to supporting LA, because it enhances students' courage to use the language independently. In order to manage to remove fears, the teacher should avoid too much interference while students are trying to produce something on their own.
- cooperative learning/grouping" (F=2). Teachers reported that they use group activities and want their students to work cooperatively. Group activities promote peer learning which is an effective way for gaining autonomy, because they work together without depending on the teacher.
- Other strategies they stated that they used to promote LA were, guidance" (F=1), promoting their perceptions (F=1), teaching learning strategies (F=1) and encouraging peer assesment" (F=1). Either directly or indirectly, these ways might also help students to become autonomous.

It will be useful to mention that using all the strategies that English teachers reported above, depends on their abilities to establish close relationships with their learners and the time they spend together. Their professional experiences working with those particular groups will definitely affect their implementation of autonomy supportive strategies.

5.1.6. English Teachers' Reflections about Young Learners' Autonomy

With the interview question 3, the teachers were asked about the possibility to develop autonomy for young learners. The majority of the interview participants (8 out of 10) reported that it was possible to promote LA with young learners, while 2 of them advocated the opposite view. Codes taken from teachers' further comments on young learners were categorized. The dominant opinion was positive about the question and from the additional explanations of these teachers, we can conclude that it is possible to

promote LA with young learners if we guide them efficiently and provide them with proper activities according to their needs and level. This is because young learners are ready to grasp every kind of knowledge as long as they are exposed to it.

On the other hand, 2 of the participants who expressed their negative view on the same question, stated that primary school is a bit early, because they don't know themselves as learners and it is necessary to correct their mistakes at early ages. Their negative view on the possibility of developing LA for young learners might stem from the traditional education system in Turkey. As it has been asserted in many academic studies before, the students in our education system have a tendency to remain passive and they are accustomed to be assisted, guided and controlled by the teacher (Balçıkanlı, 2008; Boyno, 2011; Ertürk, 2016; Köse, 2006). For instance; Boyno (2011) has drawn attention to the fact that the children in Turkey grow up under the control of their parents who decide on behalf of them and at their school age this control passes to their teachers. So their dependency on their families and teachers goes on during their educational life. Their tendency to remain passive hardly changes. Hence, some teachers may think that especially with young learners it is very difficult to overcome this problem and manage to create autonomous learners especially at very early ages.

5.1.7. English Teachers' Reflections about the Existing English Coursebooks in Schools

The last research question aimed to find out teachers' reflections on the existing English coursebooks which are delivered to schools by the Ministry of National Education. These coursebooks are written by commission members who are assigned by the Ministry of National Education and they are undoubtedly the product of a long, devoted working period. When the teachers were asked about these coursebooks in terms of supporting LA, some of them firstly touched upon this point and emphasized that they respect the great efforts of commissions to write elaborative sources for the students in order to make them learn English best. But almost all of them criticize the books from many aspects which they thought were hindering promoting learner autonomy.

The frequency of teachers who thought that the existing coursebooks were generally

inefficient to support LA (F=10), showed that they had a negative opinion about them. While making further comments on the books; some of the teachers emphasized the necessity of adapting them or using additional books as supplementary sources (F=3). Some of them compared the coursebooks with the well-known ones and they emphasized that the existing ones at schools were not as efficient as the coursebooks printed by the globally-known publishers. Other reasons that teachers explained why they did not find the coursebooks supportive enough for LA were, “teacher-centered learning” (F=3), “lack of practicing activities” (F=3) and “books overloaded with grammar and vocabulary” (F=2). These factors clearly showed us why teachers had a negative opinion about the existing English coursebooks in terms of supporting LA.

In some of the recent coursebook evaluation studies (Çalışır, 2013; Kıssacık, 2016), English textbooks used in state schools in Turkey were scrutinized and similar results were obtained. In her master thesis study, Çalışır (2013) aimed to find out whether the seventh graders' English textbooks encourage learner autonomy or not. She focused on four English coursebooks of seventh graders and used content analysis technique to evaluate these coursebooks in terms of LA. She utilized from the Reindeer's framework (2010), which consist of eight stages about self-directed learning process. In the light of these stages, she investigated how textbooks provide information and practice about; making own choices, learning how to learn within the book, using learning styles and strategies, making reflections, building awareness. Results revealed that the information and practice about the elements above were not equal. In other words; focus on self-directed learning is not common in all four textbooks investigated. None of the eight skills was covered in these books. She concluded that LA shouldn't be disregarded by the textbook writers.

In another master thesis study by Kıssacık (2016), high school English coursebooks used in state schools were examined in detail in order to find out to what extent they help learners develop autonomy. It was a descriptive study in which quantitative data collection instruments were employed. These tools were the coursebook evaluation checklist applied to the coursebook series Yes You Can and a questionnaire answered by 63 English teachers using this coursebook series. Depending on the results, he indicated that LA should be supported more effectively by the coursebook publishers.

To conclude; recent studies showed that teachers do not believe that the English coursebooks that we use in state schools are well designed enough to promote learner

autonomy. In today's learner-centered educational approaches, material evaluation studies with regard to LA have a great importance in shaping our coursebooks contents according to learners' needs. As the more research are conducted in this area, the more elaborated materials will be created in this sense. On the other hand, books might not be the only factor which will affect the process of gaining learner autonomy, but may be one of the most prominent elements to foster it. While trying to promote LA, teachers are definitely in need of well-written materials which will be facilitators for gaining autonomy at the same time. However, there should not be too much dependency on the coursebooks as well. There is no doubt that the presence of these kinds of source – autonomy supportive coursebooks - may ease teachers' job, while they are trying to build up an autonomous learning environment. Yet, students need more flexible types of sources which will enable them to work with /without teacher by gaining more and more control over their own learning process.

5.2. Conclusion and Implications

The following sections were presented for the summary and conclusion of the study and continued with the implications for educators and recommendations for further research.

5.2.1. Summary and Conclusion of the Study

This study has a mixed methods research design which aimed to investigate English teachers' perceptions and practices regarding learner autonomy by using both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools. In terms of mixed methods design strategies, sequential explanatory design was employed in this study, which is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by a collection and analysis of qualitative data (Creswell, 2003). The answers for the following research questions were investigated regarding the aims of the study;

Within this context, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are English teachers' perceptions regarding learner autonomy?

2. How desirable and feasible is it to promote learner autonomy according to English teachers?
3. To what extent do English teachers feel that their learners are autonomous?
4. To what extent do English teachers say they actually promote learner autonomy?
5. What are the practices of English teachers to support learner autonomy, if they say they do?
6. How do English teachers feel about the young learners' autonomy?
7. What are the reflections of English teachers about existing English textbooks in schools in terms of supporting learner autonomy?

The research was conducted in the spring term of 2017-2018 Educational Year with 90 English teachers working in Primary, Secondary and High Schools in the central district, Menteşe, Muğla. For data collection, a questionnaire and a follow up interview were used to find out the answers of the research questions above. First “English Language Teachers’ Beliefs about Learner Autonomy” questionnaire (Borg&Al-Busaidi, 2012) was administrated to 90 English teachers. Then 10 English teachers out of 17 volunteers were non-randomly chosen to make an interview.

Conclusions drawn from the study were presented in the following statements;

Learner autonomy means a lot to the English teachers who work in various grades of basic education. They perceive learner autonomy as a matter of “learning to learn” and they believe that it brings success in L2 learning. Controlling one’s own learning process, taking responsibility, independent and collaborative learning, self-evaluation and involvement in decision-making are the most prominent components of LA. They know the importance of learner-centred classrooms to develop LA, and they believe in the teacher’s key role to promote it. Motivation, self-confidence and willingness are crucial factors for gaining autonomy.

Additionally, teachers have a more positive view about the desirability of some decision-making processes and some skills related to LA than their views on the feasibility of them. In other words they see these items as desirable educational goals to promote LA, but do not think they are so achievable in the existing educational context.

Only 1/3 of participant teachers think that their students have a fair degree of autonomy while the 2/3 of them don’t think in this way. The participants who were unsure or who

disagreed, stated reasons such as; lack of self confidence, eagerness and motivation, being used to spoon-fed ways of learning, tendency of being controlled or guided by a teacher, inadequate class hours, being of young age, inadequate backgrounds and unconcerned parents.

72% of participant teachers reported that they gave their students the opportunities to develop learner autonomy, while 26% of them were unsure and 2% of them reported that they didn't support it. Some of the teachers made further explanations about how they supported LA, by giving examples about their real practices. When these examples were eliminated in terms of their suitability to support LA, the following implementations have emerged; teaching learning strategies, acting according to their strengths and needs, providing them with various sources of information, giving tasks on the internet, encouraging them to watch films/listen to songs/read books in English, encouraging them to show themselves, giving individual tasks, projects, not giving the answer directly and making them think, encouraging them to independent and/or co-operative work, giving a chance to choose the learning material, letting them act freely, giving responsibilities, trying not to be authoritarian and giving positive feedback, promoting their self confidence by letting them make mistakes, letting them search something on their own.

Teachers' real practices to support LA, were also investigated via the interview question 4. To sum up the methods and activities they used (in the light of their explanations); encouraging their students to watch movies, tv series, tv programmes in English or listen to English songs, giving practicing tasks, giving chance to students to explore something by themselves, giving out of class tasks, removing fears, encouraging cooperative learning, guiding, promoting their level of perception, teaching learning strategies, giving chance for peer assessment.

A majority of participants think that it is possible to promote LA with young learners (8 teachers out of 10), if we guide them efficiently and provide them with proper activities according to their levels. This is because they are ready to grasp any piece of knowledge as long as they are exposed to it. Contrary to this, 2 participants stated that primary school is somewhat early, because students do not know themselves as learners and they need correction.

Teachers think that the existing coursebooks are not sufficient to support LA. It is necessary to adapt them or to use supplementary sources. Although they were written

elaborately with the great efforts of Turkish commission members, they are not as efficient as the coursebooks printed by the globally-known publishers. According to the teachers in the present coursebooks, there is a dominance of teacher-centered learning, there is a lack of practicing activities and they are overloaded with grammar and vocabulary.

5.2.2. Implications of the Study

Regarding the latest visions in education, learner autonomy is accepted as a very useful concept which should be utilized in teaching-learning environments. Especially in the field of foreign language learning, the importance of learner autonomy has recently been realized along with the changing and developing circumstances of today's global and technological world.

Besides admitting its benefits in language learning, English teachers' views here showed that they cannot find too many opportunities to actualize it in the existing educational setting owing to various factors. However, it should be remembered that changing the whole system to convert into autonomous learning is not an easy process, as it requires a totally new way of understanding. They should try hard for integrating learner autonomy into their teaching-learning environments. Even in the poorest conditions, they should seek for new ways, sources and strategies to develop learner autonomy and introduce them to their students. They should not only depend on coursebooks as a material and lead their students to find alternative ones that they can use anytime, anywhere. They should not neglect to follow the current technological developments and should remember the easiness of accessing various sources via technological devices. They may reflect upon new ways of creating autonomous learners under any circumstances and benefitting from advantages of this.

The teacher-led way of teaching in education should be abandoned to create more active learners. It is necessary to start to train people from the very early stages of their educational life. As they are being trained to gain autonomy in the early ages (in primary school), the overall understanding and attitude will change easily. People will admit that learning is a lifelong- lasting process in all subject areas.

English coursebooks are still regarded as inefficient sources for developing

communicative skills and learner autonomy. Even if the recent curricula have been changed to integrate learner autonomy in our education system, the books still have inadequacies in terms of supporting LA. They should be revised over and over again to reach more elaborative sources which will remove the obstacles in front of the learner-centered education.

5.2.3. Recommendations for Further Research

It is hard to discover their real practices on LA without classroom observation. It is a fact that longitudinal studies are needed to be conducted for making enough observation on LA and they will definitely be very helpful to diagnose the real situation in schools by showing us the circumstances about developing LA in our educational setting.

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APPENDICES**APPENDIX 1: Etik Kurul Kararı**

MUĞLA SITKI KOÇMAN ÜNİVERSİTESİ
İNSAN ARAŞTIRMALARI ETİK KURUL KARARI

Protokol No : 180019

Karar No : 24

Araştırma Yürütücüsü

Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi ASLIAYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI

Kurumu / Birimi

MUĞLA SITKI KOÇMAN ÜNİVERSİTESİ-EĞİTİM FAKÜLTESİ/
YABANCI DİLLER EĞİTİMİ

Araştırmanın Başlığı

PERCEPTIONS AND REPORTED PRACTICES OF ENGLISH
TEACHERS IN MUĞLA REGARDING LEARNER AUTONOMY.
MUĞLADAKİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ÖĞRENEN
ÖZERKLİĞİNE İLİŞKİN ALGILARI VE BİLDİRDİKLERİ UYGULAMALAR

Başvuru Formunun Etik Kurula
Geldiği Tarih

29.01.2018

Başvuru Formunun Etik Kurulda
İncelendiği Tarih

İlk İnceleme Tarihi : **02.02.2018**

1. Düzeltme Tarihi : **09.02.2018**

2. Düzeltme Tarihi : **26.02.2018**


Karar Tarihi

27.02.2018

KARAR : **UYGUNDUR**


AÇIKLAMA :Araştırmanın uygulanabilirliği konusunda bilimsel araştırmalar etiği açısından bir sakınca yoktur.

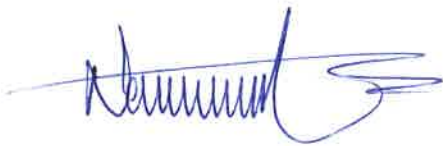

Prof. Dr. Banu BAYAR
Başkan



Prof. Dr. Ali AKAR
Üye


Prof. Dr. Özcan SAYGIN
Üye


Prof. Dr. Umut AVCI
Üye


Prof. Dr. Harun ÜÇÜNCÜ
Üye


Prof. Dr. Nevide DELLAL
Üye


Prof. Dr. Nurcan CENGİZ
Üye

APPENDIX 2:

AYDINLATILMIŞ ONAM FORMU

(ARAŞTIRMA AMAÇLI)

Bilgilendirme: Değerli katılımcı;

“İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Öğrenen Özerkliğine İlişkin Algıları ve Bildirdikleri Uygulamalar” adlı bu Yüksek Lisans Tez çalışması, Muğla Menteşe’de ilkökul, orta okul ve liselerde görev yapan İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin, yabancı dil öğretiminde öğrenen özerkliğine (kendi kendine, otonom öğrenmeye) dair düşüncelerini tespit etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmanın ilk kısmının yer aldığı bu veri toplama formu 5 bölümlü, 58 soruluk bir anketten ibarettir. Anketi cevaplamak yaklaşık 20 dk.nızı alacaktır. Araştırmanın ikinci kısmı için ise gönüllülük esastır. Anketin 5. (son) bölümüne adını ve irtibat numarasını yazan gönüllülerle ileriki bir tarihte (Mayıs-Haziran 2018) 5 soruluk bir ropörtaj yapılacaktır. Araştırmacının bizzat görüşeceği katılımcıların konuya dair düşüncelerini ve sınıftaki uygulamalarını daha detaylı keşfetmeyi amaçlayan bu mülakat yaklaşık 20-25 dk. sürecektir. Katılımınız için teşekkürler.

1. Aşağıda imzası olan ben "İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Öğrenen Özerkliğine İlişkin Algıları ve Bildirdikleri Uygulamalar" başlıklı çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum.
2. Bu çalışmayı yürüten Aslı AYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI, çalışmanın yapısı, amacı ve muhtemel süresi, ne yapmam istendiği ve yan etkilerle karşılaşsam ne yapmam gerektiği hakkında ayrıntılı sözlü ve yazılı bilgi verdi.
3. Araştırmacı Aslı AYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI'na çalışmasıyla ilgili her soruyu sorma fırsatını buldum. Cevapları ve bana verilen bilgiyi anladım.
4. Araştırmacı Aslı AYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI'na bilgilerin ayrıntılarını açıklamama ve benimle ilgili sırları koruması şartıyla benimle bu çalışmayı yapmasına izin veriyorum.
5. Çalışma boyunca tüm kurallara uymayı, araştırmacı Aslı AYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI ile tam bir uyum içinde çalışmayı ve konuyla ilgili herhangi bir sorun çıktığında hemen onu aramayı kabul ediyorum.
6. Bu çalışma sonuçlarının kullanılmasını kısıtlamamayı, yayın, rapor ve benzeri bilimsel dokümanlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.
7. Bu çalışmadan istediğim zaman çıkabileceğimi anladım.

Katılımcının

Adı Soyadı:

Tarih:

İmza:

Araştırmacının

Unvanı, Adı Soyadı:

Tarih:

İmza:

APPENDIX 3: Anket**AYDINLATILMIŞ ONAM FORMU**
(ANKET ARAŞTIRMALARI İÇİN)

“Perceptions and reported practices of English teachers in Muğla regarding learner autonomy” adlı çalışma Aslı AYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI tarafından gerçekleştirilecektir. Araştırma Muğla’daki İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğrenen özerkliğine ilişkin algıları ve bildirdikleri uygulamalar hakkında anket ve mülakata dayalı veri toplamak amacıyla planlanmıştır. Bu araştırmaya katılmak gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır. Çalışmaya katılmamayı tercih edebilir veya anketi doldururken sonlandırabilirsiniz. Anket formunun üzerine adınızı ve soyadınızı yazmayınız. (Ancak 5. Bölümde mülakat yapılması için gönüllü olan katılımcılardan, kendileriyle irtibat kurulabilmesi amacıyla, isim ve telefon istenmektedir. Bu isimler çalışmada kesinlikle gizli tutulacaktır.) Bu anket ile toplanan bilgiler sadece bilimsel amaçlar için kullanılacaktır. Bu nedenle soruların tümüne doğru ve eksiksiz yanıt vermeniz büyük önem taşımaktadır.

Anket 58 sorudan oluşmaktadır. Anketi tamamlamak yaklaşık 20 dakikanızı alacaktır.

Çalışma ile ilgili her hangi bir sorunuz olduğunda aşağıdaki isimle iletişim kurabilirsiniz.

Sorumlu Araştırmacının

Unvanı, Adı Soyadı: Öğretmen – Aslı AYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI

Telefon Numarası: 0 505 776 41 75

Anketi doldurduğunuz için teşekkür ederiz.

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS’ BELIEFS ABOUT LEARNER AUTONOMY
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.					

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 your current school.

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 my current school 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 my current school, 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 school / 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. Which grades do you teach English currently? (Tick ONE):

- 2nd, 3rd, 4th grades / Primary School
- 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th grades / Secondary School
- 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th grades / High School

7. Gender (Tick ONE):

- Male
- Female

Section 5: Further Participation

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	

Thanks for your participation... 😊

Ash AYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI
Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University Institute of Educational Sciences
MA Student-ELT Programme

APPENDIX 4: Anketin Birinci Bölümüne İlişkin Betimsel Veri Tablosu

Table: Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Beliefs about L2 Learner Autonomy

Items	disagree		unsure		agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
29.Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.	0	0	6	6,7	84	93,3
16.Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.	2	2,2	6	6,7	82	91,1
36.Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner.	2	2,2	6	6,7	82	91,1
4.Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.	2	2,2	7	7,8	81	90
33.Motivated language learners are more likely to develop Learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.	1	1,1	8	8,9	81	90
11.Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.	3	3,3	8	8,9	79	87,8
14.Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.	0	0	12	13,3	78	86,7
28.Learner-centred classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy	2	2,2	11	12,2	77	85,6
35.The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.	5	5,6	9	10	76	84,4
25.Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy.	1	1,1	14	15,6	75	83,3
7.Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.	2	2,2	15	16,7	73	81,1
19.Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together	4	4,4	13	14,4	73	81,1
2.Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy.	3	3,3	16	17,8	71	78,9
12.Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.	3	3,3	16	17,8	71	78,9
37.To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.	3	3,3	17	18,9	70	77,8
13.Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.	9	10	14	15,6	67	74,4
10.It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults	7	7,8	17	18,9	66	73,3
27.Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.	4	4,4	21	23,3	65	72,2
31.Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy	9	10	16	17,8	65	72,2

1. Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy	14	15,6	12	13,3	64	71,1
22.Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed	6	6,7	20	22,2	64	71,1
17.Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching.	7	7,8	23	25,6	60	66,7
3.Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.	6	6,7	26	28,9	58	64,4
32.The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.	8	8,9	26	28,9	56	62,2
6.Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.	12	13,3	23	25,6	55	61,1
15.Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teachercentred classrooms.	15	16,7	21	23,3	54	60
5.Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.	16	17,8	25	27,8	49	54,4
30.Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy.	16	17,8	25	27,8	49	54,4
21.Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self access centre.	12	13,3	32	35,6	46	51,1
18.Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher.	27	30	27	30	36	40
26.Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners	19	21,1	40	44,4	31	34,4
9.It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners.	30	33,3	30	33,3	30	33,3
8.Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.	37	41,1	24	26,7	29	32,2
34.The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy	29	32,2	32	35,6	29	32,2
24.Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher.	44	48,9	25	27,8	21	23,3
20.Learner autonomy is only possible with adult learners	55	61,1	17	18,9	18	20
23.Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners.	44	48,9	34	37,8	12	13,3

APPENDIX 5: Interview questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does learner autonomy mean to you? Can you make your own definition with a few words?
2. What are the key characteristics of an autonomous learner according to you?
3. Is it possible to promote LA for young learners? Can we start supporting our learners to become autonomous in primary school?
4. Do you support your learners to become autonomous? If you say yes, how do you manage this? / what kind of methods and activities do you use? Please give some examples.
5. What do you think about the present English textbooks at schools in terms of learner autonomy? Are they suitable to promote LA? / Do they give the opportunity to develop your learners' autonomy? Why? Please give examples?

CV

PERSONAL DETAILS

Name and Surname: Aslı AYDEMİR BEKÇİBAŞI

Place of Birth and Date: İstanbul, 01/01/1982

E-mail: asli_ay09@hotmail.com

Telephone: 0 505 776 41 75

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Degree	Institution	Year
Bachelor	İstanbul University Hasan Ali Yücel Education Faculty	2003

WORK EXPERIENCE

Employment	Institution	Year
English Teacher	Ministry of National Education	2003 - still on

PUBLICATIONS