

Are Turkish University Students Autonomous or Not?

Büşra Kırtık (kirtikk.368@gmail.com)

Abstract: The present study tried to determine Turkish learners' attitudes, and the Turkish education system's approach towards learner autonomy with regard to three main points: 1) whether Turkish university students are aware of learner autonomy or not 2) whether Turkish university students have the characteristics of autonomous learners (whether they are autonomous learners or not), and 3) if the Turkish education system is suitable for fostering learner autonomy or not from the viewpoint of the participants. Participants were 50 second grade learners in the English Language Teaching Departments of Hacettepe University (N=10), Mehmet Akif Ersoy University (N=10), and Uludag University (N=30) who had already taken courses about learner autonomy. The data were collected by means of a questionnaire which had two Likert-scale sections and an open-ended questions section. The first Likert-scale section contained 15 characteristics of autonomous learners each of which was rated by the participants in a scale from strongly disagree to agree, from 1 to 5. In the second Likert-scale section, the participants were asked to rate the Turkish education system's five basic elements such as school curriculums, course materials, approaches used by the teachers in classrooms, learning activities, and classroom settings. Additionally, learners' opinions about their awareness and understanding of learner autonomy were gathered by five open ended questions. The results proposed that the participants were aware of learner autonomy, and had the characteristics of autonomous learners. On the other hand, results showed that the Turkish education system was not suitable for autonomous learners and did not foster learner autonomy. The findings suggested that the Turkish education system should be designed again in such a way to support the autonomous learners and to foster learner autonomy in all sections of the education.

Keywords: Learner Autonomy, Fostering learner autonomy, Autonomous learners.

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn."

Benjamin Franklin

Over the last two decades, the concepts of learner autonomy and independence have gained importance in educational programs all over the world. It has gained importance also in the English Learning Teaching (ELT) departments in Turkey. Approaches in ELT, English Methodology, and Learning Acquisition are some of the courses which place special emphasis on learner autonomy and independence in the ELT departments in Turkey. These courses also show how much importance the Turkish educational programmes attach to the matter. However, according to the personal observations of the author and some teachers in the ELT department of Uludag University, Turkish students, teachers, and educational syllabuses still encounter problems with regard to fostering learner autonomy. The personal opinion of the author is that Turkish students need firstly to understand what learner autonomy and independence is exactly, and to determine how much autonomous they are. Then, according to this awareness they should rearrange their expectations, attitudes, manners, programmes, and courses, certainly nevertheless, to the extent permitted by the educational system.

Autonomy can be defined as the capacity to take control over one's own learning. According to Holec (1981), taking charge of one's own learning is to have the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of learning, i.e. defining objectives, selecting materials and evaluating progression. Little (2007) explained that learner autonomy seems to be a matter of learners doing things not necessarily on their own but for themselves. Thus, it can be noted that autonomy has also a psychological dimension. The concept of autonomy has been taken to the field of language education with the introduction of the idea that language learning is a process of learning how to communicate and learn, rather than putting the teacher at the centre of the process and concentrate on teaching.

In 2006, The Ministry of Education revised the English curriculum in Turkey. Along with the other changes, this innovated curriculum adopted a new approach to the development of autonomy, by encouraging independent learning. It also aimed to enable learners to have control over the management of their learning by making them aware of their own learning process. According to the new curriculum, understanding how learning takes place is important as it motivates learners to tackle target language tasks on their own even after the end of the course, leading to learner autonomy and independence (MEB 2006). Nevertheless, these curricular changes were not enough to foster learner autonomy and independence.

Therefore, the basic point of this study was to determine whether Turkish students are autonomous, and to provide data for the Turkish Ministry of Education related to the efficacy of the ELT curriculum in fostering learner autonomy and independence. With this specific purpose, first, I provided information related to fostering learner autonomy and independence. Second, I prepared and applied a questionnaire to students who were in the ELT departments of Uludag University, Hacettepe University, and Mehmet Akif Ersoy University to reveal how much autonomous they felt. Third, I analysed the results to derive the most sensible and useful conclusions out of the present study. The present study aimed to reveal whether Turkish students feel autonomous, to what degree autonomous they are, and their opinions related to autonomy within the current educational system. Therefore, considering the data of the present study, the Turkish Ministry of Education might be willing to reconsider the educational system in general and the ELT program in particular in order to make the necessary changes to foster learner autonomy and independence.

Literature Review

Learner autonomy in language education

Learner autonomy is defined in many different ways by many different researchers and theorists since 1960's. The most frequently cited definition of learner autonomy is "the ability to take charge of one's own learning", noting that this ability not inborn

but must be acquired either by natural means (most often happens) or by formal learning (Holec, 1981). Holec, further explained that learner autonomy requires taking responsibility for all aspects of learning such as determining the objectives, defining the content and progression, selecting methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the process of acquisition, and evaluating what has been acquired. The other frequent definition of learner autonomy is "situations in which learners work under their own direction by taking all decisions for their own learning outside the traditional classroom" (Dickenson, 1987).

Little (1991) argues that there were some misperceptions about learner autonomy and he adds psychological dimensions in Holec's definition. He defines learner autonomy as a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action. It presupposes but also entails that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of learning. The capacity of learner autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts (Little, 2008).

On the other hand Beckert (2005) asserted that the term "autonomy" was derived from the Latin words "autos" (by oneself) and "nomos" (manage, direct). Accordingly, autonomy requires one to take responsibility to direct himself (Yilmazer, 2007). The other definition of learner autonomy is an awareness of one's own learning process and his ability to control it to make the individual gain ownership (Aitken and Deaker, 2007).

Characteristics of autonomous learners

Like as in the definition of learner autonomy there are different arguments on characteristics of autonomous learners by different researchers and theorists. According to Little (2001) autonomous learners are active in every part of their learning journey which may start with the priorities and needs in learning, go on

monitoring it and end in assessing themselves and their needs with holistic view to begin another journey of learning again with a new and better perspective.

According to Karababa (2010), autonomous learners are conscious in their choice of strategies and they apply these strategies accordingly in learning context when they needed. He further expressed that autonomous learners are also capable in transferring strategies and styles to their other learning experiences. In this way, a learned skill or subject can be made use of in other contexts which is especially desired in an interdisciplinary world. A flexible student in thought who synthesizes the language subject he/she learns and transmits it to other learning situations even to other disciplines is encouraged.

Hedge (2000) characterized autonomous learners as learners who know their needs and work productively with the teacher towards the achievement of their objectives, learn both inside and outside the classroom, can take classroom-based material and can build on it, know how to use resources independently, learn with active thinking, adjust their learning strategies when necessary to improve learning, manage and divide the time in learning properly, do not think the teacher is a god who can give them ability to master the language.

Independent and autonomous learners have an aptitude for learning, are curious for learning, postpone their pleasures for intended studies, prefer learning when they have conflicting interests, focus on the benefits of learned things for the future, and are good at problem solving. (Carr, 1999).

Autonomous learners are positive in their meaning-making and how they comprehend success and failure (O'Donnell, 2013). Autonomous learners' affective filters are low. They are conscious about controlling their own learning process and success. Autonomous learners are good at organizing their own learning experience by choosing the objectives, monitoring the process and evaluating their efforts to learn something. They know their needs to learn, define these needs explicitly and

put learning objectives according to these needs. If they face a problem about language learning, they can find a lot of solutions to solve the problems.

Characteristics of curriculum/classroom set-up/materials which are suitable for learner autonomy

A curriculum designed to promote learner autonomy is based on a mutual understanding between learners and teachers. In other words, learners are closely involved in the decision making process concerning the content of their own learning and how it should be taught (Nunan, 2004). Also involving learners in the decision making process may have them feel the ownership over their own learning so that they may accept to undertake some additional responsibility for their own learning. (Holec, 1981; Chan 2003; Finch, 2000; Benson, 2001).

Any curriculum must be flexible to foster learner autonomy so that learners and teachers, through negotiation, may exercise their individuality. (Sancar, 2001). According to Little (2001) and Dam (1998) eliminating the barriers between living and learning may make learning more meaningful and purposeful for learners. So an ideal curriculum should include learners' present and future personal and educational learner needs in addition to their past experiences. In addition to these an ideal curriculum should include a variety of learning activities, materials, techniques. By the way learners can choose the most appropriate ones for their own learning goals and styles of learning.

Learners need more input than which their teachers' provides. For that reason learners should be provided with access to as wide range of materials as possible, such as written and oral texts, audio-visual materials, realias, reference books, dictionaries, newspapers, magazines. Also learners should be encouraged to use learning materials on their own in accordance with their individual needs and interests (Little,1991; Dam,1995; Finch, 2000).

According to Brown (2001) to support the development of learner autonomy, desks need to be arranged take students' focus off the teacher and the blackboard as the centre of attention. If the desks are moveable they can be arranged in U-shape. Thanks to this students do not face the teacher and the blackboard. (Scharle & Szabo, 2000).

Studies on readiness for learner autonomy

One of the most known study about readiness for learner autonomy was conducted by Chan (2001) in Hong Kong. Within the scope of this study twenty students' perception about learner autonomy were investigated. A questionnaire applied as a data collection tool. The main aim of this study was identifying learners' perceptions about learner autonomy. Results showed that learners had had an awareness of different roles of teachers and themselves, they were autonomous in several ways, and they have positive attitudes towards the autonomous approach. Thanks to this study two important principles appeared for the design of autonomy-oriented classroom activities. First, students should be involved in the teaching process; second, activities should stimulate motivation and interest.

An important study about readiness for learner autonomy in Turkish EFL classrooms was conducted by Yıldırım (2008). The main objective of the study was to explore the extent to which learner autonomy can work in Turkish EFL classrooms. 103 learners participated in this study. A 43-item questionnaire, which was designed to determine learners' views of responsibility for themselves and for their teachers, their confidence to act autonomously, and their actual practice of autonomous learning, was used as a data collection tool. The results indicated that there is a significant relationship between the students' perceptions of their own and their teachers' responsibilities in the language learning process. For most of the classroom actions, students have a notion of sharing responsibility with the teachers. Students have a positive approach to their abilities to behave autonomously; in other words, they see themselves capable of performing autonomous behaviour. There is a significant relationship between how students perceive their abilities and their responsibilities.

There is the perception of greater responsibility where there is the perception of greater ability, or vice versa. The majority of the students have already been engaging in some outside class learning activities which can be considered as the signs of autonomous behaviour.

Methodology

Participants

Within the compass of this study fifty Turkish teacher trainees who were all enrolled in the English Language Teaching Department in the Faculty of Education at Uludag University, Hacettepe University and Mehmet Akif Ersoy University were examined. Ten of them were from Hacettepe University; ten of them from Mehmet Akif Ersoy University and thirty of them were from Uludag University. All of the participants were at least second grade students who had already taken courses about learner autonomy such as Approaches in ELT, Methodology, Second Language Acquisition. Thirty-four of the participants were female and sixteen of them were male. Their age ranged between 19 and 23. All of the participants had advanced level linguistic proficiency, and were experienced students.

Instruments

A questionnaire which has three sections was designed, prepared and applied by the researcher. The first section was Likert-scale questionnaire which has a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. It is about the characteristics of an autonomous learner. It was designed to determine whether the participants of this study have the characteristics of autonomous learners or not.

In the second section there are five open-ended questions. Three of these questions were designed to understand the participants' attitudes towards learner autonomy. Two of them were designed to understand the participants' thoughts about whether the Turkish education system is suitable for learner autonomy or not.

Third section is a Likert-scale questionnaire which has a scale of very unsatisfied to very satisfied. It was aimed to understand the participants thoughts about whether the five of main elements of Turkish education system (school curriculums, course materials used in classrooms, approaches used by teachers, learning activities used in classrooms and classroom set-up) is suitable for fostering learner autonomy or not. All of the three sections were prepared appropriately to the participants' proficiency level and in English.

Procedure

Data collection procedures were carried out in two sections. Firstly, seven of the participants were randomly selected from the Uludag University English Language Teaching Department. Four of these selected participants were female and three of them were male. The questionnaire was applied on these selected learners. It took ten minutes. According to the results, questionnaire's convenience to the research questions were compared, and some feedback collected from the selected learners. In consideration of the results, some changes were made in the questionnaire by the researcher.

In the second section, the questionnaire was sent in a printed form to one of the students in ELT department of Hacettepe University and one of the students in ELT department in Mehmet Akif University. The questionnaire was also answered by Uludag University students in the ELT department. The results of the questionnaire were collected, grouped, and clustered altogether in the end.

Data Analyses

To investigate the data, the questionnaire was analysed in three parts. Before analysing the data for each of the three parts, they were examined to determine which records would be accepted as sufficient and which records would be accepted as not sufficient and also which total scores would be accepted as sufficient and which would not. The first part of the questionnaire was analysed by calculating the mean scores of all answers. To calculate the mean scores all of the points that were

given by participants, they were added together and divided into the 50 which is the total number of the participants. To analyse the second part, which generated qualitative data, all of the answers of the participants were read and summarised by the researcher. To analyse the third part, mean scores of all five elements of the table were calculated by adding all points of participants together and dividing into the total number of the participants. These were summarised in one table. Also for both of the section 1 and 3 the total scores were calculated, summarised and added to the ultimate table.

Results and Discussions

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data were provided from the questionnaire's part A and part C.

Part A's results

Part A was designed to determine whether Turkish English Language Teaching Department's learners have sufficient characteristics to being autonomous learners. The criteria for evaluating the part A's results were determined on a scale of 1 to 5 similar to Likert-scale as follows:

1-strongly disagree 2-disagree 3-not sure 4-agree 5-strongly agree

Therefore, prior to analysing the results, it was determined that any record below 3 would be evaluated as an indicator of low efficiency to having an autonomous learner characteristics, while 3 over would count as sufficient to having an autonomous learner characteristics. Also it was determined before the analysing the results that, any total record below 3 would be evaluated as an indicator of Turkish English Language Teaching Department's learners are not autonomous learners, they have not got the characteristics of autonomous learners, while 3 and over evaluated as an indicator of Turkish ELT department's learners' efficiency about being autonomous learners, having the characteristics of autonomous learners. Table 1 presents the mean scores that were calculated for each characteristic of autonomous

learners and total point for determining whether Turkish ELT department learners are autonomous or not.

Table: 1. The mean scores about having the characteristic of autonomous learners.

	Mean score
I take responsibility for my own learning experiences.	4,18
I plan my time to study effectively	3,28
My time management is good	2,12
I am good at suiting deadlines	3,7
I am a pro-active learner(I don't wait for things/ people to come to	3,26
I am good at analysing the information which I need	3,48
I have specific strategies for managing my own learning	3,74
I have specific skills for managing my own learning	3,58
I know how to use resources independently	3,8
I am willing to control my learning	3,92
I am willing to take risks about new learning	3,16
I am motivated to learn	3,84
I learn both inside and outside the classroom	3,88
I know my needs to work productively	4,14
I can evaluate my own language competencies	3,78
Total mean	3,59

According to the results the lowest mean score was $M=2,12$ and the highest was $M=4,18$. It was observed that except for the three characteristics (I take responsibility on my own learning $M=4,18$, My time management is good $M=2,12$, I know my needs to work productively $M=4,14$) the scores of all other characteristics over $M=3$. These indicators show that Turkish English Language Teaching Department learners' have sufficiently the characteristics of autonomous learners, their characteristics are sufficient to being autonomous learners. The total mean score is $M=3,59$. This is an indicator of Turkish English Language Teaching Department learners' have sufficient characteristics to being autonomous learners.

This should have been an expected outcome, determining the participants have chosen from university learners. The participants' have already passed the university exam shows that they have already have the characteristics of autonomous learners.

If they have not got these characteristics, or with another words if they do not know how to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning, they could not passed the university entrance exam. From the other aspect, all of the participants are at least second grade (fourth term) learners, this means that all of them have already learn the learner autonomy and how they can apply it on their own learning experiences from their courses such as Approaches in ELT, Methodology or Second Language Acquisition etc. From this view they should have been autonomous learners already. But the in this results show that they have already some problems about some characteristics of autonomous learners.

The lowest mean score $M=2, 12$ is about to time management. This is an indicator of Turkish ELT departments learners have still some problems about arranging their study times, appointments or time schedules. The other lowest mean score after the $M=2, 12$, is $M=3, 16$ is about to being willing to taking risks about new learning. This record shows that Turkish ELT departments learners are close to new learning, they prefer to learn just traditional learning; they choose staying away from creation about learning. The highest mean score $M=4, 18$ is about to taking responsibility their own learning and the other highest mean score after the $M=4, 18$, is $M=3, 92$ is about to willing to control their own learning. These are indicators of Turkish ELT departments' learners are aware of being autonomous and having their own learning responsibility.

Part C's results

Part C was designed to determine whether Turkish curriculum, course materials, approaches used by teachers in classrooms learning activities used in classrooms , classroom setting are suitable for fostering the learner autonomy or not .The criteria for evaluating the part C's results were determined on a Likert-scale of 1 to 5 similar to Likert-scale as follows;

1-very unsatisfied 2- unsatisfied 3-not sure 4-satisfied 5- very satisfied

Therefore, prior to analysing the results, it was determined that any record below 3 would be evaluated as an indicator of low efficiency to being suitable for fostering the learner autonomy, and autonomous learners, while 3 over would count as sufficient to being suitable for fostering the learner autonomy and autonomous learners. Also it was determined that if the total mean score is below the 3 it is accepted as an indicator of Turkish Educational System is not appropriate for fostering learner autonomy and autonomous learners; while 3 and over indicator of Turkish Educational System is sufficient and suitable for fostering learner autonomy and autonomous learners. Table 2 presents the mean scores which were calculated for each of 5 main components of Turkish Education System.

Table: 2. The mean scores of 5 main elements of Turkish Education System.

<i>Condition</i>	<i>Mean score</i>
Turkish school curriculums are suitable for fostering the learner autonomy	2,02
Course materials used in classrooms are suitable to fostering the learner autonomy	2,64
Approaches used by Turkish teachers suitable for learner autonomy	2,08
Learning activities in classrooms are designed according to learner autonomy	2,4
Classroom settings are suitable for fostering learning autonomy	2,26
<i>Total score</i>	<i>2,28</i>

According to the results the lowest mean score $M=2,02$ and the highest mean score is $M=2,64$. It is observed that all of the results are below the 3. These scores show that Turkish school curriculums, learning activities used in classrooms, approaches used by teachers in the classrooms, classroom setting and course materials are inefficient to fostering the learner autonomy and not suitable for autonomous learners. Total score is $M=2,28$. It is indicator of Turkish Education System is inefficient for fostering learner autonomy and not suitable for autonomous learners.

The lowest mean score $M=2,02$ is about to Turkish school curriculums. This result shows that Turkish ELT departments' learners see the Turkish education system inefficient for fostering the learner autonomy. This result is a kind of indicator of Turkish school curriculums' inefficiency and should be changed. The other lowest mean score is $M=2,08$ about to approaches which is used by teachers in classrooms. According to this result, approaches are not suitable for fostering the learner autonomy and autonomous learners. Because of all of the participants are at least second grade (fourth term students) they have already took the Approaches in ELT course this should have been an expected outcome. Participants have already learned other applicable approaches so they can evaluate the used approaches used in classrooms easily.

The highest mean score $M=2,64$ about to course materials used in classrooms. Although it is the highest mean score, because of it is below the 3 course materials used in classrooms are seen as inefficient to fostering the learner autonomy. The other highest mean score is $M=2,26$ about to classroom settings. According to this results also the classroom setting are inefficient for fostering the learner autonomy.

Because of the all scores are below the 3 , Turkish school curriculum, classroom setting, learning activities used in classrooms, approaches used by teachers in classrooms and course materials are inefficient for fostering the learner autonomy, none of them are suitable for autonomous learners. This should have been an unexpected outcome according to the part A's results. According to the part A's results Turkish ELT departments' learners are autonomous learners but the school curriculum, course materials, classroom settings, approaches used by teachers and learning activities used in classrooms in conclusion the education system which was educated them are inefficient for educate them autonomously.

The Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data provided from 5 open-ended questions which were in the questionnaire. These questions were designed to determine learner's attitudes

towards learner autonomy and learner's thoughts about Turkish education system's attitudes towards learner autonomy. First two questions specifically concerned with participants' attitudes towards learner autonomy. All responses of the participants concerning the five questions were synthesised and are presented in the following:

Question 1: What is your understanding of learner autonomy?

- It is the ability of learning by oneself.
- A skill which a learner studies by oneself.
- A method to learn by oneself.
- Controlling the study on your own.
- Learning something by oneself.
- Deciding to learn what, how, when on by own.
- Learners' self-confidence and thoughts about their performance.
- Taking responsibilities of your own learning.
- It is managing your own learning.
- Learners' being aware of own duties and responsibilities.
- Someone own effort to learn something.

Responses are gathered on 11 main topics. According to the results, almost half of the participants M=23 thinks that learner autonomy is someone's taking responsibility of their own learning. These responsibilities concern the planning, managing the learning experiences and time schedules, evaluating the learning experiences and learning outcomes. It is an indicator of how much Turkish ELT department's learners are aware of learner autonomy and their knowledge about this.

Another most frequent response is M=12 someone's planning, monitoring and evaluating his/her own learning. The other frequent response is someone's managing his/her own learning. By using managing learners mean that determining all of the sections of learning by oneself such as determining the deadlines, learning strategies which one be used, place which type of place will be used inside of class or

outside of the class etc. These results show that Turkish ELT departments' learners are aware of learner autonomy, they have thoughts about it and their knowledge about how any system can be managed autonomously.

Question 2: Do you think that learner autonomy is important? Why? Why not?

Responses of this question were designed to be synthesized under two main responses, namely Yes and No. However, none of the participants gave the "No - it is not important" answer. Therefore, the responses were synthesized under the main "Yes - learner autonomy is important".

Learner autonomy is important because...

- It is important for learning to control our own lives.
- It is important for improving learning without any help.
- It is important for improving people's all aspects.
- It is important for learners to be aware of his/her inner skills to learn something and to be active learners.
- It is important for feeling self-confident.
- It is important because learners will not have a teacher during his/her life to guide them.
- It is important for being aware of learners' own related to how they can learn best.
- It is important because all of the learners learn differently from each other and teachers cannot teach all of the learners suitably.

This question's responses should have been an expected outcome, when comparing the results of questionnaires and first question. Because all of the participants are aware of learner autonomy and are autonomous learners they should have been see the importance of learner autonomy.

The most frequent answer of this question M=17 is about to its effects of learners own private life. This record show that Turkish ELT departments' learners understand the learner autonomy and they see the learner autonomy has an effect of their life. As a

kind of learners who are already passed the university entrance exam all of the participants see the learner autonomy is important on their passing this exams and their private life especially on planning and managing their life without anyone's help.

Question 3: Do you think that you are an autonomous language learner, if yes or not why?

The responses of this question were synthesised under two main answers. More than half of the participants (N= 27) think that they are autonomous learners. This should have been an expected outcome when comparing the results of questionnaire and other questions' responses.

Yes, I am an autonomous language learner.

- I take responsibility of my own learning.
- I plan, monitor and evaluate my own learning without any help.
- I use my own strategies to learn something.
- I manage my own learning without anyone's help.
- I know why I am learning and what I need.

These results should have been an expected outcome comparing the questionnaire's results and other question's results. The participants were aware of the learner autonomy and know it in general. They had already learnt what it is and the characteristics of autonomous learners from their courses. So, the participants have already been applying the learner autonomy on their own learning.

No, I am not an autonomous learner.

- I still need someone's especially my teacher's help to manage my learning.
- I have some problems about planning and managing my own learning.
- I prefer someone's managing my learning.
- My learning should be always managed by someone else.
- The education system cannot let me to be an autonomous learner.

According to the results, participants think that the education system is not suitable for growing up autonomous learners. This result is parallel to the other questions' answers. Someone's managing my learning is another frequent answer. This shows that Turkish ELT department's learners are used to giving help about managing their learning or taking responsibility of their learning. It can be linked with the education systems' insufficiency.

Question 4: What type of attitudes do you observed about learner autonomy in Turkey?

Responses given this question are much unexpected. Nearly the entire participants M= 46 think that Turkish education system give any importance to learner autonomy. And also they think that teachers (as a kind of teacher candidates) give no importance to learner autonomy and prefer to manage the learners' own learning. Results of this question show that Turkish education system have any aspects to fostering the learner autonomy although variances which was made in 2006 to foster the learner autonomy in Turkish education system. This result also shows that Turkish education system needs more changes to being suitable for autonomous learners and fostering learner autonomy.

Question 5: Does the teaching and learning environment in Turkey help or hinder the development of autonomy? In what ways?

According to the responses M= 48 Turkish education system hinders the learner autonomy. Also these questions' results are parallel to other questions' answers. To sum up Turkish English Language Teaching departments' learners think that learner autonomy has not got any importance in language education system in Turkey. These result have very importance because of the participants are all of the Language teaching candidates. With the light of these results they can design their teaching experience suitably the autonomous learners and learner autonomy. And also the heads of Turkey education system think again making changes to make the curriculum and education system suitable to autonomous learners and foster it.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify Turkish English Language Teaching Department learners' attitudes towards learner autonomy and identify their thoughts about Turkish educational system's suitability to learner autonomy according to five main elements of education system school curriculums, course materials used in classrooms, approaches used by teachers in classrooms, learning activities and classroom setting up. So a three-part questionnaire was administered to 50 ELT departments' learners from 3 different universities (Hacettepe, Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Uludag University).

This study shows that second grade (fourth term) ELT department learners have the special characteristics of autonomous learners that are willing to taking responsibility of their own learning, motivated to learn, managing their own learning process, planning their time as a teacher candidates. This study highlights that Turkish English language teaching trainees are aware of learner autonomy and ready for teaching suitably to it.

On the other hand, results also show that Turkish education system's five of the base elements are school curriculums, course materials used in classrooms, approaches used by teachers in classrooms, learning activities and classroom setting up are not convenience for fostering the learner autonomy. Furthermore Turkish education system hinder the learner autonomy with its teacher-dominant approaches, learning activities which are managed by only teachers, classroom set-up prepared for fostering teacher's dominance, school curriculums and course materials such as course books and workbooks designed by ignoring the learners' difference and autonomy.

These should have been expected outcomes because of all of the participants are ELT departments learners who are already familiar with learner autonomy and autonomous learners as teacher candidates. And also it shouldn't have been forgotten that all of the participants of this study pass the university entrance exam

successfully by taking responsibility of their own learning. The following studies might be carried out with participants from different departments which have not got any course about learner autonomy and with participants from not only higher education departments but also with high school learners and primary school learners.

References

- Balcikanli, C. (2007). The Investigation of the Instructors' Attitudes toward Learner Autonomy at Preparatory School. *Proceedings of Language teaching and learning in multilingual Europe. Vilnius: Lithuania.*
- Balcikanli, C. (2010). Learner autonomy in language learning: Student teachers' beliefs. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, 35(1), 90.
- Benson, P. (2007). Autonomy in language teaching and learning. *Language teaching*, 40(01), 21-40.
- Chan, V. (2001). Readiness for learner autonomy: What do our learners tell us?. *Teaching in higher education*, 6(4), 505-518.
- Dincer, A., Yesilyurt, S., & Takkac, M. (2012). The Effects of Autonomy-Supportive Climates on EFL Learner's Engagement, Achievement and Competence in English Speaking Classrooms. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 3890-3894.
- Karabiyik, A. S. L. I. (2008). The relationship between culture of learning and Turkish university preparatory students' readiness for learner autonomy. *Unpublished master's thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey.*
- Karahan, F. (2007). Language attitudes of Turkish students towards the English language and its use in Turkish context. *Çankaya University Journal of arts and sciences*, 1(7).
- Kirkgoz, Y. (2007). English Language Teaching in Turkey Policy Changes and their Implementations. *RELC Journal*, 38(2), 216-228.
- Little, D. (2000, September). We're all in it together: Exploring the interdependence of teacher and learner autonomy. In *Proceeding of the 7th Nordic Conference and Workshop on Autonomous Language Learning, Helsinki.*

- Little, D. (2007). Introduction: Reconstructing learner and teacher autonomy in language education. In *Reconstructing autonomy in language education* (pp. 1-12). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Özdere, M. (2005). *State-supported provincial university English language instructors' attitudes towards learner autonomy*. Department of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Bilkent Univ..
- Scharle, A., & Szabó, A. (2007). *Learner autonomy: A guide to developing learner responsibility*. Ernst Klett Sprachen.
- Sert, N. (2006). EFL student teachers' learning autonomy. *The Asian EFL Journal*, 8(2), 180-201.
- Smith, R., & Erdoğan, S. (2008). Teacher-learner autonomy. *Learner and teacher autonomy*, 83-102.
- Smith, R. (2008). Learner autonomy. *ELT journal*, 62(4), 395-397.
- Tilfarlioglu, F. Y., & Ciftci, F. S. (2011). Supporting self-efficacy and learner autonomy in relation to academic success in EFL classrooms (A Case Study). *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(10), 1284-1294.
- Üstünlüoğlu, E. (2009). Autonomy in language learning: Do student take responsibility for their learning. *Journal of Theory and practice in Education*, 5(2), 148-169.
- Yıldırım, Ö. (2005). ELT students' perception and behavior related to learner autonomy as learners and future teachers. *Unpublished master's thesis, Anadolu University, Eskişehir*.
- Yıldırım, Ö. (2008). Turkish EFL learners' readiness for learner autonomy. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 4(1), 65-80.

Appendices

Appendix 1

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I take responsibility for my own learning experiences					
2	I plan my time to study effectively					
3	My time management is good					
4	I am good at suiting deadlines					
5	I am a pro-active learner(I don't wait for things/people to come to me)					
6	I am good at analysing the information which I need					
7	I have specific strategies for managing my own learning					
8	I have specific skills for managing my own learning					
9	I know how to use resources independently					
10	I am willing to control my learning					
11	I am willing to take risks about new learning					
12	I am motivated to learn					
13	I learn both inside and outside the classroom					
14	I know my needs to work productively					
15	I can evaluate my own language competencies					

Appendix 2

1-What is your understanding of learner autonomy?

2-Do you think that learner autonomy is important? Why? Why not?

3-Do you think that you are an autonomous language learner, if yes or not why?

4-What type of attitudes do you observed about learner autonomy in Turkey?

5-Does the teaching and learning environment in Turkey help or hinder the development of autonomy? In what ways?

Appendix 3

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Not sure
Turkish school curriculums are suitable					
Course materials used in classrooms are					
Approaches used by Turkish teachers					
Learning activities in classrooms are designed					
Classroom settings are suitable for fostering					