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BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI
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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LEARNER AUTONOMY, LANGUAGE ENGAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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AUTONOMY, LANGUAGE ENGAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

MASTER'S THESIS

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ONAY

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Tez içindeki bütün bilgilerin etik davranış ve akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde edilerek sunulduğunu, ayrıca tez yazım kurallarına uygun olarak hazırlanan bu çalışmada orijinal olmayan her türlü kaynağa eksiksiz atıf yapıldığını, aksinin ortaya çıkması durumunda her tür yasal sonucu kabul ettiğimi beyan ediyorum.

Raşide DAĞ AKBAŞ
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ABSTRACT

The current study, conducted at the Department of English Language and Literature, Karadeniz Technical University, is an attempt to investigate the relationships between learner autonomy, language engagement and academic achievement as measured by Grade Point Average (GPA).

The sample in the study consists of 83 students including senior and junior students attending the Department of English Language and Literature at Karadeniz Technical University. 8 out of 83 students are selected to conduct interviews. The participants are selected through purposive sampling which is a part of non-probability sampling.

This is a case study combining qualitative and quantitative research tradition. The data is collected via questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. In analyzing the data obtained via the semi-structured interviews, qualitative analysis is used and quantitative analysis is used in analyzing the data collected via the questionnaire. The SPSS 16.0 program is used in the analysis of the quantitative data. As for the qualitative analysis, content analysis is used to determine recurring themes.

The study indicates that there are statistically significant relationships between learner autonomy, language engagement and academic achievement as measured by GPA. The nature of the correlations is positive. The strongest relationship occurs between language engagement and learner autonomy while the relationship between learner autonomy and academic achievement as measured by their GPAs and the relationship between language engagement and academic achievement are moderate. The findings obtained via the interviews are consistent with the findings obtained via the questionnaire.

Key words: Learner autonomy, academic achievement, language engagement

ÖZET

Bu çalışma 2010–2011 eğitim-öğretim yılında Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü'nde 3. ve 4. sınıfta okuyan öğrencilerin öğrenen özerkliği, İngilizce ile olan uğraşları ve akademik başarıları arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bir örnek olay niteliğinde olan bu çalışmada gerekli verileri toplamak için nicel ve nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden yararlanılmıştır. Öğrencilerin öğrenen özerkliği, dil ile olan uğraşları ve akademik başarıları ile ilgili verilere ulaşmak için anket çalışmasından ve yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlardan yararlanılmıştır. Buna göre nicel veriler, 2010–2011 eğitim-öğretim yılında İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü'nde 3. ve 4. sınıfta okuyan 83 üniversite öğrencisinden toplanmıştır ve bu veriler 8 öğrenciyle yapılan mülakatlarla desteklenmiştir. Araştırmanın amacına bağlı olarak gerekli ölçütler göz önünde bulundurularak, her iki örneklem seçiminde de olasılı olmayan amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır.

Nicel verilerin analizi SPSS 16.0 programı aracılığı ile betimsel analizler ve Pearson korelasyon katsayısı kullanılarak yapılmıştır. Mülakatlardan elde edilen nitel veriler ise içerik analizi ile yorumlanmıştır.

Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre öğrencilerin öğrenen özerkliği, İngilizce ile olan uğraşları ve akademik başarıları arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı ve pozitif bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Öğrencilerin öğrenen özerkliği ile akademik başarıları arasındaki ilişki ve öğrencilerin İngilizce ile olan uğraşları ile akademik başarıları arasındaki ilişki orta düzeyde çıkmıştır. Diğerlerine nazaran en güçlü ilişki öğrencilerin öğrenen özerkliği ve İngilizce ile olan uğraşları arasında bulunmuştur. Mülakatların sonuçlarında da benzer ilişkiler bulunmuştur.

Anahtar sözcükler: Öğrenen özerkliği, akademik başarı, dil uğraşı

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALL   : Autonomous Language Learning

CAALL   : Computer Assisted Autonomous Language Learner

EAP   : English for Academic Purposes

EFL   : English as a Foreign Language

ELP   : European Language Portfolio

ELT   : English Language Teaching

GPA   : Grade Point Average

LAP   : Learner Autonomy Profile

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Over the last thirty years, learner autonomy has been a recurrent theme of discussion in the field of language training. The considerable number of recent research papers (Chan, 2000; Chanock, 2004; Cotterall, 2000; Çubukçu, 2009; Macia et al., 2010; Schmenk, 2005; Spratt et al., 2002; Sugawara, 2007; Yen and Liu, 2009) and books (Benson, 2001; Camilleri, 1999; Lamb and Reinders, 2008; Palfreyman and Smith, 2003; Paran and Sercu, 2010) written on this theme around the world clearly indicate that there is still an ongoing interest in this issue. The current case study, conducted at the Department of English Language and Literature, Karadeniz Technical University, aims to show how the level of learner autonomy and English language engagement relate to the students' academic achievement as measured by their Grade Point Average (GPA).

This chapter presents an introduction to the concept of learner autonomy and explains the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose, and significance of the study. It also identifies the operational definitions, research questions and finally outlines the design of the study.

1.2. Background of the Study

A movement away from consumerism and materialism in social and economic life toward an embrace of democratic society, the meaning and value of individual experience, quality of life, and freedom has shown itself in education over the last three decades (Gremmo and Riley, 1995). At question was the issue of "authority". This apparent change in society also influenced education, language learning and teaching theories over time. With the resulting innovations, learners rather than teachers were brought to the center of education.

The notions of communicative approaches in language education and learner-centeredness supported a shift of responsibility from teachers to learners as well. At this point, the concept of "autonomy" was introduced to the lexicon of language education. The origins of the concept of learner autonomy date back to the year 1971 when the concept was first introduced to the field of language education as part of the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project, of which the basic aim was to avail adults of opportunities for lifelong learning. Yves Chalon, who was then regarded as the pioneer of autonomy in language learning, worked on the project, and, after his death, Henri Holec, now regarded as a leading figure who introduced the concept of learner autonomy in language education, continued the work. The project report issued in 1981 has been considered the key document in the field of research focusing on learner autonomy. The concept naturally arose as a result of the need to have individuals who possess the freedom and the necessary abilities that make individuals feel much more responsible in the society (Benson, 2001).

As it is mentioned above, the concept of autonomy did not primarily originate from educational literature, but from political and social movements towards the end of 1960s. Ideas, inaugurated by innovations in society, like individualism, freedom, and contribution to society gained importance; learner centered pedagogies, adult education, self-access centers and accordingly self-directed learning, distance learning, and open learning grew into the world of education. Educators searched for new ways to enable learners with different needs, preferences and opportunities to gain an education. From then on, learners were considered to be the key agents of the educational process and autonomy was increasingly regarded as a primary goal. Self-access centers became a platform for the first "experimentations with self-directed learning", and autonomy was seen as a "natural product of self-directed learning" and directly or indirectly associated with "ideas of individualization" (Benson, 2001: 8). Independence, individualization, self-instruction, out-of class learning and autonomy were thought to be interrelated and influencing each other. In contrast to the previous views, in recent years, autonomy has been noted as requiring collaboration, negotiation and interdependence instead of isolation. According to this view, people are social beings and their independence is balanced by their dependence; therefore, one must consider interdependence, rather than independence (Little, 2009). The idea of interdependence is also in accord with Vygotsky's sociocultural theories in psychology. In fact, Little (1991) suggests that considering autonomy as synonymous with

self-instruction is one of the misconceptions because autonomy does not make teachers redundant. This idea of teacher significance is also confirmed by Holec who argues that "learners are unlikely to develop a capacity for autonomy without assistance" (cited in Little, 1991: 21) and by Dickinson (1987) who focuses on teachers' vital role in self-instruction processes. The focus on autonomy was formerly outside the traditionally organized classes; that is to say, autonomy was set in out-of-class learning processes and applications. Since then, new ways have been identified for improving traditional classes in favor of promoting autonomy or autonomous learning, and, more recently, with the rapid developments of new technologies in education, learner autonomy concepts are being revisited again today.

In years passed, the concept of autonomy was defined and redefined consistently in accordance with the views, implications and results of learning experiences in time. Today, there are still different perspectives on what learner autonomy is and what it should be. Learner autonomy is not an easily described concept since it incorporates lots of different behaviors and does not refer to a stable condition (Little, 1991). However, Little (1991) finds it possible to describe autonomous learners by their behaviors. Yet, before moving to these characteristics of autonomous learners, it would be better to define the concept first.

There have been different approaches towards defining and describing the concept of learner autonomy from the rise of learner autonomy in education until today. While some take it as a capacity or ability, others consider it as a situation. The earliest and most cited definition of learner autonomy is by Holec (1981: 3) when he describes it as "the ability to take charge of ones' own learning". From time to time, Holec has made some changes to his definition, in that, 'ability' is replaced with 'capacity'; 'take responsibility for' or 'take control of' are used in place of 'take charge of'. However, the key issue is always that learners are in the centre of autonomous learning and education is attributed to learners themselves. On the other hand, Dickinson (1987: 11) describes learner autonomy as "the situation in which learner is totally responsible for all of decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions". This definition indicates that learner autonomy is now attributed to a situation, rather than to a learner. Taking some further steps, Little (1991: 4) argues that "autonomy is a capacity –for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that

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learner will develop [a] particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning." Little (1991) here focuses on psychological capacities of learners as he denotes learner autonomy concepts. By associating learner autonomy with learners' characteristics, Yen and Liu (2009: 347) state that "learner autonomy is also considered as the characteristics of an individual who exhibited intentional behavior in learning activities". The common thread in all these definitions is that learners are at the heart of learner autonomy. In spite of the variations in the definitions of the concept, there appears a consensus about learner autonomy among researchers that it is a matter of degree and a kind of developmental aspect of the learning process since there may be various forms or manifestations of autonomy in learners. According to Palfreyman and Smith (2003), different interpretations of learner autonomy may arise from the practicality of learner autonomy concepts among different cultures.

In parallelism with the definitions and interpretations of the concept of learner autonomy, autonomous learner characteristics are presented by many researchers in this field. Dickinson (1993: 41) suggests that autonomous learners:

-understand what is being taught, i.e. they have sufficient understanding of language learning to understand the purpose of pedagogical choices.
-are able to formulate their own learning objectives.
-are able to select and make use of appropriate learning strategies.
-are able to monitor their use of strategies.
-are able to self-assess, or monitor their own learning.

In addition to the characteristics listed above by Dickinson, autonomous learners are also regarded to be good language learners. Thus, autonomous learners are described to "have developed a degree of control over their learning management, managing their time, seeking help, and coping with pressures and stresses" (Oxford, 1990 cited in Sugawara, 2007: 1). Breen and Mann (1997, cited in Gonzales and Louis (2008: 28) claim that "autonomous learners should possess a desire to learn, have a positive self-image along with metacognitive capacity and the ability to handle change and to negotiate with others". Related with almost all aspects of the learning process, autonomous learners are considered as good learners and therefore, success is expected from autonomous learners. However, it is noted that such abilities are not fixed, which means a student may be an autonomous learner in one area, while s/he may not be so in another. Nevertheless, it is believed that being an autonomous learner may consistently bring success in the end. Little (1996)

argues that "learner autonomy is generally regarded as a defining characteristic of all sustained learning that attains long-term success" (cited in Chan, 2003: 33). Cotterall (1995) also established a connection with autonomy and successful language learning through the capacity for self-monitoring and for self-assessment. Being successful academically and developing learner autonomy are both among the goals of education and thus are interrelated to the extent that if a learner wants to be successful, s/he needs to be an autonomous learner. The goal of this study is to determine whether there is a relationship between being successful academically, being engaged in the English language and being an autonomous learner, and, if a relation exists, is it statistically significant?

1.3. Statement of the problem

One of the first and foremost goals of the Turkish National Education is to raise individuals who have the ability to think freely, who are respectful of human rights, who value personality and feel responsible towards society as it is listed among the general principles regulating the Turkish National Education system (Ministry of National Education (2002), http://www.meb.gov.tr/Stats/apk2001ing/Section_1/1Generalprincipals.htm). To attain this goal, learners should start embracing these responsibilities from their very first day of school until the end of their lives while also succeeding academically.

The students attending courses at the Department of English Language and Literature come to the department with the knowledge of English and they take courses on language skills for one year in preparatory classes. In the following years at the department, they take different courses including basic translation, textual analysis, research techniques, introduction to literature, academic writing, mythology, American culture and literature, American novel, English cultural studies, short stories, English novel, advanced translation, English drama and poetry, language teaching methods, English language testing, literary translation, literary criticism, teaching language skills, modern English literature and modern American literature. The medium of the instruction at the department is English. It is considered that the students are expected to have a considerable proficiency in English and also, to develop their own autonomy so as to be successful in such courses. The present study sets out to determine if there is a correlation

between learner autonomy, their engagement in English language activities and academic achievement measured as GPA. If learners feel responsible, have the ability to make decisions for their own learning process and feel motivated in their departmental courses, in brief, if they are autonomous, and if they are engaged in English language activities so as to keep up with their English proficiency level, does academic success come to them naturally as a result of learner autonomy, and is there really a significant relationship among them?

1.4. Significance of the study

In Turkey the concept of learner autonomy appears to have become more important, especially with the introduction of the European Language Portfolio Project emphasizing learner-centeredness in and out of classroom practices. A shift from teacher-centered classrooms to learner-centered classrooms was provided along with practices promoting learner autonomy in education. There have been many studies in Turkey focusing on teachers' and students' views and practices about learner autonomy or autonomous learning (Koçak, 2003; Özdere, 2005; Sert, 2006; Üstünlüoğlu, 2009; Yıldırım, 2008). Few studies have touched upon degrees of learner autonomy and its relation to other variables such as academic achievement, motivation, course success, gender, and teaching and learning strategies. The current study attempts to detect any correlation between learner autonomy, language engagement and academic achievement, as it tries to present reflections of autonomous learning practices on the outcomes of learning processes.

1.5. Purpose of the study

This case study research conducted at the Department of English Language and Literature, Karadeniz Technical University, attempts to investigate the relationships among students' autonomy level in their departmental courses, their engagement in the English language and their academic achievement as measured by their GPA.

1.6. Operational Definitions

Grade Point Average (GPA): It is a measure of a student's academic achievement at a college or university and it is computed by dividing the total number of grade points received by the total number of credits or hours of course work taken.

Autonomous learner: In this study, it is defined to feel motivated to learn and to have control over the learning processes. Furthermore, autonomous learner does not consider the teacher to be the only decision-maker in the learning process and feel responsible for all decisions concerning learning process including setting objectives, choosing course content, materials, activities, evaluation. These characteristics of autonomous learner are attributed to the concept of learner autonomy in the current study.

Language engagement: It is described as interest and active involvement in various language activities or practices with the aim of improving language level or staying up-to-date.

1.7. Research Questions

The current study addresses the following questions in its attempt to find out the relationships among learner autonomy, language engagement activities and academic achievement as measured by GPA.

The major question in the study is:
- Is there any relationship between the students' achievement level, autonomy level and their engagement in English?

The study also seeks to answer the minor questions:
- What are the general characteristics of the students regarding their academic achievement as measured by GPAs and study hours?
- To what extent are the students autonomous in their departmental courses?
- How do the students perceive their own responsibilities and that of their teachers'?

- What are the students' perceptions of their abilities in performing their own responsibilities?
- How do the students perceive their motivation level in terms of studying for departmental courses?
- To what extent do the students engage in autonomous activities throughout their university education?
- To what extent do the students engage in activities so as to improve their English throughout their university education?
- How do the students perceive their motivation level in terms of engaging in English language activities throughout their university education?
- How do the students perceive themselves regarding their proximity to the autonomous learner profile identified in the current study?
- Is there any relationship between their self-perceived autonomy level and the autonomy level indicated in the questionnaire?
- Is there any relationship between the students' achievement level as measured by their GPA and their language engagement?
- Is there any relationship between the students' achievement level as measured by their GPA and their level of autonomy?
- Is there any relationship between the students' level of autonomy and their language engagement?

1.8. Statement of Method

In attempting to investigate the relationships students' autonomy that they developed for their departmental courses, their engagement in English language activities and academic achievement measured by GPA, senior and junior students in the Department of English Language and Literature, at Karadeniz Technical University, are chosen as a sample since these groups of students are assumed to have more experience in learning processes and they have established their own way of learning to some extent. Also their GPA is calculated with grades accumulated at least in more than five semesters. Students' autonomy degree and language engagement are determined via a questionnaire and their grade point averages are taken into consideration to determine academic achievement. Semi-structured face to face interviews are conducted with the low and high

achieving students by taking their GPAs into consideration. In this way, this case study research incorporates quantitative and qualitative research methods.

1.9. Outline of the Study

Chapter One, **Introduction,** by introducing the topic of the study, presents background of the study and explains the problem. It also clarifies the purpose of the study and identifies the research questions.

Chapter Two, **Literature Review,** includes a general description of the related literature. First, it gives information about learner autonomy and its relations to other important constructs and then highlights the characteristics of autonomous learners. It provides information about why learner autonomy is in question now and about some considerations regarding the promotion of learner autonomy. It also focuses on how learner autonomy is related with academic success, including how learner autonomy enters into Turkey's educational agenda. The chapter ends with various studies on learner autonomy conducted in Turkey and abroad.

Chapter Three, **Methodology,** introduces instruments and processes that are adopted for data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four, **Findings and Discussion,** focuses on the data analysis and discusses the results and the findings of the study followed by the interpretations.

Chapter Five, **Conclusion,** explains the conclusions, their implications for and limitations of the study. This chapter also gives suggestions for further research. Finally, the references and the questionnaire in appendices are available in this section.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.Introduction

The present chapter initially provides a framework of autonomy and its relation to learner autonomy in language education process. This section presents different definitions of the concept of learner autonomy and its relation to other concepts such as responsibility, control, culture and success, which exist in the relevant literature. The other section depicts the profile of autonomous learners based on different attributions presented by different researchers. Reasons behind the popular concern about learner autonomy are also discussed. Throughout the chapter, other considerations regarding the implementation of learner autonomy, essential ways and roles so as to promote it in language education and teacher roles are explained. For further developments in learner autonomy, there is a need to measure the degree of learner autonomy with a sound tool. The reasons behind this problem of measuring learner autonomy are discussed as well. Following a section, which is devoted to the introduction of learner autonomy concepts to Turkey, this chapter concludes with the various studies conducted in Turkey and abroad.

2.2.The Concept of Autonomy and its Relation to Learner Autonomy

The concept, autonomy, is originally derived from the Greek word, "autonomia" which refers to the "condition or quality of self governance or self direction within a broader community" (Castle, 2006: 1906). Related with self, autonomy indicates "a set of human characteristics such as personal knowledge, awareness and responsibility" (Harkin et al., 2001: 85). Autonomous individuals are characterized as to be "knowledgeable, resourceful, and responsible members of their democratic society" (Burk and Dunn, 1996: 11). As Benson (2001) claims, the concept of autonomy is not primarily a concept related to language teaching or learning. Ryan (1991 cited in Littlewood, 1999) argues that autonomy is one of the most basic needs and goals of individuals. This consideration refers to personal autonomy. Accordingly, the idea of autonomy in an educational context is

"grounded in liberal-humanist conception of personal autonomy" (Benson, 2008: 30). In fact, personal autonomy is first developed by Kant who uses the term "to characterize the human potential to make rational decisions individually and also stresses that it entails the moral obligation to respect other persons' autonomy" (Schmenk, 2005: 109). The concept of personal autonomy is also stated to be derived from the ideological argument that "the individual has the right to be free to exercise his or her own choices, in learning as in other areas, and not become a victim (even an unwitting one) of choices made by social institutions" (Crabbe 1993, cited in Benson, 2001: 43).

When it comes to educational theories, Schmenk (2005: 109) maintains that "the autonomous individual who may be able to think and act independently and who may be able to resist domination and manipulation is still a widespread and, to some extent, indispensable ideal". For Candy (1991), personal autonomy is one of the "four dimensions of self-directed learning: personal autonomy, self-management in learning, the independent pursuit of learning, and the learner control of instruction" and "personal autonomy represents one of the principal goals of education in all settings and all ages" (cited in Loyens et al., 2008: 414). Here, personal autonomy is attributed to independence, freedom of choice and rational reflection (Loyens et al., 2008). Derrick et al. (2003: 4) additionally assert that "A learner who can exhibit personal autonomy will exhibit all of the identified behaviors identified as characteristic behaviors of autonomous learning". That is to say, the more personal autonomy a learner has, the more autonomous a learner becomes. This infers that it is possible to say that personal autonomy is regarded to be interrelated with learner autonomy.

Autonomy is also one of the issues discussed among many great thinkers and philosophers throughout the ages. Benson (2001) emphasized that thinkers such as Galileo Galilei, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Dewey, William Kilpatrick, Paolo Freire, Ivan Illich, and Carl Rogers contributed to the development of autonomy concepts in society and correspondingly in education. For instance, Galileo says "you cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself"; Dewey who sees schools and classrooms as 'microcosms' of the community believes that learners' own felt needs should be a starting point and teachers should act as a resource or guide; Rogers, an advocate of humanistic psychology, regards people as 'self-actualizing' beings striving for

health, individual identity and integrity, and autonomy. Their ideas, perspectives and philosophies have exercised a greater influence on education as well as on theories and practices of learner autonomy today.

As for the psychology of learning, constructivist theories pave the way for developing concepts of autonomy in language education. It is stated that constructivists regard autonomy as a goal of education (Burk and Dunn, 1996). For example, Kelly's personal construct theory considers human thought as a continual process of hypothesis testing and theory building in the light of new experiences and holds the idea that learners bring their own systems of constructs to bear on learning tasks; this in turn has an influence on developing theory of autonomy at the beginning (Benson, 2001). Little (1991: 22) emphasizes the contribution of Kelly's personal construct theory to autonomy in learning and also concludes that "teachers must find ways of accommodating her teaching to personal constructs of her learners". Recently, Vygotsky's view of learning, which focuses on the significance of social interaction, has been influential on the theory of autonomy in learning, in that social interaction can be attributed to the idea of collaboration which is one of the key factors in the development of autonomy. In addition to this, Murase (2007: 3-4) comments that "Bruner's discovery learning has put the leaner-centeredness of constructivist approach into practice in promoting learner autonomy" and taking a humanistic approach, while Rogers's view of "teachers' role as a facilitator of his/her students' learning has greatly influenced the practice of promoting learner autonomy".

Growing out of the concept of autonomy, which encapsulates individual responsibility and control in social life, learner autonomy encourages learners to control and take responsibility for the learning process. The concept of autonomy transfers its characteristics to the concept of learner autonomy, especially in the language learning process. The next section presents different approaches to defining the concept of learner autonomy as it exists in the relevant literature.

2.3.Defining Learner Autonomy

The idea of autonomy arrived on the stage of language learning as a result of social and ideological changes of the late 1960s (Benson, 2001). More specifically, through the

Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project in 1971, the term came into the field of language teaching and learning. Innovations occurring at this time, such as the rise of communicative approaches to language teaching, learner-centeredness and autonomy, brought the learner center-stage as a key figure in the process of language learning. Accordingly, having learners achieve autonomy became increasingly listed among the broad goals of education thus leading teachers or practitioners to create optimal environments that could pave the way for more and more autonomous learners, a process called by Little (2003) as 'autonomization'.

Despite Little's (1991) argument about autonomy not being easily described behavior, it is still necessary to try to put the concept of learner autonomy in a sound framework. Regarding the necessity of defining learner autonomy, there are two reasons suggested by Benson (2001: 47):

> Firstly, construct validity is an important precondition for effective research. In order for a construct such as autonomy to be researchable, it must be describable in terms of observable behaviours. Secondly, programmes or innovations designed to foster autonomy are likely to be more effective if they are based on a clear understanding of the behavioural changes they aim to foster.

As Benson (2001) points out, it is inevitable, for a researcher, to know what is meant by the concept, and to what it refers specifically. A clear understanding of the concept paves the way for a sound research base. Based on this clear picture depicted by description of the concept, more powerful suggestions can be presented to foster the concept in question. If there is a lack in understanding, definition or description of concepts, it is likely to lead to misconceptions. As assumed, there are some misconceptions about the concept of learner autonomy (Little, 1991: 2). First, autonomy is assumed to be synonymous with 'self-instruction'; although it is not. However, there is still a possibility that some learners who prefer self-instruction may achieve some degree of autonomy. About the relation between learner autonomy and self-instruction, Benson (2001) clarifies that for years, self-access centers made it clear that there is no necessary relationship between the two. Another misconception is the belief that learner autonomy turns teachers into a fifth wheel, that is, "redundant". This is not true because one is not likely to have autonomous students without the assistance of a teacher; at least there is a need for their encouragement throughout the language learning process. It is also

sometimes mistakenly believed that autonomy is a fixed state and a behavior that can be defined simply; Little (1991) asserts that autonomous learners can be autonomous in one skill while not in another skill and the concept is not easily defined since it incorporates lots of different behaviors regarding the learning process.

When it comes to the definition of learner autonomy, it is easy to agree with Dafei (2007: 6) when he states that "It is also a slippery concept because it is notoriously difficult to define precisely." As one can easily recognize when one looks at the issue, there are numerous definitions of the concept in literature. Other than Little (1991), Chan (2000) also emphasizes the same challenge in describing the concept. Chan (2000: 75) claims that "learner autonomy is difficult to define as it carries multiple meanings with different interpretations of the autonomous self." Hence, the starting point in defining the concept in literature is inevitably and generally done with the most quoted and popular definition by Holec (1981: 3) as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". This particular definition is not easily grasped or bypassed since there may be several notions to contemplate when it comes to words like 'ability' and phrases like 'take charge of'. As aforementioned, these definitions are merely a starting point leading up to a bulk of different perceptions about learner autonomy that change over time. Dickinson (1987: 11) defines autonomy as "the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions". Here, 'ability' is replaced by 'situation' which indicates another aspect of learner autonomy and 'take charge of' is replaced by 'totally responsible for' which expands its borders identified in Holec's definition. Moreover, Dickinson (1987) proposes two other labels for autonomy: "semi- autonomy" and "full autonomy". While "semi- autonomy" is stated to be as "the stage at which learners are preparing for autonomy", in "full autonomy" there is "no involvement of a teacher or an institution". Referring to similar concepts in a single term, Dam (1995) relates learner autonomy to capacity and willingness, which requires learners to have independent behaviors as well as negotiate with other individuals around.

Gremmo (1998) put the concept into a different context by excluding teachers or educators. For Gremmo (1998: 144), the clearest definition is uttered by Holec: "the capacity of the learner to learn without being taught". He finds this definition advantageous for two reasons: "it states explicitly which kind of autonomy is being

referred to [and] it stresses the point that teaching is only one way of promoting learning" (Gremmo, 1998: 144). This definition implies that teachers are responsible for promoting learning rather than the act of teaching. Additionally, he defines learner autonomy by stating that "learners are given the methodological tools to go about learning in a self-directed way" (Gremmo, 1998: 144). Here again, he refers to teachers' responsibility as providing students with the necessary with which to learn by themselves.

Due to the various definitions of learner autonomy in literature, Benson (1997 cited in Benson, 2006) attempted to classify these definitions of learner autonomy. He discussed three different "versions" of autonomy: technical, psychological and political.

1. 'Technical' learner autonomy refers to learners learning without institutions or control of a teacher.
2. 'Psychological' learner autonomy describes learners having a capacity or a construct of attitudes and abilities so as to take more responsibility for their own learning.
3. 'Political' learner autonomy is when learners have control over learning processes and educational content in both their individual learning and in an institutional context.

Taking his definition of political learner autonomy further, Benson (2008: 15) argues that "autonomy is primarily concerned with institutional and classroom learning arrangements within established curricula".

There is a similar emphasis by Reinders (2000: 13) who presents a diagram representing all factors influencing autonomous learning in relation with control, motivation and social or affective factors. Figure 1 summarizes the complex structure of learner autonomy:

Figure 1: Autonomous Act of Learning
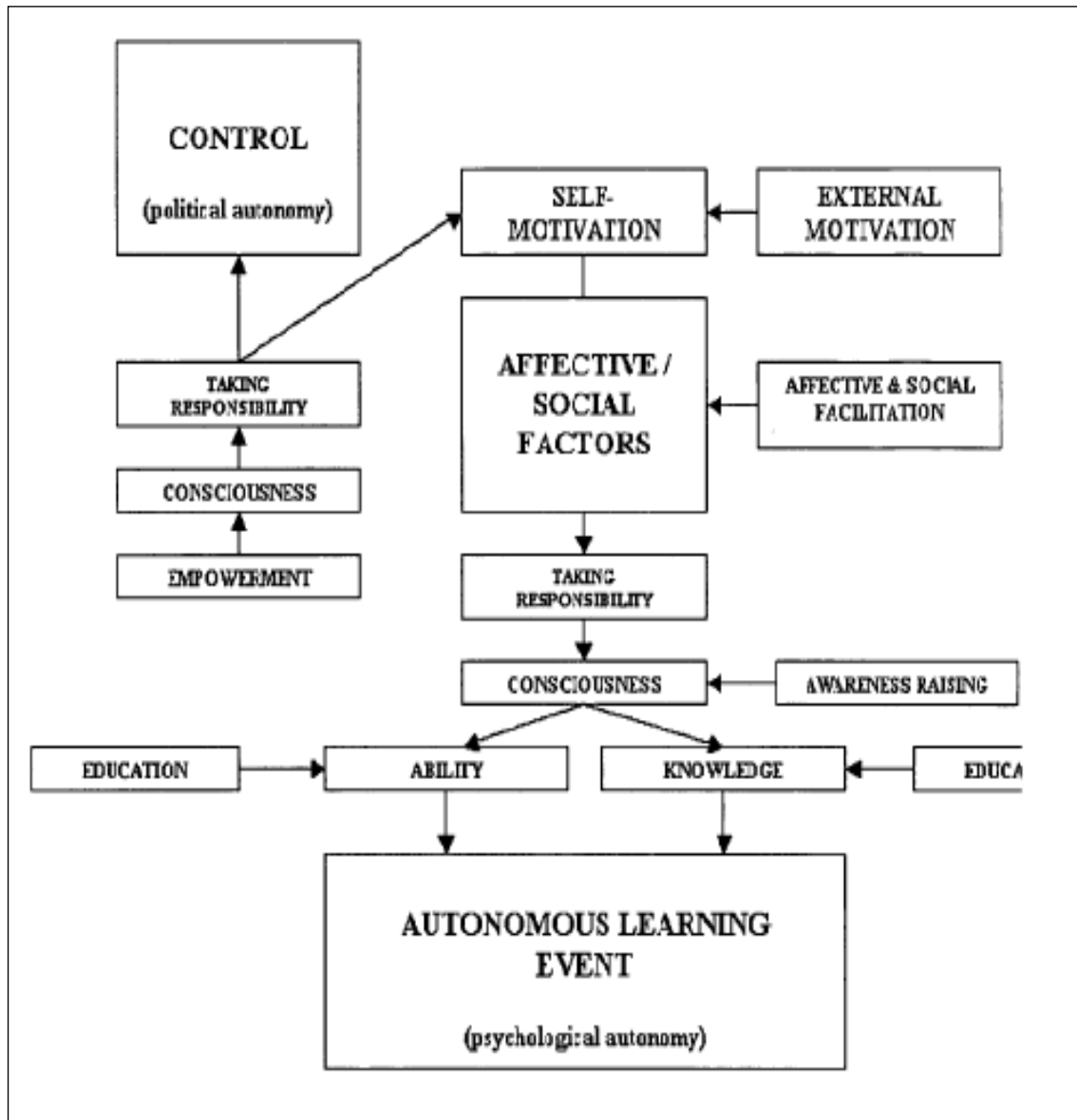
Source: Reinders, 2000: 13

As it is summarized in the figure, self-motivation, responsibility, consciousness, and empowerment lead to the concept of control developed in political autonomy and all these factors are related to self-motivation. If learners have self-motivation, take responsibility and are aware of the process, they can direct the knowledge they gain through education and contribute to their autonomous learning, as described by psychological autonomy. As it is presented, all these concepts are interrelated and lead to

an autonomous learning event. Therefore, affective and social factors as well as awareness-raising take an important role in developing learners' autonomy. Bearing some similarity to the depiction of learner autonomy in the figure, Sinclair (2008: 243) deals with the concept of 'learner autonomy' as follows:

- Learner autonomy is a construct of capacity, which is operationalised when willingness is present.
- This capacity consists of the development and conscious awareness of a body of specific metacognitive knowledge about:
  -one's self as a learner;
  -one's learning context;
  -the subject matter to be learnt;
  -the processes of learning.

Additionally, he advocates that intervention of teachers is necessary so as to develop such a capacity in learners. Here again, ability is replaced with capacity in Sinclair's perception and willingness can be referred to as the concept of self-motivation. Other concepts, like conscious awareness about the learning process and intervention of the teacher are regarded as necessary to address the development of learner autonomy in learners. Ultimately, they have similar approaches to the conceptualization of learner autonomy or autonomous learning. All these various approaches to defining learner autonomy in the literature point out that there is a mutual agreement about the fact that "practice of learner autonomy requires insight, a positive attitude, a capacity for reflection, and a readiness to be proactive in self-management and in interaction with others" (Little, 2003: 1).

2.4. Learner Autonomy and Approximate Concepts in Literature

There exists a myriad of meanings and versions of learner autonomy in the literature. Therefore, it is often possible to encounter different concepts used synonymously or used to refer to different aspects of the same concept while trying to explain the concept in different ways. Everhard (2006: 2) describes the process of dealing with the concept of learner autonomy:

as something akin to 'opening a can of worms'. Some of the worms that emerge include the following: Motivation, Self-esteem, Self-regulation, Counselling, Learning Styles, Learning Strategies, Learner Training, Teacher Training, Self- and Peer-assessment, Learner Diaries, Learner Contracts, Culture, Technology, Self-access, Affect, Multiple Intelligences,

Differentiation, Self-instruction, Learning Pathways, Perceptions and Beliefs, Goal-setting, Portfolios and the list goes on …

As Everhard (2006) posits, the concept of learner autonomy is like a can of worms covering lots of different but interrelated issues regarding motivation, and several concepts encapsulating 'self', learning styles and strategies, culture and so on. Therefore, to be engaged in such a concept means being faced with a number of issues behind the concept. This refers to the fact that learner autonomy can cover or be related to a bulk of issues regarding the learning process. The image depicted here by Everhard (2006) clearly shows how complex a construction or multidimensional concept learner autonomy is.

In literature, it is possible to see the various expressions researchers or authors use to refer to concepts of learner autonomy or autonomous learners and learning. For instance, Macaskill and Taylor (2010) associate self-directed learning with autonomous learning and independent learning and state that "[…] self-directed learning, and is more frequently now labeled autonomous learning or independent learning" (p. 351). Here autonomous learning is used under the title of self-directed learning. However, they refer to two distinct concepts in literature. Another example, Dörnyei (2001: 102) "Autonomy is currently a buzzword in educational psychology-it is also discussed under the label of self-regulation'". Here, learner autonomy is regarded the same as self-regulation. Likewise, Palfreyman (2003) states that independence is frequently used in the place of autonomy. However, he adds that Boud (1981) regards "interdependence as a more developed stage of autonomy than independence" (cited in Palfreyman, 2003: 4). While dependence was associated with autonomy in its early years, independency or interdependency has of late been associated with autonomy since the significance of collaboration and negotiation has been realized. Little (2009) argues that learner autonomy is developed depending on social interaction and insists on the idea by stating that "autonomous learners always do things for themselves, but they may or may not do things on their own" (Little, 2009: 223). All indicates that associating learner autonomy just with independence may not be correct; instead, it may be more acceptable to associate the concept of learner autonomy with interdependence or collaboration. Apart from these instances, as Pinkman (2005) states, sometimes learner autonomy and learner independence is used interchangeably, thus it is important to make a distinction between the two since the former refers to control while the latter denotes self-reliance. In response to these different usages or labels, Naizhao and

Yanling (n.d.: 6) righteously argue:

> Autonomy and autonomous learning are not synonyms with 'self-instruction', 'self-access', 'self-study', 'out-of-class learning' or 'distance learning'. These terms basically describe various ways and degrees of learning by one's self, whereas autonomy refers to abilities and attitudes (or whatever we think the capacity to control one's own learning consists of). The point is, then, that learning in isolation is not the same as having capacity to direct one's own learning. These two concepts, however, do not have to exist completely independently, as the ability to be able to work in isolation can play a role in a autonomous learning.

As it is discussed in this section, it is suggested here that autonomy should not be used in the place of other 'self' concepts like self-study, self- access, or in the place out-of-class learning. They may seem similar but they are separate concepts even if there is some kind of relationship or they are interrelated concept. The reason for this complexity of usages may be the multidimensional structure of learner autonomy concepts.

2.5. Learner Autonomy: Responsibility and Control

As it is implied in the literature, there is no single, definitely approved definition of learner autonomy among researchers in general and there is 'terminological confusion' (Reinders, 2010: 43). Although definitions for learner autonomy vary in the literature, the common feature is the necessity of learners' taking responsibility and control over their own learning process. Hence, control and responsibility can be taken as key aspects of learner autonomy.

Associating the language learning process to an interactive and at the same time subjective process, Gremmo (1998: 153) points out how the language learning process can only be directed, or in his own word, "monitored" by learners. Derrick and Carr (2003: 6) explain the relation of responsibility and control to learner autonomy as follows:

> Learner autonomy is the process in which the learner makes an intentional decision to assume the responsibility for goal setting, planning, and action in a learning situation. In other words, the learner is in control of the learning. Knowles (1980) states "The locus of responsibility for learning lies within the learner" (p.51). This notion of the *self in control* of a learning situation forms the foundation of autonomous learning.

Along similar lines, Chan (2000: 75) indicates that in their own learning process, autonomous learners mostly feel responsible for "setting their own learning goals,

identifying and developing learning strategies to achieve such goals, developing study plans, identifying and selecting relevant resources and support, and evaluating their own progress." Chan (2003: 33) proposes that "learner autonomy grows out of the individual's acceptance of his or her own responsibility of learning". Similarly, Scharle and Szabo (2000) assert that "autonomy and responsibility both require active involvement, and they are apparently very much interrelated" (p. 4). Sert (2006) confirms that responsible learners who act autonomously make the decisions regarding what they will learn, how they will learn it and within what time frame the learning will take place.

Bouschard (2009) considers control as the central aspect of learner autonomy. Learners can exercise control over different dimensions of learning. To make it clearer, Bouschard (2009: 96) posits a diagram (Figure 2) showing how learner autonomy can be divided in four areas of learner control:

Figure 2: Areas of learner autonomy
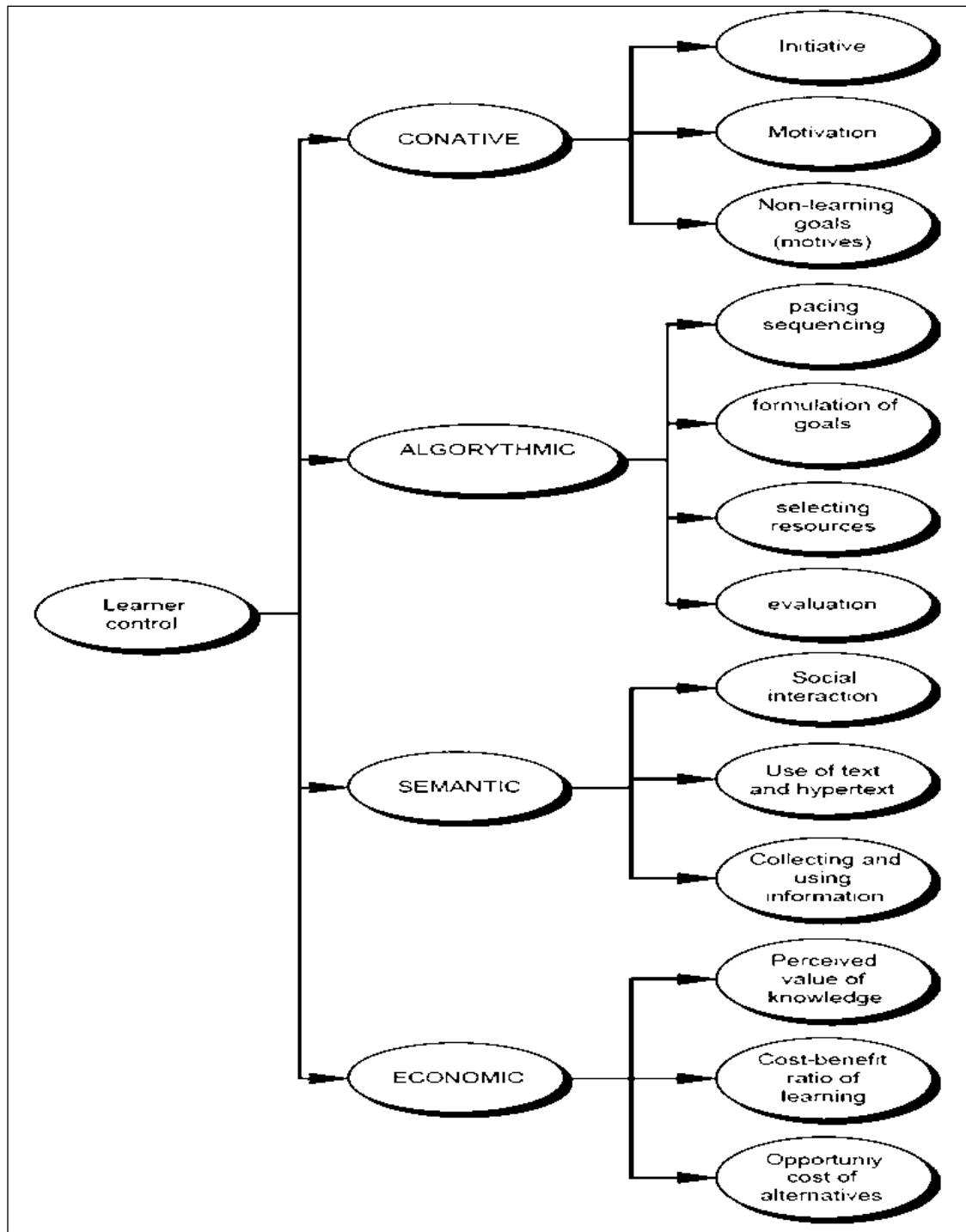
Source: Bouschard, 2009: 96

For Bouchard (2009), before educational technology, the boundaries of control in learner autonomy are assumed to be limited to cognative and algorithmic and later with

the introduction of educational technology, the boundaries of learner control are expanded. Now there are four dimensions of a learning environment—cognative, algorithmic, semantic and economic—over which autonomous learners can exercise their control.

In conclusion, autonomous learning does not just deal with developing certain skills; it should be understood that it refers to developing a "mind-set" (Murray, 2004; Reinders, 2010) which requires learners to consider it as an active process of discovery for which learners' responsibility and control is inevitably needed.

2.6.Characteristics of Autonomous Learner

The dictionary defines "autonomous" as "independent and having the power to make your own decisions" (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2011); "formal having the ability to work and make decisions by yourself without any help from anyone else [= independent]" (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2010); "having self-government and independent of others" (Collins English Dictionary, 2011). The literature also describes the features of being an autonomous learner as many and varied in that lots of attributions regarding characteristics of autonomous learner are interrelated or overlapped.

By referring to various and significant research in psychology, Oxford (2003: 83-84) describes autonomous learners having characteristics such as "high motivation; self-efficacy; sense of agency; a desire to seek meaning; positive attitudes; need for achievement; a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation" and in the same study, it is stated that autonomous learners use learning strategies such as "self-evaluation, organization, goal setting, planning, information-seeking, record keeping, self-monitoring, environmental structuring, giving oneself consequences for performance, rehearsing, memorizing, seeking social assistance, and reviewing".

On the other hand, Benson (2001: 48) points out that an autonomous learner can "direct the course of his own learning by making all the significant decisions concerning its management and organization." Additionally, Benson (2001: 50) states that learners should

have control over three interdependent levels of "management, cognitive processes and learning content". Usuki (2007: 10) and posited a table presenting different characteristics of autonomous learners available in the literature:

Table 1: Characteristics of Autonomous Learners

Being capable of taking charge of his own learning and making all the decisions concerning the learning with which he is or wishes to be involved. (Holec, 1981)
The autonomous learners act according to their own mind and must be free not only from direction by others external to themselves but also from their own inner compulsion and rigidities. (Boud, 1988)
Having total responsibility for making and implementing all of the decisions concerned with his own learning. (Dickinson, 1989)
Willingness to take the responsibility for their own learning. Being self-confident learners; autonomous learners believe in their ability to learn and to self-direct or manage their learning. (Wenden, 1991)
Having capacity for being active and independent in the learning process; autonomous learners can identify goals, formulate their own goals; and can change goals to suit their own learning needs and interests. (Dickinson, 1995)
Taking active part in the social processes of learning. (Dam, 1995)
Showing a desire to learn, a robust sense of self, metacognitive capacity, management of change, independence and a capacity to negotiate. (Breen & Mann, 1997)
Autonomous learners show awareness of the aims and processes in learning and are aware of traditional pedagogical measures. (Benson, 1998)
Being able to accept responsibility for their learning, autonomous learners constantly reflect on what they are learning, why they are learning, how they are learning, and with degree of success. (Little, 1999)

Source: Usuki, 2007: 10

In addition to the statement by Breen and Mann (1997) presented in Table 1, Breen and Mann (1997, cited in Benson, 2001: 84) also state that autonomous learners:

- see their relationship to what is to be learned, to how they will learn and to the resources available as one in which they are in charge or control;
- are in an authentic relationship to the language they are learning and have a genuine desire to learn that particular language;
- have a robust sense of self that is unlikely to be undermined by any actual or assumed negative assessments of themselves or their work;
- are able to step back from what they are doing and reflect upon it in order to make decisions about what they next need to do and experience;
- are alert to change and able to change in an adaptable, resourceful and opportunistic way;
- have a capacity to learn that is independent of the educational processes in which they are engaged;
- are able to make use of the environment they find themselves in strategically;
- are able to negotiate between the strategic meeting of their own needs and responding to the needs and desires of other group members.

All these characteristics point out that autonomous learner as one conscious about his learning process, the objectives, and outcomes of learning. There should be a desire behind his attitude towards being an autonomous learner and a trust in self while deciding which steps to take in the process.

Additionally, an autonomous learner should not hesitate to change the ways of reaching educational goals. He should think and act independently by benefiting from the environment strategically and being aware of the significance of negotiation for meeting his needs. Similar to these characteristics, one further step is taken by Thanasoulas (2000: 2) who presents a list regarding the characteristics of autonomous learners:

- have insights into their learning styles and strategies,
- take an active approach to the learning task at hand,
- are willing to take risks, i.e., to communicate in the target language at all costs,
- are good guessers,
- attend to form as well as content, that is, place importance on accuracy as well as appropriacy,
- develop the target language into a separate reference system and are willing to revise and reject hypotheses and rules that do not apply,
- have a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language

Thanasoulas (2000) also adds that factors such as learner styles, learner strategies, motivation, language awareness and openness towards target language are also important to determining these characteristics.

According to Candy's profile of autonomous learners (1991 cited in Benson 2001: 85), autonomous learners are characteristically:

- methodical and disciplined
- logical and analytical
- reflective and self-aware
- able to demonstrate capacity, openness and motivation
- flexible
- interdependent and interpersonally competent
- persistent and responsible
- venturesome and creative
- able to show confidence and have a positive self-concept
- independent and self-sufficient
- developed with regard to information seeking and retrieval skills
- knowledgeable about, and skilled at, learning processes
- able to develop and use criteria for evaluating.

As it is inferred from the list, autonomous learning is engaged in the management part of learning as well as the cognitive and the notion of autonomous learning incorporates various aspects of the learning process from management to cognitive skills. More specifically, according to the descriptions above, an autonomous learner is expected to have a positive attitude towards the concept of self, capacity, motivation, discipline, flexible point of view, persistence, responsibility, creativity, confidence, independence, having special ways to develop his knowledge and also s/he should be able to be conscious about the learning process. In addition to these characteristics, s/he is expected to improve her/his own methods and her/his own rules for evaluation in the process of language learning.

Autonomous learners are assumed to show "some ability to direct the course of his/her learning, which implies being able to make decisions concerning course management, organization and content" and be "reflective about their own learning, taking initiative to explore, find possible solutions and contrast results." (Macia et al., 2010: 2). Presenting similar outlines, by making references from other descriptions of autonomous learner in the literature, Moore (1973: 668) emphasizes that autonomous learners like planning for their learning process and sticking to a method without leaving it before making use of it totally. They enjoy discussing, organizing, questioning and analyzing while dealing with any subject. They can develop their own way of learning autonomously. Also they like to cooperate with others as well as they like to study independently.

Considering all these attributions to autonomous learners, it becomes clear that it is not easy to say that 'ok, this learner is an autonomous learner and the other one is not' since some learners can be autonomous in one area, but not in another (Little, 1991). This obscurity may be because of "affective factors such as mood; psychological factors such as tiredness or hunger; motivational variables such as their attitude towards the subject matter, and environmental factors such as noise, temperature or time of day" (Sinclair, 2000 cited in Balçıkanlı, 2007). By making inferences from the related literature, the current study concludes that autonomous learner feel motivated to learn; have control over learning processes; does not consider the teacher to be only decision-maker in the learning process and feel responsible for all decisions concerning learning process including setting objectives, choosing course content, materials, activities, evaluation.

2.7. Why Learner Autonomy?

There has been a concern about learner autonomy over the last twenty years or so; in Smith's words, it is "in at least some kind of 'mainstream' for a long period of time" (Smith, 2008a: 6). Lots of publications like books, reports, articles, and research papers on the subject clearly indicate its popularity in language teaching and learning for years. From its rise into educational context until today, it has been influential on innovations, reforms in language teaching and learning. Smith (2008a: 9) classifies some key innovations in which the concept of learner autonomy takes a great role:

- New forms of learning situation (innovations in self-access provision, e.g. CRAPEL, Hong Kong);
- New forms of classroom practice (in particular, as developed in Scandinavia);
- New forms of teacher association and conference (e.g. JALT Learner Development SIG);
- New forms of teacher education (e.g. University of Minho, Portugal).

As inferred from the list above, the concept of learner autonomy has contributed to do some reforms or innovations in learning environments and classroom practices. Originally the concept arose out of learners' needs and with the aim of meeting their needs in their learning processes; however, teachers also needed to analyze, modify and renew their education in accordance with the innovations realized in learning situations and practices. Considering all this, a question comes to mind: What makes learner autonomy so popular, so suggestible? Is it really a concept worth pondering and worth the effort to make

learners autonomous? There are some arguments that offer some insight to such questions. Focusing on autonomous learning, Bould (1988 cited in McClure, 2001:143) explains how it can serve in educational contexts:

1. a goal of education, an ideal of individual behaviour to which students or teachers may wish to aspire
2. an approach to educational practice, a way of conducting courses which emphasizes student independence and responsibility for decision-making
3. an integral part of learning of any kind.

As discussed above, learner autonomy is defined as a significant goal of language education (Murphy, 2008) because it is thought to be an ideal behavior expected from learners and also an approach in educational practices which requires independence and responsibility. It is regarded as an integral part of learning environments regardless of its type. Likewise, Chan (2003) maintains that the success of the development of learner autonomy is an essential goal of any learner training programmes. In addition to these considerations, Dafei (2007: 2) presents two arguments in favor of trying to make learners autonomous:

- First, if they are reflectively engaged with their learning, it is likely to be more efficient and effective, because more personal and focused, than otherwise; in particular, what is learned in educational contexts is more likely to serve learners' wider agendas.
- Second, if learners are proactively committed to their learning, the problem of motivation is by definition solved; although they may not always feel entirely positive about all aspects of their learning, autonomous learners have developed the reflective and attitudinal resources to overcome temporary motivational setbacks.

Dafei (2007) believes that if learners are more focused on learner process individually, their learning will be more efficient and fruitful. Motivation, which matters a lot in learning, can be automatically increased with learners' positive attitudes, which are also one of the outcomes of autonomous learning. Thus, learners can cope with their motivational problems via autonomous learning. Dafei (2007) also adds that autonomous learning is effective and learner autonomy development results in better language learning and greater language use proficiency. This idea strengthens the fact that the possibility of being successful in language learning and use can be increased by autonomous learning.

Based on these considerations about the significance of autonomous learning, it becomes clearer what lies behind its popularity and teachers' increasing interest in the

concept. Consequently, the next section will focus on promoting the concept in language learning and teaching.

2.8. Promoting Learner Autonomy

When learner autonomy is in question, teachers and learners' roles should be revisited. "The learner's role and the teacher's role in achieving learner autonomy overlap and cannot realistically be dealt with as separate entities" (Austin, 2006: 2). Especially, teachers are regarded as being pioneering figures in providing autonomous language learning environments for their learners, as it is claimed by Usuki (2001). Pointing out roles of teachers who stand in an indispensible position, Little (2009: 223-224) emphasizes, "development of autonomy […] is generally a matter of deliberate effort and conscious reflection precisely because formal learning itself can happen only on the basis of explicit plans and intentions which is one of the reasons why the teacher plays an essential role". With similar focus, Egel (2009: 2023) states that "learner autonomy means a reshaping of the view that the learner is responsible for learning, [however] teachers do not abdicate their responsibilities of teaching in the language learning process and on the contrary teachers become the primary agents" in promoting learner autonomy in language learning. Thanasoulas (2000) also comments that autonomous learning is not an "unbridled" learning style; therefore, there is a need to have a teacher who can provide necessary resources, materials and ways to meet learners' needs for optimal learning, and who can even abandon all if there is a need to do so. For Harkin et al. (2001: 75), teachers should "exercise control through leadership as distinct from authoritarianism" so as to encourage learners to be autonomous. It is clearly inferred from these considerations that teachers as well as learners seem to have a crucial mission in this phase of promoting learner autonomy by providing necessary conditions for learners.

The question here is "what is needed to enhance learner autonomy in foreign language learners?" There are numerous approaches and considerations regarding this question in the agenda generated by researchers in this field. Karacaoğlu and Çabuk (2002) assert that both learners and teachers should conceive what it refers to exactly and what are its prerequisites. Dogsa (1999) suggests that not only learners but also teachers should be taught to be autonomous from the very beginning of education. The increase in various

recent studies with the title 'teacher autonomy' following previous studies entitled 'learner autonomy' is an obvious manifestation of this trend which bring teachers into an important position in learner autonomy. Smith (2003: 2) also focuses on this view:

> The rise to prominence of learner autonomy as a goal in classroom settings, in turn, has led to needs for retraining and an enhanced awareness both of the importance of the teacher in structuring or 'scaffolding' reflective learning and of the complex, shifting interrelationship between teacher and learner roles in a 'pedagogy for autonomy' [that is to say] if students are to learn to 'take control', the teacher may need to learn to 'let go', even as she provides scaffolding and structure.

The consideration here simply refers to the idea of autonomous actions of teachers in the language learning process. If learners are asked to promote their learner autonomy, teachers are to make them free and provide essential conditions for their learners' autonomous learning. Similarly, Camilleri (1999: 32-33) supports the idea that autonomous learning entails autonomous teaching, that is to say, there is "a better possibility for an autonomous teacher to implement autonomous learning then one who is not" and states that "in a climate of learner autonomy, both the learner and the teacher need space for flexibility, risk-taking, adjustment, experimentation and decision making". Ushioda (1996 cited in Dörnyei, 2001: 109) focusing on changing the teacher's role with the introduction of learner autonomy in education, states that "in the age of learner-centredness in education and of learner autonomy in particular, it may be that the teacher's own agenda needs to change". More broadly, Camilleri (1999) thinks that promoting learner autonomy should also be supported by the entire system, including school authorities and education policies. If promoting learner autonomy is considered to be a goal in language learning, in addition to teachers' effort, other authorities can also make an effort to organize and strengthen necessary conditions to develop autonomous learners. Making this more concrete, Camilleri (1999: 33) presented a pyramidal model:

Figure 3: Comparative Degrees of Autonomy in an Education System
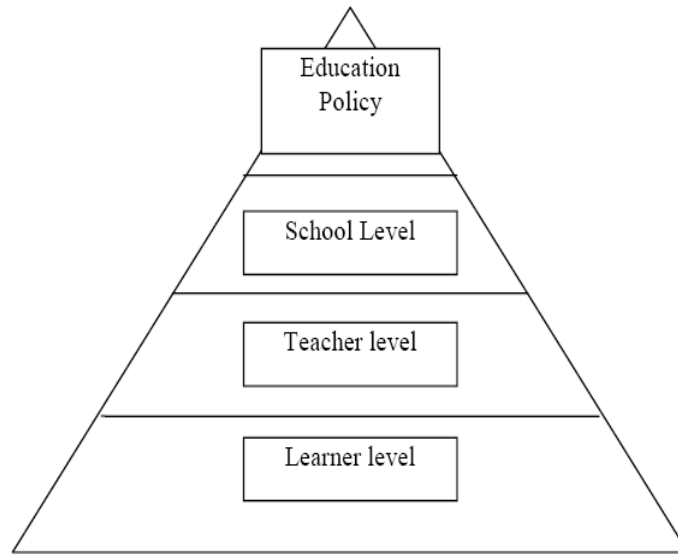
Source: Camilleri, 1999: 33

After providing necessary conditions with the positive attitudes and contribution of authorities and policies in the educational context, teachers may now be more active and successful to enhance learners' autonomy.

A primary step into the world of learner autonomy may be taken by enabling learners to recognize the autonomous nature of learning (Gremmo, 1998). Aydoğdu (2009) asserts that before struggles for promoting learner autonomy, learners should be shown how to learn in order to be autonomous. He adds that if a learner knows how to learn, s/he can be aware of his needs, goals and take responsibility throughout her/his learning processes. In this first step, teachers have responsibility and they play a crucial role in this process of internalizing the concept. Yang (1998: 133) states that "throughout the effort, the instructor's role [is] to facilitate the structure, process, beliefs and strategies necessary for learner autonomy to become a reality. To just raise awareness of autonomy in learners is not enough because learners need opportunities created by teachers to try out (Murphy, 2008). To create opportunities for learners, Chan (2000) proposes that teachers' time, effort, skill, and patience are inevitably necessary for promoting leaner autonomy and views learner-centeredness as a good basis for this. Little (2009) suggests that learner

autonomy development in formal learning requires a conscious effort and reflection since formal learning is performed via plans and established goals. This nature of learning points out teachers' vital role in the process of language learning. Moore (1972: 84) also emphasizes that, "if the instructor has an understanding of the autonomy concept, he withdraws his support gradually, encouraging the learner to assume increasing control of his affairs". Here, he points out teachers' precautionary approach to their learners in step-by-step learner autonomy development. In addition to this scope, Moore (1972: 81) focuses on teachers' role in describing autonomous learners as follows:

> Autonomous learners are likely to have recourse to teachers in all kinds of media, particularly in books, but also in radio and television programs, correspondence courses, and even contiguous teaching situations. The autonomous learner turns to teachers when he needs help in formulating his problems, gathering information, judging his progress, and so on, surrendering temporarily some of his learner autonomy as he says, in effect, 'Direct me in my learning task.'However, if he is truly autonomous learner, he will not give up overall control of the learning processes. He therefore seeks a particular kind of teaching which is, in Maslow's words, 'receptive rather than intrusive,' doesn't 'condition, reinforce, or boss,' but helps him discover his own problems, his own aptitudes, and his own answers.

By focusing on the language learning process, Moore mostly describes an autonomous learner by referring to his relationship with teachers. The teacher's role is regarded as important in describing an autonomous learner because the teacher is considered to be a kind of assistant to the learner in helping him to find ways to determine problems and find solutions. Teachers are also expected to assess autonomous learners' progress in time and investigate alternative methodologies for their benefit so as to help autonomous language learners develop. Dickinson (1987) also suggests that learners can develop learner autonomy with the assistance of teachers who give them a role in decision-making about learning processes. Additionally, Dickinson (1987) who defines self-instruction as situations where learners study without control of teachers directly considers self-instruction as a kind of facilitating factor for developing learner autonomy. Regarding teachers as a facilitator in this process, Gonzales and Louis (2008: 28) argue:

> We, as facilitators can help students become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, their individual learning styles, help them to develop learning strategies, to reflect on their own learning and devise plans for future action. In this way, students may be more likely to develop this facet of autonomy which Little defines as a capacity […]

Gonzales and Louis (2008) describe the role of teacher as a facilitator who makes learners see their strong and weak sides and necessary learning strategies that are crucial to

their progress in language learning. In a way, teachers are also required to be autonomous in promoting learner autonomy by getting involved in their learners' language learner process. Therefore, teachers also should improve on their own autonomy. In his study, Chuk (2004) concludes that learner autonomy and also teacher autonomy can be promoted through exploratory practice which is stated to help all participants achieve productive progress through their developing understanding of language teaching and learning. There is a need for teachers doing exploratory teaching and action research to find more ways to ascertain critical collaborative autonomy as well (Murphey and Jacops, 2000). It was found out that classes which incorporate "project-based collaborative work, teacher and learner integration, and peer teaching" could help learners for the development of autonomous language learning along with promoting self-confidence, motivation and independent learning (Kimura, 2007). Providing a different perspective on this issue, Benson (2001) presents five different approaches to foster autonomy:

> 1. In resource-based approaches, the focus is on independent interaction with learning materials. Learners can act as a guide to direct their learning processes.
> 2. In technology-based approaches, there exists independent interaction with educational technologies such as computers. Learners have freedom and different opportunities to develop learner autonomy with the help of technology.
> 3. Learner-based approaches focuses on learners' behavioral and psychological changes realized throughout the process. Learners are trained about learning strategies and their awareness level increases accordingly.
> 4. Classroom-based approaches signal changes in the relationship between learners and teachers in the classroom and emphasize learner control over different aspects of learning such as the cognitive aspect. Collaborative and supportive educational environment is provided both by teachers and learners.
> 5. In Curriculum-based approaches, the idea of learners' control over the planning and evaluation of learning can be extended to the curriculum level, learners can be involved in decision making processes regarding curriculum. Responsibility and opportunities regarding their own learning processes are given to learners, which is assumed necessary to foster learner autonomy.

By providing different opportunities and optimal environments with students, Benson (2001) tries to depict a more colorful picture for teachers to see different alternatives paving the way for creating an autonomous language-learning environment for students. Nevertheless, it may not be so easy to show the way to develop learner autonomy. Everhard (2006: 2) holds the ideas below:

> While ALL seems a most logical and desirable aim, which most ELT educationalists would endorse, it remains, in many cases, an unfulfilled and unattainable dream. This may be because ALL does not appear to be achievable by practising any one teaching

methodology, nor does ALL seem to be facilitated by any one principle or practice, but, on the contrary, seems to involve taking into account a whole range of issues.

Everhard (2006) emphasizes that it is not possible to state one way to have an autonomous learner; rather it is like a recipe, and a mix of issues regarding teaching and learning should be taken into consideration to have an autonomous learner. Thus the challenge behind learner autonomy is maybe due to the necessity of holding a holistic view involving cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social dimensions of language learning (Little, 2003).

The relationship between learner autonomy and motivation presents a different way to promote learner autonomy. Dörnyei (2001: 108) encourages promoting learner autonomy in order to increase student motivation. "Learner autonomy is a goal seen as linked to motivation" (Brown, 2001; Dörnyei, 2001; Garcia and Pintrich, 1996 as cited in Wachob, 2006: 95). It means the more teachers motivate their learners, the more autonomous learners they have in the classrooms. Especially, intrinsic motivation is regarded as significant to develop autonomous learners (Sanacore, 2008). In turn, autonomy is needed to sustain intrinsic motivation (Niemiec and Ryan, 2009). Due to this interrelation between motivation and learner autonomy development, Dörnyei (2001) suggests that:

> Teachers should:
> ▪ allow learners real choices about as many aspects of the learning process as possible.
> ▪ hand over as much as they can of the various leadership/ teaching roles and functions to the learners.
> ▪ adopt the role of a facilitator.

Focusing on teachers' role and responsibility about developing autonomy, Dörnyei (2001) aims to encourage learners to take control over their own learning and he believes that these approaches enable learners to feel more motivated and learn effectively and thus contribute to developing autonomous learners. Furthermore, teachers who want to train their learners to behave autonomously should try to teach study skills and learning strategies to make their learners engage in pedagogical choices about their learning processes and motivate them to promote their learner autonomy (Spratt et al., 2002). Little (2009) characterizes autonomous language learning classrooms as language learning communities with learners working in groups collaboratively, recording their own learning

process individually by using journals or logbooks and doing regular evaluations. He elaborates on this issue by sharing his ideas regarding teachers' roles in promoting learner autonomy:

> First, there's the principle of learner involvement – [teachers] have to involve learners fully in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning. Then there's the principle of learner reflection – we must help learners to reflect continuously on the process and content of their learning and to engage in regular self-assessment. And thirdly, there's the principle of target language use – [teachers] must ensure that the target language is the medium as well as the goal of learning, including its reflective component. (Little, 2009: 226)

Here, Little (2009) insists on teachers who encourage learner involvement, learner reflection and target language use. These factors play an important role in developing and maintaining autonomous language learning. With a similar emphasis, Reinders (2010) takes dynamics such as reflection, interaction and motivation into the central position in explaining the nature of autonomous learning.

Figure 4: Cyclical nature of the autonomous learning process

Source: Reinders, 2010: 51

Figure 4 implies that autonomous learning develops gradually and is a lengthy process which requires learners to pass all the phases successfully by being aware of needs, setting goals, planning learning processes, finding resources and strategies to be used, monitoring progress and self-assessment. In implementation of this framework presented above depends on perseverance of learners and teachers as well. This figure also points out the significance of motivation, reflection and interaction needed in developing learner autonomy. Adopting such a perspective about the value of interaction, Dang (2010: 4) even relates the highest level of learner autonomy to "dialogic negotiations and interactions with the immediate situation". This perspective contributes to the interactional aspect of autonomous learning process in a way.

Naizhao and Yanling (n.d.: 9) also maintain that teachers should direct learners to study in collaboration, to be interdependent; to keep their experiences in learning process via introspective or self-search ways and to raise their awareness by pondering over the ways to become an autonomous learner. They believe that "the fewer students depend on their teacher the more autonomous they will become". According to their view, classroom atmosphere and relationships between students and teachers are also of importance in promoting learner autonomy in that students can feel secure, comfortable and confident; and they can exchange their ideas and perceptions with their teachers in face to face conversations. Ganza (2008) considers that development of learner autonomy depends on the relationship between learner and teacher. Therefore, this relationship is regarded as a milestone in promoting learner autonomy. Apart from developing an appropriate climate between teachers and learners, Ganza (2008: 66) attaches importance to other influential dynamics in developing this relationship and promoting autonomy:

> Apart from developing a capacity for restraint, the learner must develop a capacity for persistence in using resources and the teacher as a resource, and the teacher must develop a capacity for communicating to the learner that he or she is concerned for the learner's educative well-being during the learning process: that he or she has the learner "in mind". In this way, the teacher "holds" the context together, reassuring the learner who is struggling with the anxieties associated with initiating and progressing his or her own work. The teacher also has to develop the capacity to cope with his or her own anxieties associated with facilitating the learning process while fostering the learner's autonomy, such as worry about when or not, and, if so, how, to offer help to the learner should the learner not seek the teacher's influence.

Likewise, Egel (2009) confirms that learner autonomy can be promoted through the support of the teachers and collaboration of the learners. Focusing on potential influence of interdependency on promoting learner autonomy, Murphey and Jacops (2000) presented five respective stages in the path toward autonomy:

1. Socialization: learners stick to a group or class, getting to know other group members, and feeling comfortable among their peers.
2. Dawning metacognition: learners monitor their own learning process.
3. Initiating choice: learners start to make decisions about their learning.
4. Expanding autonomy: learners join in self-assessment and provide feedback to their teacher about ideas and feelings regarding the most useful learning methods for them.
5. Critical collaborative autonomy: learners internalize the significance of the idea that "two heads are better than one".

Being aware of learners' profile as a social individual and a language learner at the same time is considered to be as a first must for creating an autonomous language learning environment. In such a kind of progressive harmony, learners can develop a capacity to do some actions on their own in time like controlling, making some decisions regarding their process and self-assessment. By the end of this process, learners are already aware of the invaluable contribution of collaboration and other dynamics important to being a social learner. However, teachers may not necessarily take a role in creating such socialized individuals during the process of promoting learner autonomy. McDonough (2005: 162) concludes that "personal development rather than instructed expertise" is needed to develop learner autonomy. McDonough (2005) relates learner autonomy to the learners' own effort and almost excludes teachers' intervention. He believes that learner autonomy can be developed by learners' effort rather than that of teachers'. In addition to these assumptions for promoting learner autonomy, it is also important to have an idea about learners' background or autobiographical knowledge which reveals their experiences with language learning and significant events in their language career. If a teacher has specific understanding of a particular student, it is easier to recognize that student's needs, beliefs and attitudes towards language learning. Depending on this information, teachers can determine appropriate intervention to promote autonomy (Carter, 2001). In this respect, Harkin et al. (2001) regard learner autonomy as one of the constructs of effective learning and teaching. In learner autonomy dimensions of effective learning and teaching processes, Harkin et al. (2001: 78) suppose that teachers:

- encourage students to play an active role in learning by, for example, consulting them about activities, setting work that challenges them to find out for themselves and to solve real-life problems
- encourage student-student as well as teacher-student interaction
- use self and peer assessment to help learners understand what they know and still need to learn.

On the other hand, teachers' autonomy support which "connotes identifying, nurturing, and building students' inner motivational resources" is stated as helping to promote autonomous learning among learners (Reeve and Jang, 2006: 216). Some different methods of teachers giving autonomy support follow:

> Asking students what they want (e.g., asking for their input into the lesson plan) is an autonomy-supportive behavior because the teacher seeks to identify students' psychological needs and integrate them into the day's lesson. Giving students time to work on a problem in their own way is an autonomy-supportive behavior because the teacher allows students' interests and preferences to guide their classroom activity. Likewise, providing a rationale to explain why a rule exists or why an apparently uninteresting activity is truly worth students' attention is an autonomy-supportive behavior because it allows students' sense of valuing to guide their classroom activity. (Reeve and Jang, 2006: 210)

With such kind of attitudes, teachers can help, encourage and support learners' autonomous learning in the course of language learning. Regarding this perception, Usuki (2001) argues that teachers should try to understand students' points of view and should trust in their potential because students care for their teachers' support and understanding. Deci and Ryan (1987) also emphasize the significant contribution of autonomy support given by teachers during the learning process. They argue that autonomy support provides learners with "more intrinsic motivation, greater interest, less pressure and tension, more creativity, more cognitive flexibility, better conceptual learning, a more positive emotional tone, higher self-esteem, more trust, greater persistence of behavior change, and better physical and psychological health". In the same way, according to Niemiec and Ryan (2009), teachers can make use of strategies like giving choice of learning activities, minimizing any evaluative pressures and giving value to learners' ideas, preferences about particular learning activities in order to support and enhance learner autonomy in the learning environment. Moreover, since learner autonomy is identified as a socially-bound capacity, other variables associated with the context in which learner autonomy development is aimed should be taken into consideration (Dang, 2010). Keeping this in mind, teachers should provide learners with optimal language learning environments leaving behind traditional perspectives and teaching routines. It is assumed that in order to

create optimal language learning environment for autonomous learning, teachers can make use of different materials and methodologies. Especially, teachers can encourage learners to keep self-reports, journals, dairies, logbooks, evaluation sheets, portfolios regarding their progress and teachers can use these to generate discussions in the classroom (Balçıkanlı, 2006; Baylan, 2007). These materials contribute to learners' reflection, motivation and interaction which are considered to be key elements in autonomous learning behaviors.

Last but not least, even if there may be no evident specific practices done by teachers so as to promote autonomous learning in and out of classrooms, at least teachers' supportive attitudes are inevitably needed by learners so that they can develop and sustain their learner autonomy in the language learning processes. Teachers and other authorities in language education should be aware of their significant role in developing learner autonomy, which is generally regarded as an ultimate goal in the language education.

2.9.Modes of Autonomous Learning

Theories and practices through time indicate that it is possible to practice and improve autonomous learning in and out of classrooms. Learning a language was initially assumed to occur in a classroom atmosphere; later, the rise of self-access centers was regarded as an alternative type of learning to language education in the classroom. In time, perceptions about self-access centers altered. In the 1990s, the self-access centers became "a standard feature of institutionalized language learning" all over the world; however, other alternatives to classroom education have emerged in time (Benson, 2006: 26). Since then, self-access centers have been considered to be an educational environment in which individual learners can promote autonomous learning.

With the technological advents, more attention was given to computers in language education. Computer assisted language learning (CALL) played an important role in developing learner autonomy by posing a positive effect on the development of learner independence (Blin, 2004). CALL was not just a part of institutionalized learning but a big part of non-institutionalized language learning as well. CALL presented more opportunities to the learners to become autonomous learners. With CALL and the internet,

new trends such as "distance learning, online learning, cyber schools, asynchronous learning net works" have begun to contribute to developing educational environments which enhance learners' language learning in an autonomous way (Benson, 2006: 26). Additionally, one of the trends in language education which is considered to be relevant to autonomous learning beyond the classroom is study abroad programmes which require learners to learn foreign language by communicating with native speakers independently and provide learners with a rich range of language learning opportunities outside of class (Pearson, 2004). Another trend is tandem learning in which a couple of learners are learning from each other through mutual help (Benson, 2006). Apart from these alternatives mentioned above, it is thought that the best way to develop a sense of learner autonomy in students is through a unity of classroom and out-of-classroom activities. Reinders (2010: 40) supports this idea by stating that " The development of learner autonomy,[…], has been one way in which teachers' have tried to make links with learners at a more individualized level, and to connect classroom learning with out-of-class language use". That means, in addition to in-class activities or practices contributing to learner autonomy development, out-of-class practices and experiences should be realized in a way to help learners to take necessary steps.

With this in mind, it may be possible to conclude, the practice or development of learner autonomy can be managed both inside and outside of the traditional language classrooms depending on teachers' effort to increase learners' awareness level and capacity, and to keep in touch with them by executing learning activities regularly throughout the language learning process.

2.10. Learner Autonomy and Culture

The role of culture in language learning is frequently discussed in literature and there is a common view about the fact that culture is an inevitable part of language and correspondingly, language learning. Autonomy and its relation to culture is also one of the recent hot debate topics since the concept of autonomy "encapsulates individual and social constructs" (Blin, 2004: 378). Palfreyman (2003: 5) points out that "like autonomy, 'culture' is a multifaceted and much-debated concept". Therefore, the applicability of

learner autonomy concepts in language learning and teaching in different cultural contexts has been one of the issues discussed in literature.

The significance of learner autonomy is already obvious in theory; however, it is equally important to develop and foster learner autonomy in practice as well. Literature implies that implications and applications of theory might differ from when they come into practice. It is an inevitable fact that different cultural and educational environments might influence the practices or realization of learner autonomy (Benson, 2001; Littlewood, 1999). Pennycook (1997 cited in Oxford, 2003: 84) notes that learner autonomy may not be a "universal good", which means it might be a specific theory for a specific culture or context. Oxford (2003) believes that it is obvious from differences in different cultures' belief systems that learner autonomy may differ from one culture to another one. On the other hand, Benson (2001: 58) argues that "autonomy in learning and life may well be a universal aspiration. […] if the goal of autonomy and the practices associated with it are too rigidly defined, cultural insensitivity may be the consequence". It can be inferred from his statement that it may be possible to adapt to other cultures so long as the theory itself is not framed in a rigid way and there is a need for flexibility. Ho and Crookall (1995 cited in Yıldırım, 2008: 67) suggests that:

> While personal autonomy appears to be a universally desirable and beneficial objective, it is important to remember that learner autonomy is exercised within the context of specific cultures. Therefore, in choosing the skills and kinds of knowledge to develop and selecting the procedures or methods that are to be used to help learners develop skills for autonomy, the culturally-constructed nature of the classroom setting needs to be taken into account.

As the researchers point out above, it is necessary to be aware of prerequisites of different contexts in terms of almost everything regarding learning and teaching process such as strategies, procedures, methods used during the process of language learning and also roles of teachers and learners before any attempt for actual practices of autonomous learning. In this respect, it would be a good idea to have a look at learners' and teachers' perceptions and readiness level for learner autonomy before trying to impose or expect some procedures for succeeding in fostering learner autonomy.

Much has been said about the cultural appropriateness of learner autonomy in language learning. Initial arguments about autonomy and culture were raised by Riley

(1988 cited in Benson 2001: 55) when learner autonomy was mostly confined to Europe and doubts about cultural appropriateness were refreshed themselves by attempts to do studies on learner autonomy in an Asian context. Taking a different look at the concept, Littlewood (1999) proposed two forms of autonomy as "proactive autonomy" and "reactive autonomy". While learners set up their own directions in the process of learning in the former, they organize their resources autonomously so as to reach their goals once a direction is initiated in the latter. Littlewood (1999) attributes the first, proactive autonomy, to learners in the West. It means there was a possibility for learners in the West to have a choice to do what they wanted in a learning process while it is not possible for learners in the rest of the world. Furthermore, they need to be shown a direction so that they can reach their goals. The origins of the concept come out of western cultures, yet it may not be true to say that the concept is a totally a Western one. Murase (2007: 6) suggests that "the important thing is that autonomy is not entirely a Western concept and that anyone has some degree of autonomy and can develop greater autonomy; [however], the culture of the context should not be neglected". That is to say, by taking outcomes of different cultures into consideration, it can be possible to develop autonomy in students to a great extent, even if they are not born to a Western culture. In contrast to the ideas by Kellner (2002) who regards attempts to promote learner autonomy as cultural neutralization and as an example of globalization, Schmenk (2005) thinks that it is possible to improve or reframe learner autonomy concepts rather than just trying to promote it in non-Western cultural contexts by giving more importance to its origin coming from Western culture and accepting its appropriateness into different cultural concepts. Furthermore, Schmenk (2005) suggests that intercultural negotiations on potential conceptualizations and implications in different cultural environments are needed to "glocalization" of learner autonomy, instead of globalizing it. Smith (2008b) concludes that learner autonomy can be regarded as an educational goal which can be valid cross-culturally. Despite some researchers misrepresenting learner autonomy as a western cultural construct inappropriate for learners from other cultures, a considerable amount of research in the field indicates that the development of learner autonomy may be possible in various cultures and, therefore, can be a "universally compatible notion" (Schmenk, 2005: 113). However, it may require different forms of methodology and pedagogy depending on the contexts.

In brief, there are some controversial ideas about the practicality of learner autonomy concepts in different educational contexts. While some advocate that learner autonomy is just special to the western cultural educational environment, some think that it is possible to develop learner autonomy in different countries and cultures all over the world even if different approaches or conditions can be necessary in different cultures.

2.11. Learner Autonomy and Success

There are various reasons behind learners' success. Different theories point out different reasons while trying to find why some learners are more successful compared to others. Phenomenologists think that learners' self concepts are crucial to their success; metacognitive theorists focus on self-regulation; constructivists find supportive environments effective for being successful; finally, attributional theorists say effort and ability play a vital role (Çubukçu, 2009). In literature, it has increasingly been affirmed that there is an intimate relationship between learner autonomy and effective language learning and use. Therefore, it is possible to say that learner autonomy obviously can contribute to success in language learning. Little (2004: 1) advocates that "an autonomous learner is a maximally successful learner" while Fazey and Fazey (2001: 345) confirm that "Autonomy in learning is considered to be a valuable asset for achievement and an outcome of higher education". Similarly, Balçıkanlı (2008: 12) believes that "learner autonomy is a prerequisite for effective learning in that it enables learners to develop a sense of responsibility, awareness and self-reflection where they can manage to study on their own more efficiently". Above all, Railton and Watson (2005) indicate a direct link between the development of learner autonomy and achievement levels in higher education.

The saying, "you can bring the horse to water but you cannot make him drink" is incredibly apt here. In language education, teachers or other resources can provide all the necessary input for learners but it is up to learners to internalize, learn and parlay these tools into educational success. Learners' responsibility and active contribution to the process can bring success. Scharle and Szabo (2000: 4) also argue that "success in learning very much depends on learners having a responsible attitude. Some degree of autonomy is also essential to successful language learning. No matter how much students learn through lessons, there is always plenty more they will need to learn by practice, on their own." All

these facts refer to the concept of autonomy, ultimately. Referring to the same result, Ecclestone (2002: 136) discovered in his study that "students' progression, motivation and autonomy [are] bound up with forming new identities as successful learners". Little (1994 cited in Benson 2001: 40) confirms the idea by proposing that "all genuinely successful learning is in the end autonomous". In her research, Wongphothisarn (2010) finds out that successful students have characteristics of autonomous learners. Accordingly, Stern (1975 cited in Kayaoğlu, 1997: 42) presents nine characteristics describing good language learner as follows:

> Good language learner:
> 1. differs in his/her approach, study habits and preference. He is also willing to learn from other people's experience and to modify his/her approach accordingly[.]
> 2. is flexible in his/her ability to adapt to any learning condition so as to make his/her learning more efficient [.]
> 3. brings his/her own conscious deliberation to the task [.]
> 4. takes responsibility for his/her own learning by selecting appropriate language learning activities and adapting to his/her own situation.
> 5. has an outgoing attitude toward the new language, and often tolerates linguistics and non-linguistics frustration facing up the difficulties and complexities of the new language [.]
> 6. pays attention to both meaning and code in turn.
> 7. creates hypothesis about rules, relationship and organization to fit the separate element into whole within the system. He constantly relates new items to previously learned items [.]
> 8. realizing that formal practice at an only conscious level is not adequate to transfer it to functional use, [s/he] tends to go beyond his/her level of formal competence in order to have exposure to language use in genuine and authentic communication.
> 9. being self-critical, cautious and sensitive, [s/he] monitors his/her language use and learns from it. He also strives to think in a foreign language by creating imaginary conversation, forming dialogue ans speeches or simply recalling what he has heard on TV, radio or read in the target language.

Successful language learners' capabilities like having special study habits or preferences; willingness for learning; ability to adapt new learning environments and to create own rules, relationships; having conscious approach towards activities; transferring previous knowledge to practice, monitoring own progress, being critical of oneself, taking responsibility for learning process can all refer to the qualities of the autonomous learner. Yen and Liu (2009) also posit that students with a higher level of learner autonomy are more likely to complete courses successfully.

Krouse and Krouse (1981) present a list of causes concerning underachievement like "skill deficit", "personality dysfunction (impulsiveness, fear of failure, high need for approval)", "deficiencies in self-control" (cited in Çubukçu, 2009: 55). These deficiencies

in learner process are also related to the concept of learner autonomy. This fact implies that if these skills are improved and needs are met, students' learner autonomy level will probably increase and so will their achievement level. Scharle and Szabo (2000: 5) also claim that "Personality traits, preferred learning styles, and cultural attitudes set limits on the development of autonomy". Therefore, teachers should be aware of learners' personality characteristics, cultural attitudes and learning styles before they attempt to develop their learner autonomy. If teachers are aware of these features, they can be more effective and find more suitable ways for learners so as to enhance their learner autonomy. To do this, there are some other methods of which teachers should be conscious as Ryan (cited in Littlewood, 1999: 75) states in the following:

1. concrete support through provision of help and resources;
2. personal concern and involvement from significant others;
3. opportunities for making choices;
4. freedom from a self of being controlled by external agents.

Listed above, these factors can contribute to creating the 'ideal facilitating environment' for autonomy development. Inferred from this list, teachers should assist learners in terms of resources, be supportive and personally interested in them by giving chances to utter their own choices and by letting them to be free of control from other individuals in the process of learning and teaching. If these matters are seriously taken into consideration, teachers can pave the way toward having autonomous and successful learners. In his study, Dafei (2007) found out that there are significant differences among the students' learner autonomy when their English proficiency is significantly different and the students' English proficiency is significantly and positively related to their learner autonomy. Dafei (2007: 15) concludes that the more autonomous a learner becomes, the more likely he/she achieves high language proficiency. Risenberg and Zimmerman (1992 cited in Dafei, 2007: 8) conclude that "a high degree of learner autonomy among high-achieving students would lead to high scores and the learner autonomy with low degrees of learner autonomy was a likely to risk achieving the low scores if learner autonomy could augment the academic scores".

On the other hand, Derrick and Carr (2003: 8) claim that "it is not about intelligence but rather the relative capacity to become independent learners that hold the key to success". These theoretical arguments behind the concept of learner autonomy

convince one that learners who are able to learn independently may gain greater proficiency in language (Dörnyei, 2001: 103). Focusing on the same aspect, Fan (2003 cited in Thu, 2009: 2) reasoned:

> the notion of independent successful learners is closely linked to the increasing importance now attached to the learner-centered approach to language teaching, which is grounded in the assumption that language learners who have greater control of their learning will become more successful than those who do not.

Fan (2003) argues that the learner-centered approach where one leaves control to language learners during the language learning process can lead to more success (2003 cited in Thu, 2009: 2). Especially, for distance learning a higher degree of learner autonomy is required for being successful. Bouchard (2009: 93) reports that

> distance education shows one of the highest drop-out rates among all educational environments, led to the supposition that distance learning requires some higher degree of learner autonomy than traditional classroom instruction. Indeed, lack of autonomy was considered the main reason why students failed or discontinued their programs.

Different from traditional classrooms, students are expected to be more autonomous in distance education; therefore, lack of autonomy may result in failure. Like in other modes of learning, autonomous learner behavior is necessary to reach success.

Motivation also plays an important role in autonomous learning and success. Motivation and autonomy are considered to be interrelated, in that, as learners' motivation increases, they gain autonomy in their learning as well. Focusing on this relationship, Ming (1998 cited in Ebata 2010: 8) states that "motivation is central to student achievement. Students who are motivated to learn about a particular topic perform better than their less motivated peers". Wachob (2006: 97) asserts that students need to develop learner autonomy in order to succeed in the course, in later classes and in future jobs. In a more detailed way, Ebata (2010: 4) explains that "creating an environment in which learners develop autonomously is of great importance in order to raise students' motivation and confidence levels, since motivated and confident learners can lead themselves to become successful learners not only inside but also outside of the classroom." In a longitudinal study carried out by White (1999), learners associate success mostly with motivation and self-confidence by giving these the highest rankings among other factors such as amount of studying, persistence, campus course etc.

Based on these invaluable contributions from research in this field, it is important that language teachers should transfer learner autonomy from theory to practice into their actual teaching environments by involving in and out-of classroom practices of learners. Thus, they can help language learners in a way to become much more successful.

2.12. Measuring Learner Autonomy

Although there are many studies conducted for defining and promoting learner autonomy in educational contexts. There is always a need to know how to measure learner autonomy for further developments of both theory and practices of learner autonomy. Macaskill and Taylor (2010) also point out that there is a bulk of competing definitions in the literature and these studies on learner autonomy do little to define it clearly. Furthermore, they argue that there is still a lack of sound measurement of autonomous learning. Benson (2001: 51) emphasizes that "for the purposes of research and the evaluation of practice, it would indeed be convenient if we had a reliable method of measuring degrees of autonomy".

Hitherto, there have been some instruments used to measure learner autonomy in general education and in language education in literature. For example, Guglielmino (1978) developed one regarding self-directed learning; Horwitz (1987) designed an inventory about learner beliefs in language learning; Oxford (1990) used a language learning strategy inventory; Cotterall (1995) also developed a means for assessing learners' readiness for autonomy (cited in Murase, 2007). These are some examples of instruments which have been used in the field of language learner autonomy; however, they do not refer to the concept itself extensively. Murase (2007) complains that they do not cover all the aspects of autonomy; instead they just refer to some parts of it. This arises out of the fact that learner autonomy is not a single easily described concept (Little, 1991) and is instead a multidimensional construct (Benson, 2001). Benson (2001: 54) believes that "the measurement of autonomy is problematic" and adds that this "does not necessarily mean that we should not attempt to measure it". To help learners to become more autonomous or be aware of needs, weaknesses and strengths, there is a need for the concept, potential behaviors and pitfalls to be grounded clearly. Here, Benson (2001: 58) claims that:

it is important that researchers and practitioners are aware of the specific behavioral changes aimed at fostering of autonomy and the specific contexts of learning in which they are applied. Again, this underlines the importance of an adequate description of the potential behavioral components of autonomous learning.

As Benson (2001) highlights, since there might be specific changes in behaviors or distinctive manifestations of learner autonomy depending on the context in which they are exercised, it is significant to present an adequate description and clear identification of behaviors related to learner autonomy so that teachers or researchers can detect learners' actual autonomous behaviors and exercises. This knowledge is necessary for finding sound ways which can be applicable to different contexts in order to promote learner autonomy and reach educational goals. Holec (2008: 4) points out that this unstable nature of learner autonomy depends primarily on different contexts or cultural environments:

> There is no one single answer to the question of the relationship between learning competence and self-directed learning, no single answer to the status to be 'officially' given to self-evaluation, no single set of language learning objectives to be achieved, no single 'best' pedagogical procedure, etc. At all levels of investigation into the autonomy approach care will have to be taken to avoid looking for monolithic and stable answers.

Here, as Holec (2008) suggests, it would be oversimplification and false to attempt to use one specific or best way to measure learner autonomy since there is no standard education system, procedure, or style of teacher or learner. Therefore, conceptual frameworks for the learner autonomy theory should be established properly. For instance, it is essential to assess the effectiveness of various approaches to improve both researching and teaching, Murase (2007) took reconceptualization and operationalization of learner autonomy as a starting point before she attempted to develop a quantitative measure of learner autonomy in the context of learning English as a foreign language at Japanese Universities. Macaskill and Taylor (2010: 357) designed a measure and presented an operational definition that was implicit in the measure suggesting:

> Autonomous learners take responsibility for their learning, are motivated to learn, gain enjoyment from their learning, are open-minded, manage their time well, plan effectively, meet deadlines, are happy to work on their own, display perseverance when encountering difficulties and are low in procrastination when it comes to their work.

About the unstable nature of learner autonomy, Macaskill and Taylor (2010) put forwarded that they just intended to measure learners' "current" state of autonomous learning; it was likely to see changes in scores. Due to this fact, they did not see any reason

to test or retest the reliability of the measure they used. In brief, difficulties in the measurement or assessment of learner autonomy can be attributed to the construction or nature of learner autonomy (Benson 2001; Murase, 2007).

On the other hand, autonomy is considered to be measured in degrees (Nunnan, 1997; Scharle and Szabo, 2000). Based on this consideration, Nunan (1997) proposes five levels to move towards autonomy:

1. Awareness: Learners are made aware of pedagogical goals, contents and strategies;
2. Involvement: learners are actively involved in the learning;
3. Intervention: learners are encouraged to modify and adapt their goals, learning styles and strategies;
4. Creation: learners set up their own goals and plans for self-directed learning;
5. Transcendence: learners move beyond classroom setting for independent learning.

(cited in Naizhao and Yanling, n.d.: 8)

It can be inferred from this list that there can be different stages of language learners who are developing learner autonomy. This refers to the fact that learner autonomy is a kind of "developmental process" (Benson, 2001: 53). With regard to this aspect of learner autonomy, O'Leary (2007: 6) prefers "portfolio-based assessment" because in his words, "the portfolio-based assessment becomes a vehicle for learner development that is an assessment *for* autonomy as opposed to a measuring tool which would be an assessment *of* autonomy". She argues that by doing such kind of assessment, it is possible both to focus on process and outcome of learning and to foster development of autonomy. Benson (2001) confirms that assessing abilities by controlling different aspects of learning in their natural educational environment and by observing and measuring their performance is maybe the best way, despite some of the existing problems. Also, he adds that a snapshot performance of learners' at a given moment may result in misunderstandings or a lack of true knowledge about learners' abilities.

2.13. Learner Autonomy and Turkish Context

As it is aforementioned, the Council of Europe first introduced the concept of learner autonomy into the world of language teaching and learning. Since then, there has been an increasing attention to learner autonomy, its benefits and ways to promote it in different educational contexts. In recent years, The Turkish Ministry of Education has been

trying to adopt the principles regarding learner autonomy proposed by the Council of Europe in ELT programs at all levels throughout Turkey (Sert, 2007). Learner autonomy is generally associated with Western culture and because of cultural differences some predicted that it would be problematic or that there would be an inadequate implementation of learner autonomy in the East. Turkey is considered to be a cultural bridge between the West and East. Also as a candidate for entry into the European Union, Turkey has been organizing plans and programmes aiming to enhance foreign language education and learner autonomy in accordance with the practices carried out in Western countries. It is stated that the Ministry of Turkish National Education takes theories and practices which are required by the Council of Europe into consideration while planning the future of education, especially in terms of language education since 1950s (Demirel, 2005). The new policy released in 1997 introduced the communicative approach into the system and teacher-centered was gradually replaced by student-centered language education (Kirkgöz, 2009). Accordingly, teachers have been given the roles as guide and facilitator of learning processes while students were expected to get involved in the learning processes actively. These attempts to form a new policy can be regarded as steps toward the introduction of autonomous learning.

In this integration process with the European Union, language education in Turkey has been exposed to some changes from the Council of Europe's introduction of language portfolio of Turkey in 2000 (Demirel, 2005). One of the main goals of this portfolio project is to have individual learners who have responsibility; have a capacity to do self-assessment, can decide about all the necessary staff regarding language learning processes, can learn how to learn and be autonomous learners. Little (2009) argues that European Language Portfolio (ELP) help creating learner autonomy in three different ways in principle. These three ways offered by Little (2009: 226) are as follows:

- First, when the checklists reflect the demands of the official curriculum they provide learners and their teachers with an inventory of learning tasks that they can use to plan, monitor and evaluate learning over a school year or a term or a month or (sometimes) just a week.
- Secondly, the language biography is explicitly designed to associate goal setting and self-assessment with reflection on learning styles, learning and communication strategies, and the cultural dimension of L2 learning and use.
- And thirdly, when the ELP is presented partly in the learner's target language, it can help to promote the use of the target language as medium of learning and reflection.

According to requirements reported among the goals of the language portfolio project, individuals should be responsible and autonomous not only in class but also in their life. Therefore, the feasibility of adopting the principles presented by the Council of Europe for ELT programs in Turkey is still in question although some pilot studies have been conducted. Among them, Koyuncu (2006: 64) investigated the impact of ELP on learner autonomy and found that it:

- was very effective in showing students what they can do in learning
- facilitated students in assessing their language skills
- helped students a lot in understanding learning aims
- helped students to see their learning process
- facilitated students in seeing their language capabilities
- motivated students to participate in their learning process
- made students feel responsible for their own learning
- gave students a chance to compare their assessment with teachers

As it is inferred from the list, ELP is affecting learners' language learning process and also autonomy positively, especially in creating awareness of the process and aims of learning. Through its utilization, learners become more responsible for their learning process. All these improvements realized in the learners refer to the development of learner autonomy. This is what is expected from the introduction of ELP in Turkey.

All in all, it can be suggested that the integration process, its conditions and particularly the introduction of the Language Portfolio of Turkey by the Council of Europe lead educators to adopt practices in the field of language education in Turkey by taking the necessity of autonomous learning seriously.

2.14. Relevant Studies Abroad and in Turkey

2.14.1. Recent Studies Abroad

Sanprasert (2010) investigated the ways to enhance learner autonomy with a blended learning situation by reconciling a course management system with a traditional face-to-face classroom. She studied two groups—one group was as an experimental group and the other was a control—of students attending university in Thailand. Generally, Thai students were characterized as obedient and not critical about their teachers' authority in the classroom. Hence, the idea of promoting learner autonomy among Thai students

requires much more effort. To see the impact of a course management system on enhancing learner autonomy of Thai students, the researcher made use of mixed methods combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The data collected consisted of students' journals and an adopted version of Cotterall's questionnaire (1995). The findings revealed that, while a traditional language classroom did not allow room for promoting learner autonomy, the integration of a course management system changed students' perceptions and encouraged them to take their learning period under control. They also learned to study collaboratively and independently but with the direction of their teachers, that is, interdependently.

Yen and Liu (2009) employed a quantitative research design to explore predictive relations of course success and final grades to the learner autonomy, which was described as intentional behavior in learning activities. The researchers recruited the participants from among students who attended online courses at a community college in Maryland. The data were collected via an online survey entitled "Learner Autonomy Profile." The study showed that learner autonomy was a valid predictor of course success and final grades in community college online courses. It also suggested that advising and counseling would be helpful for promoting learner autonomy and correspondingly contribute to students' achievement in terms of course success and final grades.

Lowe (2009) did a correlational study to find out the relationship between learner autonomy and academic performance. His study focused on adult learners who attended a university in Washington, D. C. The sample consisted of 125 students. In order to learn students' learner autonomy level, he used an online learner autonomy profile (LAP) as a data collection instrument and he also asked their cumulative grade point average (GPA) to determine their academic performance. The LAP instrument had 22 components focusing on four constructs as follows: desire, resourcefulness, initiative and persistence. In analysis of data, learners' autonomy level was treated as a dependent variable and students' cumulative GPA as an independent variable. The results of the study indicated that there was a positive, significant relationship between learner autonomy and academic performance as measured by learners' GPA.

Figura and Jarvis (2007) conducted a study which aimed to find out to what extent language students used learner strategies and to what extent their learner autonomy was fostered while working with computer-based materials, in self-study environments and in self-access centers. The researcher worked on a sample of 26 students who came from different nationalities and registered for an EAP (English for academic purposes) course at a British University. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research design. The instruments consisted of questionnaires, observations and interviews. The participating students in the study showed a good understanding and awareness of metacognitive and cognitive skills. Additionally, they had a reasonable level of autonomy and used appropriate cognitive strategies.

Gardner (2007) presented a report regarding a small-scale study about students' perceptions of autonomous learning in an English language class into which the self-access learning component was integrated. It was expected that as they were engaged with self-access learning during the ten-week courses, students would change their perceptions and adopt more sophisticated perceptions that could serve as a signal for raising students' awareness about learner autonomy. The data collected with a series of open-ended questionnaires administered before, during and after the students' engagement with self-access learning. In contrast with expected results, the study found no clear evidence for students' development of learner autonomy. The reason behind this result was not explained by the collected data in hand during the study; however, the students held a positive attitude towards self-access learning throughout the study.

Kimura (2007) conducted an empirical study with the aim of determining effectiveness of promoting learner autonomy at universities in Japan. It is stated that the instruction is more teacher-based at Japanese Universities. In this study, the researcher gleaned information from four classes formed for the study. The first class was based on test drills and videos, the second class was project-based, the third one focused on more speaking-oriented practices, and the fourth emphasized more listening-oriented studies. The study concluded that project work and peer teaching have a positive impact on autonomy development.

Raby (2007) carried out an empirical study in a French university language center with the aim of finding out motivational affects of a new learning system called computer assisted autonomous language learning (CAALL) in a language learning environment. The researcher held a qualitative approach including observations and journal content analysis. The participants were six volunteer learners. The participant learners were observed six times while working autonomously and were asked to write down their feelings about their CAALL experiences. The data collected throughout the study indicated that such a technology enhanced environment serves four different motivational functions which the researcher called basic function, hook function, regulative function and restore function. The study also concluded that internal factors such as learners' characteristics are more influential in motivational attitudes regarding autonomous learning style in such a new computer assisted language learning system as compared to external factors such as learning environment.

Sugawara (2007), assuming that good language learners are also autonomous learners, worked with lower proficiency students who attended a non-compulsory independent study course called the First Steps Module in which students were assigned to learning advisors. During courses, students were provided with skills and strategies like learning styles and strategies, time management, needs analysis, various resources, and study systems thought to be important in developing learner autonomy. The aim of the study was to introduce the concept of learner autonomy and show the ways to become good language learners. The study concluded that the most important factors were the learning advisors' instructional and affective supports and their face-to-face interaction. These factors were reported to be helpful for students transitioning to autonomous learning.

Chan (2003) conducted a larger-scale study on learner autonomy which focused on teachers' perspectives about their roles and responsibilities, their assessment of students' decision-making abilities and activities carried out so as to encourage students for autonomous learning, in Hong Kong. The study showed that teachers viewed themselves as more responsible for methodological aspects of language learning, for motivating students to be responsible and for assessment and evaluation. However, teachers perceived that they had less responsibility toward students' learning activities and progress in and out of

class. Findings mostly indicate there was a preference for a more dominant teacher role and a less autonomous student role. There was a need to have opportunities for more motivation, negotiation, discussion and decision-making.

Spratt, et al. (2002) aimed to find out tertiary students' readiness for learner autonomy, their motivation level and their perspectives about their own role and those of their teachers' in learning English at a university in Hong Kong. The data regarding the research purpose was collected via questionnaire and small group interviews. The study concluded that, contrary to belief that motivation was a product of autonomy, motivation was regarded as a key factor affecting learners' level of readiness to behave autonomously in language learning. The results also demonstrated that the students saw their teachers as more responsible for decisions relating to methodological areas in formal language learning process while they felt responsibility in learning outside the classroom. Upon these findings, the researchers suggest that teachers should start to train learners in order to become autonomous learners by focusing on intrinsic motivation and making them believe in their own effectiveness in the language learning process.

Fazey and Fazey (2001) investigated psychological characteristics regarding autonomy of first year students at a university in Bangor. Totally 488 volunteer participants were selected randomly for this research. Three different inventories were employed. These are 'The self-perception profile for college students' to measure students' self-perceptions of competence and self-esteem; 'The academic motivation scale' to determine students' motivation level; 'The academic locus of control scale' to measure students' perceptions regarding the control degree over their successes or failures in their academic work. Data gathered via these three instruments was analyzed and showed that age and sex differences were not apparent in variables measured in the study. However, students presented a positive profile in terms of perceived locus of control and motivation and students were stated to be cautious about their abilities related with autonomy. However, it also noted that teachers should be aware of students' potential and try to meet their needs.

McClure (2001) studied international postgraduate students in Singapore. In this study, lasting 14 weeks, McClure tried to provide a pedagogical environment for students

to develop language skills and learner autonomy. She reported that he gave precedence to a learner-centered approach, group work and collaboration, which were central to the goal in this study. She proposed that a reflective model including good communication and negotiation could be considered to be an efficient way to develop skills like learner autonomy.

Rivers (2001) conducted a research analyzing language-learning behaviors in terms of self-assessment, self-management, autonomy and self-directedness. The study was carried out at a university in USA and the participating students were adult learners who were employed as translators or interpreters. A grounded method was adopted to analyze the data gathered via two different survey instruments including daily and weekly questionnaires. The findings pointed out that all participant learners showed autonomous learning and self-directed language learning behaviors in that they were assessing their progress, learning strategies and requesting some changes to different aspects of the language learning process such as course content, materials and classroom activities.

Cotterall (1999) focused on learners' beliefs and their influences on learner autonomy by employing a questionnaire including items related to the learners' perception of self- efficacy, the nature of language learning, learner strategies and behaviors, the role of teacher, and the role of feedback in the process of language learning. The findings showed that all these variables have an impact on learners' autonomous behaviors.

Naizhao and Yanling (n.d.) argued that traditional teaching method created a passive learning and this resulted in a need for enhancing learner autonomy. First, they provided an overview of current conditions in China in which English as a foreign language gained popularity because of the demand economically and culturally. Secondly, they explored how learner autonomy was perceived and what kinds of pedagogical implications existed for autonomous learning. Thirdly, they offered some ways to promote learner autonomy in a Chinese context. They conducted an experimental study where they compared the data gathered from four groups of samples who were taught through traditional approaches and autonomous approaches. The findings indicated that the more autonomous students were, the more self-confidence they gained in English learning and collaboration took a crucial role in developing learner autonomy. They also reported that it

was a challenging task to try to promote and facilitate learner autonomy in a Chinese cultural environment. Their study suggested that teachers had to focus assisting their learners so as to promote leaner autonomy and also encourage students to be autonomous. More importantly, they considered that teachers' and learners' needed to recognize their own roles and the relationships between students and teachers were important so as to promote leaner autonomy.

2.14.2. Recent Studies in Turkey

As it was stated before, the concept of learner autonomy has gained popularity in Turkey since the 2000s. The best evidence of it can be the studies about the issue, which dates back to the early 2000s. For example, there are almost 25 theses (4 doctoral, 21 master theses) regarding this issue in Turkey and, except one, the rest of the studies were released in the early 2000s. This fact implies that the concept of learner autonomy is a newer research field. Here are summaries of some research studies and theses conducted in Turkey till now.

Varol and Yılmaz (2010) conducted a descriptive study, which attempted to explore the similarities and differences between female and male students' preferences of autonomous language learning activities in and out of class learning processes. In order to search this, the researchers used questionnaires and interviews as data collection instruments. Also, achievement grades were taken into consideration to compare both genders. The results showed that female learners were generally more motivated, more active and willing to take charge of processes in language learning. The achievement grades implied that females were significantly more successful than males. The findings indicated that female learners preferred to talk to foreigners and watch television in English on their own. Female learners were more involved in decisions related to learning processes and eager to take initiative as compared to male learners. Additionally, female learners were reported to do non-obligatory homework, such as writing down new vocabulary and trying new methods. All these findings demonstrated that female learners were likely to be more autonomous inside and outside of the class as compared to male learners.

Üstünlüoğlu (2009) investigated perceptions of students and teachers about responsibilities and abilities regarding autonomous learning. The researcher also attempted to research about students' autonomous activities in and out of class and the relationship between all these responsibilities, abilities, activities with motivation level and gender. The study was both qualitative and quantitative in that the data was collected via questionnaire and interviews. Both teachers (n= 24), and students (n=320) were participants in the questionnaires and interviews during the data collection process. The study concluded that despite, their abilities, students do not take charge of their learning processes and teachers mostly take these responsibilities by assuming that students are not so capable of taking responsibilities. Moreover, there is no significant difference between female and male students in terms of responsibilities, but female students regard themselves as more competent and involved in autonomous activities as compared to male students. Therefore, the study shows that there is significant difference between male and female students regarding their abilities, activities and their motivation level. Based on the results, the study suggests that the significance of learner independence and learner autonomy should be perceived by both teachers and students. In order to develop these concepts, there should be training programmes in the language curriculum.

Gökgöz (2008) tried to determine the relationship between the degree of learner autonomy, use of strategies for coping with speaking problems and success in speaking classes. The study sample included 102 preparatory class students at a university. In order to collect the data, the researcher made use of a questionnaire which consisted of three different parts, a self-report part to ask students to write about their use of strategies for struggling with problems regarding speaking skill, a part geared to oral communication strategy inventory and a part measuring learner autonomy degree or learners. The questionnaire was designed to determine students' degree of learner autonomy. After data collection, the data was analyzed quantitatively by conducting some statistical analysis. The results pointed out that students with a lower degree of autonomy had lower grades in speaking as compared to more successful students and there is a positive relationship between use of coping strategies, speaking skill grades and reported degrees of learner autonomy among participants.

By focusing on the applicability of learner autonomy in different contexts, Karabıyık (2008) investigated the culture of learning in Turkey and its relation with Turkish university students' readiness level for learner autonomy. The researcher wanted to learn if there are any predetermined learning behaviors and educational backgrounds or experiences behind the students' attitudes towards the concept of learner autonomy. To this end, the researcher worked on a sample of 408 preparatory class students at different universities throughout Turkey. The data were collected via questionnaire and analyzed quantitatively. The study concluded that there was a relationship between students' culture of learning and their view of learning autonomy. That means, the experiences and practices they had in their high school could have an impact on their view and attitudes towards learner autonomy.

In his study titled as "Turkish EFL Learners' Readiness for Learner Autonomy", Yıldırım (2008) aimed to find out 130 university level Turkish EFL students' readiness for learner autonomy, their perceptions of teacher and learner responsibilities, their abilities for autonomous learning and the frequency of actual activities for autonomous language learning. He found out that students are ready to take more responsibility in their language learning process and they find themselves to be capable of acting autonomously in that they already carry out some out-of-class activities signaling autonomous behaviors. Similarly, Yıldırım (2005) investigated students' perceptions and behaviors regarding learner autonomy at a department of English Language teaching. He also examined if there is any change in their point of view of teaching English after gaining awareness about learner autonomy. To this end, the participants were selected from first year and fourth year students studying at the department. Two different data collection instruments were used for this research: questionnaire and interview. They were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results showed that there is not so much difference between first year and fourth year students. As future teachers of English, they had generally positive attitude towards the idea of learner autonomy and practicing it in their classrooms. However, fourth year students were more worried about learners' abilities about autonomous learning when compared to other participants, first year students. On the other hand, as learners of English, they were ready to take responsibility and control of their learning process. Nevertheless, they needed some support and guidance.

Bayat (2007) investigated the relationships between autonomous perceptions, reading comprehension achievement and classroom behaviors of 560 EFL preparatory class students in the School of Foreign Languages at Dokuz Eylül University. As the researcher stated, the study is a kind of descriptive research. The data was gathered via an Autonomy Perception Scale, Reading Comprehension Test, and Classroom Behaviors Scale. The results showed that the higher perception of autonomy was related to the higher reading comprehension achievement. Therefore, there existed a statistically significant relationship between learner autonomy perception and reading comprehension achievement and also classroom behaviors of students. Students with higher autonomy perception showed positive behaviors as compared to students with lower autonomy perception.

Balçıkanlı (2006) explored the ways to promote learner autonomy through activities. The study was conducted at a preparatory school and experimental study design was applied. Randomly control and experimental groups were appointed and the implementation was done. The implementation phase lasted twelve weeks. By comparing data gathered via questionnaires, how much students' level of learner autonomy was improved in each group was determined. The results following some T-tests pointed out that the experimental group who were taught via learner autonomy activities showed more autonomy as compared to the results gathered from the control group.

Durmuş (2006) aimed to determine EFL instructors' perceptions on learner autonomy at Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages Basic Languages Department. To this end, the researcher administered a questionnaire to 108 EFL instructors. By analyzing data both quantitatively and qualitatively, the researcher found out that participant instructors had a positive attitude towards the idea of learner autonomy since they were collaborative and supportive in terms of "short term objectives of a course, topics of course content, individual/pair/group work organizations, types of class activities, position of desks and seating of students, record-keeping of work done, marks gained and attendance, encouragement towards learner explanations, learning procedures and self-assessment of learners". On the other hand, the results also revealed that participant teachers had "a strong resistance in some respects such as learner involvement in decision making process, selection of textbooks, time and place of the lesson". The findings

suggested that instructors did not rely on students' capacity or did not regard them to be competent to some extent and wanted to have the last word in their educational environments.

Koyuncu (2006) investigated impact of traditional school tests and European Language Portfolio (ELP) on students' learner autonomy and students' perceptions about the school tests and ELP. The study was carried out at a private school and the participants were sixth grade students. The research design was called a basic interpretive qualitative study since the researcher intended to present the changes of the learners in terms of autonomy at the end of the research employing the ELP as a methodology. The researcher employed questionnaires, interviews, field notes, observations and students' portfolios to collect necessary data. At the end of the study, the researcher found out that the ELP influenced autonomous learning positively (A list regarding its impact on learner autonomy is presented in the previous section). Therefore, the use of ELP contributed to students becoming more reflective and responsible, and in the end to become an autonomous learner. Since the scope of the current study is related to learner autonomy, the other results about school tests are ignored here.

Sert (2006) conducted a case study with EFL student teachers at a Turkish university. The aim of the study was to determine student teachers' awareness of autonomous learning and whether student teachers can direct and monitor their learning processes or not. The researchers made use of document analysis, including some academic annual plans, national education programmes, course books; structured/unstructured class observations and structured/unstructured interviews, in order to gather data. The findings of the study suggested that participants lacked reflection and awareness about their needs, goals and monitoring their learning processes, self-assessment. Additionally, document analysis implied that the language teaching program did not serve to develop a sense of autonomy in student teachers. A year later, Sert (2007) again conducted another study seeking to explore perceptions of 408 students' and 25 English teachers' perceptions of autonomous learning at a private school. The data collection instruments included questionnaires, self-assessment checklists, semi-structured interviews, students' spring term GPAs and in that the researcher tried to make a triangulation in employing the study. The researcher also observed the activities done in

the classroom according to the curriculum based on the philosophy of learner autonomy. It was found out that the students and teachers made an effort to promote their learner autonomy and their self-governing capacity. Nevertheless, the teachers thought that they failed in promoting their own autonomous behaviors. The study suggested that they mutually felt a need to have optimal support and training in order to fulfill autonomous learning.

Koçak (2003) investigated whether students are ready for learner autonomy in four different areas such as learners' motivation level, metacognitive strategies, perceptions of responsibility and their practices in and outside the classroom. The participants were 186 preparatory class students at a private university in Turkey. This study was an example of a descriptive case study employing quantitative data gathered via questionnaire. The results showed that even if students needed training in some respects, they had a tendency to become autonomous learners. However, they considered their teachers to be responsible for most of the tasks in the classroom and they spared little time to do out-of-class activities. They tended to use metacognitive strategies such as self-evaluation, and self-monitoring. They also tended to be highly motivated.

As it was reviewed in this section, while many of the studies mainly focuses on perceptions or views of students or teachers about learner autonomy, or their readiness for learner autonomy (Baylan, 2007; Durmuş 2006; Karabıyık, 2008; Özdere, 2005; Sabancı, 2007; Yıldırım, 2005), there seems no research investigating the relation between learner autonomy and academic success except for two studies regarding the relation of learner autonomy and reading comprehension achievement (Bayat, 2007); its relation with listening comprehension success (Arkoç, 2008). In this sense, the current study may contribute to the present literature in Turkey.

2.15. Conclusion

In this part of the study, firstly, autonomy and its relation to learner autonomy were presented by referring to various references. Since learner autonomy encapsulates different concepts, it is replaced with some other concepts synonymously or even mistakenly. Therefore, it was important to touch on those concepts used in the relevant literature.

Important components of learner autonomy such as responsibility, control, motivation and the perceptions about all these concepts were also presented. In relation with all these facts, there was a part presenting the profile of an autonomous learner depicted by different researchers in the literature. The reasons behind the popularity and significance of learner autonomy were elaborated on in the following section. The ways to promote learner autonomy were highlighted with various approaches taken by relevant researchers. In the next section, implementation of autonomous learning in different educational environments including classroom environment and environments beyond classroom and also the relation of learner autonomy with culture were discussed under two separate titles. Central to the purpose of the study, relationship between learner autonomy and success were presented. It was stated that there was a positive relationship between learner autonomy and success however there existed a problem in measuring learner autonomy to understand learners' level of autonomy while conducting studies to improve the ways to reach autonomous learning since it was stated to be a multidimensional concept as it was discussed in the literature. There was a section about the problem of measuring learner autonomy as well. The following section was devoted to the introduction of ELP and implementation of the learner autonomy concept. At the end of the chapter, there were various studies addressing the concept of learner autonomy in Turkey and all over the world. Depending on the literature reviewed here, the next chapter of the study will be on the design of the current study aiming to determine the relationships among learner autonomy, language engagement and academic success, in our case.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explains the research questions and the methodology adopted to answer the research questions in the current study. It proceeds with a description of the sample, the instruments employed, the data collection and the analysis procedures.

3.2. Nature of the Study

The current study investigating the relationships between learner autonomy, language engagement and academic achievement was a case study research which aimed to "portray, analyse and interpret the uniqueness of real individuals and situations through accessible accounts" (Cohen et al., 2007: 85). Dörnyei (2007: 155) claimed that case study "offers rich and in-depth insights that no other method can yield, allowing researchers to examine how an intricate set of circumstances come together and interact in shaping the social world around us". Additionally, according to Cohen et al. (2007: 253), case study provided "a unique example of real people in real situations". In this respect, this study was conducted with junior and senior students at the Department of English Language and Literature, Karadeniz Technical University. Therefore, this study tried to depict the picture of these students in their real situations. Case studies could be conducted for various different purposes and present different characteristics. Stenhouse (1983) who was regarded to be one of the 'fathers' of case study research in education presented a typology of case studies including 'neo-ethnographic, evaluative, multi-site and action' (cited in Nunan and Bailey, 2009). While one case was investigated in depth by one observer in neo-ethnographic case study, a case was investigated in more than one researcher and perspective. As its name suggested, a policy or practice was evaluated in evaluative case study. Another type was 'action' in which a classroom practitioner carried out a study in his context. Other researchers took another way to classify case study describing it in different perspectives. For instance, Yin (1994) presented three types: 'exploratory' in which hypothesis was significant; 'descriptive' which gave detailed description and

'explanatory' which investigated casual relationship. According to categorization presented by Yin (1994), current study could be listed under the category of 'descriptive' since it described students' level of learner autonomy, language engagement activities, and the relationships between two and their academic achievement level as measured by GPA.

Methodologically speaking, the case study was a 'hybrid' in that almost any data collection and analytical methods could be used (Nunan and Bailey, 2009: 157). Additionally, Dörnyei (2007: 155) suggests that "the case study is ideally suited for being combined with other research approaches (for example, a subsequent survey) in mixed method studies". In terms of research methods to be adopted in this study, it was not be wrong to claim that this was also a mixed methods study since it combined collection of qualitative and quantitative data and analysis. Likewise, Dörnyei (2007: 163) pointed out that mixed methods study involved "the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study with some attempts to integrate the two approaches at one or more stages of the research process". In a detailed way, Dörnyei (2007) presented different combination categories regarding mixed method designs by taking sequence and dominance of two methods used into consideration. According to these combination categories, this study fell in a group of 'questionnaire survey with follow-up interview' (QUAN→ qual) indicating that quantitative data was first and dominant. Dörnyei (2007: 170) also suggested that "the questionnaire survey is a versatile technique that allows us to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short time; [however], the respondents' engagement tends to be rather shallow and therefore we cannot explore complex meaning directly with this technique". Therefore, a subsequent qualitative component to the study like interviews could be complementary. The present study attempted to collect data via questionnaire and a face-to-face interview subsequently.

To sum up, the current study was a descriptive case study which combined qualitative and quantitative research traditions with the aim of investigating relationships between learner autonomy, language engagement and academic achievement level of senior and junior students at the Department of English Language and Literature at Karadeniz Technical University.

3.3. Research Questions

Depending on the purpose of study, the following research questions were addressed in this study.

The major research question in the study was:

- Is there any relationship between the students' achievement level, autonomy level and their engagement in English?

The study also tried to answer the minor research questions:

- What are the general characteristics of the students regarding their academic achievement as measured by GPAs and study hours?

- To what extent are the students autonomous in their departmental courses?

- How do the students perceive their own responsibilities and that of their teachers'?

- What are the students' perceptions of their abilities in performing their own responsibilities?

- How do the students perceive their motivation level in terms of studying for departmental courses?

- To what extent do the students engage in autonomous activities throughout their university education?

- To what extent do the students engage in activities so as to improve their English throughout their university education?

- How do the students perceive their motivation level in terms of engaging in English language activities throughout their university education?

- How do the students perceive themselves regarding their proximity to the autonomous learner profile identified in the current study?

- Is there any relationship between their self-perceived autonomy level and the autonomy level indicated in the questionnaire?

- Is there any relationship between the students' achievement level as measured by their GPA and their language engagement?

- Is there any relationship between the students' achievement level as measured by their GPA and their level of autonomy?

- Is there any relationship between the students' level of autonomy and their language engagement?

3.4.Participants and Setting

This case study was conducted at the Department of English Language and Literature at Karadeniz Technical University. Students who get the required score from the Transition to the Higher Education Examination (Yükseköğretime Geçiş Sınavı) and the Undergraduate Placement Examination (Lisans Yerleştirme Sınavı) including Foreign Language Examination are accepted to the Department. At the department, the period of the education is 1+4 years. The beginners take a one-year preparatory class including speaking, writing, listening, reading, phonetics, and study skills. After successfully completing this preparatory year, students take a four-year undergraduate education. During these following years at the department, students take different courses including basic translation, textual analysis, research techniques, introduction to literature, academic writing, mythology, American culture and literature, American novel, English cultural studies, short stories, English novel, advanced translation, English drama and poetry, language teaching methods, English language testing, literary translation, literary criticism, teaching language skills, modern English literature and modern American literature. Graduating students are awarded a Bachelor of Arts diploma in English Language and Literature. The students who took part in the current study were junior and senior students studying at this department. As it was stated in the relevant literature, the case which was selected could be a single individual or groups of people, or a school or a group of schools. It could be an organization, an institution or a phenomenon (Bryman, 2004; Nunan and Bailey, 2009; Robson, 1993; Yin, 1994).

The case in the current study was a group of students majoring in English Language and Literature. The sample in this case study consisted of 83 students. The participants in this study were selected through purposive sampling which was a part of non-probability sampling. In purposive sampling, "researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought" (Cohen et al., 2007: 114). As it was clear from its name, the sample was selected by considering specific purposes. The purpose here was to investigate the relationships between learner autonomy, language engagement and academic achievement. To this end, junior and senior students were considered to be more experienced in language learning and in courses as compared to the other students, that is

to say, sophomores, freshmen and prep students. Furthermore, their GPAs depicted a more realistic picture about their grades and academic achievement level since it covered all the credits accumulated after five semesters for juniors, seven semesters for senior students. It was counted after five semesters for juniors and seven for seniors since the data collection was done in the Spring term, that is, the second semester. The latest term, that is, the Spring term is not included in these GPAs since the academic grade point of the Spring term was not computed by the time of the data collection. Moreover, it was assumed that junior and senior students were more conscious about academic self-concept and mature enough to express their characteristics in terms of their interests, abilities and responsibilities regarding autonomous learning.

Table 2: Characteristics of the Participants in the Questionnaire

		Frequency	**Percent**
Gender	Female	70	84.3
	Male	13	15.7
	Total	**83**	**100.0**
Class	Junior	33	39.8
	Senior	50	60.2
	Total	**83**	**100.0**

As for the characteristics of the students attending the current study, because of the nature of the Departments of English Language and Literature throughout the universities in Turkey, most of the students were female at this department at Karadeniz Technical University. Therefore, almost 85% of the students were female and the rest was male in the present study sample. While 60% of the students were senior students, 40% of the students were juniors since fourth class accommodated 50 students and third class accommodated 33 students in the term when the study was conducted. Some students from both classes were missing because they went abroad within the framework of Erasmus student exchange programme. All in all, all of the active third and fourth year students attending courses at the Department of English Language and Literature at Karadeniz Technical University participated in this case study.

Following sample selection for the questionnaire administered, 8 out of 83 students were selected purposively in order to conduct face-to-face interviews. While half of the participanting students in the interview were fourth year students, the other half of the students were third year students. The purpose here was to select both low and high-achieving students from both classes. To do this, their GPAs were taken into consideration. Among fourth and third year students, two low-achieving and two high-achieving students were chosen. While low-achieving students had the lowest value of GPAs in their own classes, the high-achieving students had the highest value of GPAs as compared to their classmates.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

3.5.1. Questionnaire:

Before attempting to construct the data collection instrument, the literature was reviewed comprehensively. As it was stated before, the measurement of learner autonomy was a problematic issue. There were only a few sound instruments addressing to determine autonomous level of learners. It was considered that it would be not so feasible to use one of them directly, instead, it would be appropriate to adopt one by making some changes in it with the help of supervisor and some experts who are experienced researchers and qualified professors in social sciences and statistics.

In the literature, it was suggested that learner autonomy was not a single easily described concept (Little, 1991) and was multidimensional construct (Benson, 2001). Hence, it was important to cover as many different dimensions as possible regarding learner autonomy in a single measure in order to get a much more sound picture about the case. The questionnaire designed by Spratt et al. (2002) was preferred since it incorporated various components such as responsibilities, decision-making abilities about responsibilities, involvement in autonomous activities and motivation level. For the current study, designed by Spratt et al. (2002) was adopted with some modifications. In this questionnaire, there were four parts respectively focusing on responsibilities regarding various aspects of the learning process, students' views of abilities to fulfill these responsibilities, students' level of motivation and students' actual activities which were

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considered to be evident of autonomous language learning. While some items were transferred directly, some modifications were done in items such as wording. Additionally, some items were omitted and extra items were added to the different sections of the questionnaire by the researcher in the light of the experts' opinions.

From the design of the questionnaire to the administration, the researcher passed through different stages. The figure below depicted these different phases in detail.

Figure 5: Phases in the Design of Questionnaire

Phase 1	Literature review
Phase 2	Revision of relevant instruments on learner autonomy
Phase 3	First draft of the questionnaire constructed
Phase 4	Expert Opinion
Phase 5	Revision of the questionnaire according to the feedback
Phase 6	Expert opinion for evaluation of questionnaire overall
Phase 7	Second revision of the questionnaire according to the feedback
Phase 8	Piloting
Phase 9	Amendments and final draft
Phase 10	Administration of questionnaire

The questionnaire constructed for the current study had five (named as A, B, C, D, E) sections. The first section consisted of 7 items in different types; however, respondents were required to fill in answers on a five point Likert scale in the rest of the questionnaire. Section A consisted of questions referring to different issues on which detailed information would be given in the following paragraphs. While section B refered to students' interest and engagement in English as a foreign language, the rest of the questionnaire (section C,

D and E) aimed to determine learner autonomy. In order to find student' level of learner autonomy, they were asked about different components of learner autonomy in these sections of the questionnaire. For confidentiality, the participants' names or numbers were not asked. More detailed information about the sections of the questionnaire would be provided below.

Section A: There was a total of 7 questions in the first section of the questionnaire. The first three questions were factual questions. Students were asked about their gender and class with the aim of describing their characteristics. Their GPAs were also asked in this section. Following three questions were multiple-choice questions regarding study hours which students spent per day in general, students' perceptions of their motivation level for departmental courses in general and also their perceptions of motivation level for learning English as a foreign language. The last question in this section was a semantic differential scale which "indicates their answers by marking a continuum between two bipolar adjectives at the extremes" (Dörnyei, 2007: 105). This question asked students to determine their proximity to autonomous learner on a bipolar scale ranged from '1' representing *teacher-dependent* to '5' representing *autonomous.* The bipolar scale used in this last question was adopted from a similar questionnaire designed by Karabıyık (2008). For this question, an explanation about autonomous learner was given to clarify it for the participants.

Section B: This section with 19 items was included with the aim of determining students' interest and engagement in English as a foreign language. There were behavioral questions in this section. The items required students to indicate the frequency of doing various activities to improve English as a foreign language. Most of the items in this section were adopted from the items in the questionnaire by Spratt et al. (2002) with some modifications. The rest was generated by the researcher. The respondents were asked to choose the answers on a five point scale ranging from *never, rarely, sometimes*, *often* to *always*.

Section C: There were 11 items in this section. These were attitudinal questions. The items here were adopted from the similar section in the questionnaire designed by Spratt et al. (2002) with some modifications. The respondents were asked to choose whose

responsibility (*completely teachers'; mostly teachers', partly students'; half teachers', half students'; mostly students', partly teachers'; completely teachers'*) should it be to fulfill different aspects of learning process.

Section D: This section included 14 items regarding some activities about courses overall which were considered to be manifestations of autonomous learning. These were behavioral questions. Most of the items in this section were results of brainstorming and readings on the topic. The respondents were asked to determine the frequency of fulfilling such activities on a five point scale ranging from *never, rarely, sometimes*, *often* to *always.*

Section E: This section consisting of 11 items aimed to find out the students' views of their abilities to manage responsibilities regarding similar aspects of learning listed in the section C. The items were adopted from the similar section in the questionnaire designed by Spratt et al. (2002) with some modifications. These were attitudinal questions. The respondents were requested to show their view on how good they think they were at managing various aspects of learning on a five point scale ranging from *very poor, poor, average, good* to *very good*.

There was a total of 5 sections and 62 items in the questionnaire constructed for the current study.

3.5.2. Semi-structured interview

To put the issue in a sound framework and to clarify the perceptions of the students identified in the questionnaire administered, interviews were conducted. It was considered that the qualitative data via interviews would complement the quantitative data gathered via the questionnaire. Here, Robson (1993: 370) focused on qualitative data by using attributions such as 'rich', 'full' and 'real' and he (1993: 371) added that "qualitative data may be useful in supplementing and illustrating the quantitative data obtained from an experiment or survey". As for analysis, "the presence of qualitative data may greatly assist the analysis of quantitative data" (Bryman, 2004: 134). "If two sources give the same messages then, to some extent, they cross validate each other" (Robson, 1993: 383).

Taking these considerations seriously, face to face interviews were held after the administration of the questionnaire.

The interviews conducted in this study were semi-structured interviews. In semi-structured interview, "although there is a set or pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, the format is open-ended and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issue raised in an exploratory manner" (Dörnyei, 2007: 136). For the current study, there were 15 pre-prepared guiding questions which were information seeking type in nature. These questions were prepared to obtain more insight into students' autonomy level, language engagement activities and their academic achievement. The interview questions were in parallelism with the items in the questionnaire and this parallelism in both instruments provided a framework for the study.

3.6. Piloting

Following a comprehensive literature review for the data collection instruments, the questionnaire and the pre-prepared questions for the semi-structured interview were analyzed with the supervisor and some experts. After the first draft, all the items were presented to the experts for face and content validity at Karadeniz Technical University again. Based on the feedback received, the data collection instruments were revised in terms of items, instructions, wording, Likert scale, designs of the sections, and the language used. Then, new drafts were prepared and presented to one of the experts for accuracy, clarity and validity of each question again. After the second revision of the questionnaire and interview questions in the light of evaluation, they were piloted.

The piloting of the questionnaire was carried out in the last week of February, 2011. It was piloted with 29 sophomore students at the Department of English Language and Literature, Karadeniz Technical University. That is, it refers to almost half of the actual sample size. These were sophomore students and they were not included in the sample in the administration of the final questionnaire. As the sample of this study only consisted of the junior and senior students, the sophomore students were chosen purposefully since they were considered to be more similar to juniors and seniors in terms of characteristics identified for the study, as compared to freshmen and preparatory class students. On the

other hand, for validity of the measure, three of the freshmen students were selected randomly to see whether this instrument tests what it purported to test. They were asked to express their understanding of all instruction, statements and Likert scales presented in the questionnaire. They stated that there were two unfamiliar words. No other problem was reported apart from these words. It was concluded that it was a valid instrument measuring what it was intended to measure.

After the piloting, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using SPSS. Considering the results, necessary changes were made. For instance, there were five choices in the item asking study hours which students spent per day in general. One of the choices was 'other' but none of the students in the piloting preferred it. Therefore, this choice was removed. In the section C, one of the items was problematic; it was also removed to increase the reliability. After the revision, the Cronbach's alpha measure increased from .657 to .691 in the section C. It was generally sound but there was ambiguity in three items in the section. In this phase, necessary changes were made in the questionnaire. Since some items in the section C were considered valuable to the overall data, they were not removed to increase the reliability for the section. Additionally, wordings of some items were revised. The Cronbach's alpha for each section and for the whole questionnaire was calculated to see the internal consistency of the instrument. The Cronbach's alpha measure was respectively as follows: alpha value of Section B was .879; alpha value of Section C was .691; alpha value of Section D was .870; alpha value of Section E was .906. The Cronbach's alpha measure for all of these sections was .937. This statistical analysis indicated that the instrument had a satisfactory level of reliability. After the piloting, the validity and reliability tests, the results were shared so as to obtain experts' final opinion.

For the semi-structured interview, the expert opinion was obtained in designing the questions in terms of wording, sequence, format and procedure. The issues of reliability and validity were considered not only in the preparations for but also conduct of the interview.

Based on the expert's evaluation, the design of the instruments was finalized. Thus, piloting process helped to test the validity and reliability of the data collection instruments.

3.7. Procedure

After the questionnaire was compiled, it was amended in light of the feedback after the piloting phase. Then, the final form of questionnaire was administrated to 83 participants in their classes. Junior and senior students were administrated in separate classes on the same day. All students were given information about the study and their consent was asked to participate in the current study (see Appendix-1).

The interviews were conducted in the following week after the questionnaire was administered. Students were selected and the sample size for the interview was 8. The students were invited to have interviews face to face and one by one after asking them for their consent. While semi-structured interviews were conducted, all interviews were recorded in full via an audiotape recorder so as to make the data reviewable and were also transcribed. Each of the interviews lasted about 15-20 minutes. In the course of the interview, the researcher paid attention to check reliability, validity and consistency of responses in different ways such as careful formulation of questions, asking interviewees to summarize and clarify their answers, paying attention to interviewees' non-verbal cues, asking the questions in a structured way and in the same format to each interviewee. To control reliability in recording, the researcher, that is, the interviewer was accompanied by an assistant taking notes and recording of the data in addition to using an audiotape recorder. The notes taken also served for the inter-rater reliability purposes in the coding of responses for the analysis of the data.

3.8. Data Analysis

This case study aiming to investigate the relationships among students' autonomy level in their departmental courses, English language engagement activities and their academic achievement as measured by their GPAs, incorporated qualitative and quantitative data. As Robson (1993: 307) stated "most real world study produces data which call for both qualitative and quantitative analysis", in the current case study, therefore, there was a need for applying both qualitative and quantitative analysis procedures. In analyzing the data obtained via the semi-structured interview, qualitative

analysis was used and quantitative analyses were used in analyzing the data collected via the questionnaire. The SPSS 16.0 program was used in the analysis of the quantitative data.

Descriptive statistics, also known as summary statistics, were employed in order to determine students' autonomy level in their departmental courses, their engagement in English language activities and their GPAs. Frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviations were calculated for the related items in the questionnaire. According to De Vaus (2002: 269), "descriptive statistics are those that summarize patterns in the responses of cases in a sample". It was considered to be the first and key task for discovering patterns and understanding the phenomenon.

Correlations were stated to be employed to get an indication of the relationship between two or more variables (Cohen et al., 2007; Hatch and Lazaraton, 1991; Robson, 1993; Tailor, 2005). Correlations were classified as negative or positive and tend to show strong and weak relationships. As Tailor (2005: 94) emphasized, "these relationships assist the researcher in explaining, controlling, and predicting phenomena". Therefore, in answering the central question to this study, that is to say, so as to see the relationships among academic achievement as measured by GPAs, language engagement and autonomy level of students, correlations were used. To this end, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was employed.

As for the qualitative analysis, content analysis was used to determine recurring themes in the data based on semi-structured interviews. Cohen et al. (2007: 475) defined content analysis as "the process of summarizing and reporting written data- the main contents of data and their messages" and they added that "the frequency of words, codes, nodes and categories provides an indication of their significance". Accordingly, content of the interviewees' responses to the questions were analyzed qualitatively. The whole process of content analysis was conducted by a group consisting of the researcher and two assistants. After defining the units of analysis, emergent and recurrent themes were highlighted. By taking research questions into consideration, relevant codes and categories were decided. Thus, cross-validation and synthesis of the data was provided by working in group. The data was summarized and inferences were made. As aforementioned, the quantitative data was dominant and first, therefore; qualitative data was complementary.

CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the collected data of the study are presented and analyzed. The findings are presented in accordance with the research questions. As it is aforementioned, this case study employs questionnaire and semi-structured interview so as to collect data. Therefore, the chapter begins with the questionnaire analysis and continues with the interview analysis.

4.2.Analysis of the Quantitative Data: The Questionnaire

In this section, the quantitative data gathered via the questionnaire are analyzed in accordance with the research questions addressed in the current study.

4.2.1. Academic Achievement

The first variable in the study is students' academic achievement. To learn their academic achievement level, their GPAs are taken into consideration. These grade point averages are achieved by the students following the completion of fall semester of the third academic year for junior students and the fourth academic year for senior students. Additionally, they are asked about hours they spend on self-studies for their departmental courses to have an idea about their studies. Here are the following research questions regarding students' academic achievement.

Research Question 1: *What are the characteristics of the students regarding their academic achievement as measured by GPAs and study hours?*

To have an idea about academic achievement of the students, their GPAs are examined. They reported their GPAs in the 4-point grading system; however, these GPAs

were converted into the 100-point grading scale for the analysis. Here is the table showing the mean scores and the standard deviations regarding their GPAs:

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Academic Achievement

Descriptive Statistics			
Variable	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
GPA	83	76.06	7.74

The table above shows that the mean score of students' GPAs is 76.06 out of 100.0. It is a fact that a picture is worth a thousand words. Therefore, the histogram below may be a better way to clarify academic achievement profile of the students:

Figure 6: Students' Academic Achievement
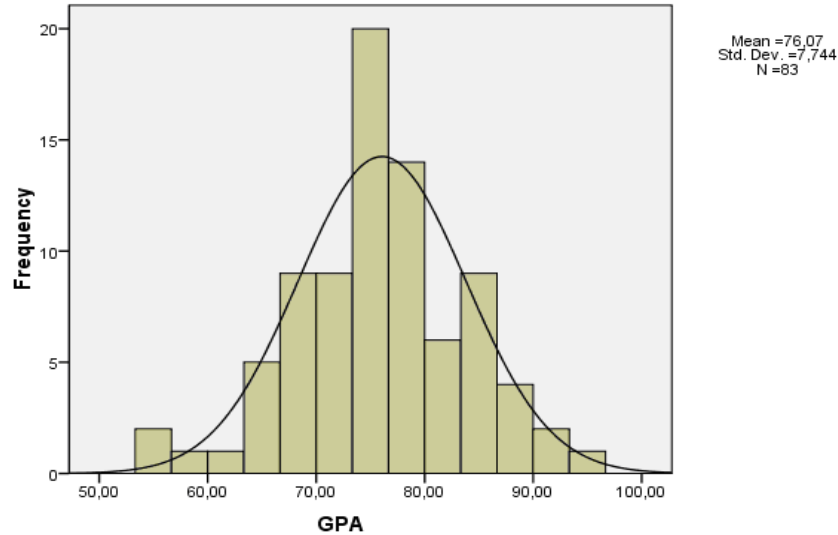
The histogram clearly shows a normal curve line. This implies that the sample includes high, moderate and low achieving students.

To get a general idea about their academic studies, the students are asked about hours they spend on studying for the courses taught at the department.

Table 4: Students' Study Hours

Item		Frequency	Percent
Study Hours	Not at all	7	8.4
	Fewer than 2 hours	36	43.4
	2-4 hours	32	38.6
	5 and more hours	7	8.4
	Missing	1	1.2
	Total	**83**	**100.0**

According to their responses, almost 44% of the students study fewer than two hours while almost 39% of the students spend between two and four hours per a day in general so as to study for their departmental courses. Almost 9% of the students study five and more hours and the same percent of the students reports that they do not study at all per a day in general. An overall fact inferred from this table is that 76 students, out of 83 students, spend some time, more or less, on studying for their departmental courses per a day in general. It can be estimated that these findings presented in this table show a consistency with the findings in the table above regarding students' academic achievement.

4.2.2. Learner Autonomy

The second variable in the study is students' autonomy level. Different sections in the questionnaire refer different constructs about autonomy. These constructs are responsibilities, decision-making abilities, involvement in autonomous activities and motivation level. Taken together, these constructs provide an idea about students' autonomy level.

Different sections of autonomy questionnaire are presented in the following page in accordance with the related research questions.

Research Question 2: *To what extent are the students autonomous in their departmental courses?*

In order to answer the second research question, it is necessary to analyze every each construct of the autonomy one by one. The first section to analyze here is about the students' perceptions of responsibilities regarding different aspects of courses in their departmental courses.

2.1. How do the students perceive their own responsibilities and that of their teachers'?

In section C, the students are asked to indicate their perceptions of their teachers' and their own responsibilities about different aspects of learning process. There are eleven items related to the students' perceptions of responsibilities in the section. The students give their answers on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *completely teachers'* to *completely mine*.

The combined mean scores and standard deviations are calculated to get a general idea about their perceptions of responsibilities. The mean score is 2.95 and the standard deviation is 0.63. This statistical analysis points out that the students have a tendency to share responsibilities with their teachers.

As for the analysis of each item in the section asking students' perceptions of their teachers' and their own responsibilities about different aspects of learning process, Table 5 shows percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviations of each item.

To have a look at the overall percentages in Table 5, it seems that the students do not give responsibility solely to their teachers and they do not consider themselves completely responsible of the situations identified in the items apart from one item (Item 37). The percentage (54.2%) of the responses to item 37 shows that the students consider themselves completely responsible of deciding what they learn outside class. However, the percentage (39.8) displays that students and teachers should share the responsibility of deciding what they learn next in their courses (item 32).

Table 5: The Students' Perceptions of their Teachers' and their Own Responsibilities

Items	completely techers'		mostly teachers, partly mine		half mine, half teachers		mostly mine, partly teachers'		completely mine		M	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
27. make sure you make progress?	1	1.2	8	9.6	**33**	**39.8**	29	34.9	12	14.5	3.51	.902
28. stimulate your interest in courses?	11	13.6	**31**	**38.3**	28	34.6	6	7.4	5	6.2	2.54	1.01
29. identify your weaknesses in courses?	4	4.8	18	21.7	24	28.9	**28**	**33.7**	9	10.8	3.24	1.06
30. make you work harder?	5	6.1	11	13.4	**27**	**32.9**	19	23.2	20	24.4	3.46	1.17
31. decide the objectives of courses?	12	15.0	**30**	**37.5**	27	33.8	6	7.5	5	6.2	2.52	1.02
32. decide what you should learn next in your courses?	14	16.9	29	34.9	**33**	**39.8**	6	7.2	1	1.2	2.40	.897
33. decide how long to spend on each activity?	11	13.3	27	32.5	**31**	**37.3**	9	10.8	5	6.0	2.63	1.04
34. choose what materials to use in courses?	18	22.0	26	31.7	**30**	**36.6**	5	6.1	3	3.7	2.37	1.00
35. evaluate your learning?	10	12.0	**30**	**36.1**	25	30.1	10	12.0	8	9.6	2.71	1.13
36. evaluate the courses?	10	12.0	27	32.5	**29**	**34.9**	12	14.5	5	6.0	2.69	1.05
37. decide what you learn outside class?	0	0	1	1.2	7	8.4	30	36.1	**45**	**54.2**	4.43	.701

On the other hand, the responses given to the items asking students to show whose responsibility should be to stimulate their interest in courses (item 28), to decide the objectives of courses (item 31), and to evaluate your learning (item 35) indicate that students see their teachers more responsible than themselves about the situations defined in these items. The percentages regarding these items are respectively 38.3, 37.5 and 36.1. The students think that teachers should be more responsible about stimulating their interest in courses, deciding objectives and evaluating their learning. When it comes to take

responsibility of identifying their weaknesses in course (item 29), the students think that they should be mostly responsible of doing this according to the percentage (33.7) indicated in Table 5.

For the situations identified in the items 27, 30, 32, 33, 34, 36, the students think that students and their teachers should share the responsibilities together. These items are asking whose responsibility should be to make sure students make progress (item 27), to make work students harder (item 30), to decide what students should learn next in their courses (item 32), to decide how long to spend on each activity (item 33), to choose what materials to use in courses (item 34), to evaluate the courses (item 36). While students report that teachers should be more responsible of evaluating their learning (item 35), they think students should be more responsible of evaluating courses even if they share these responsibilities to some extent.

Having a look at the table closer, combined percentages (*completely teachers'* and *mostly teachers', partly mine* together) imply that the students particularly want their teachers to be more responsible in stimulating their interest in courses, deciding objectives of courses, choosing materials for courses, deciding how long to spend on each activity, deciding what they learn next in courses, evaluating courses even if it seems that they want to share the responsibilities with their teachers. For the rest of the items in this section, again combined percentages (*mostly mine, partly teachers'* and *completely mine* together) show that the students think that they should be more responsible of making sure they make progress, making them work harder, identifying their weaknesses in courses and deciding what they learn outside class. Nevertheless, overall mean score (2.95) concludes that there seems a tendency to share the responsibilities with teachers rather than leaving them completely to teachers.

2.2. What are the students' perceptions of their decision making abilities?

In section E, the students are asked about their views of abilities to manage responsibilities regarding similar aspects of learning process listed in the section C. In other words, they are asked to indicate how good they would be if they are given the opportunity to make decisions about different aspects of learning process. There are eleven

items in the section E. Students are requested to respond on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *very poor* to *very good*.

The combined mean score of this section is 3.75 and the standard deviation is 0.15. It means that the students find themselves better than average in making decisions in different aspects of the process. It implies that they think they would be able to make decisions about various aspects in the process of learning if they are given the opportunity to do so. When it comes to analysis of each item, the table below illustrates percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviations of items.

Table 6 indicates that the majority of the students think that they would be good at making decisions about the situations identified in the items. The percentages of responses to items may prove it. Additionally, none of the students regard themselves very poor in making decisions about the situations except for the situations described in the items 57, 60, 61 and item 62. The students who regard themselves very poor in making decisions about the situations described in these items (57, 60, 61, and 62) constitute very small part of the sample and the percentages are not more than 2.4%. It may be possible to say that almost all of the students are confident about their decision making abilities.

The combined value of the responses given to *good* and *very good* also displays that the students assume that they would be better at deciding learning objectives (item 55), activities (item 53), and materials (item 57) for their own studies than deciding for the courses (respectively, items 54, 52, and 56).

Table 6: Students' perceptions of their decision-making abilities

Items	Very poor		Poor		Average		Good		Very good		M	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
52. choosing learning activities in class?	0	0	4	4.8	32	38.6	**37**	**44.6**	10	12.0	3.63	.758
53. choosing learning activities for your own studies?	0	0	3	3.6	16	19.3	**40**	**48.2**	24	28.9	4.02	.795
54. choosing learning objectives in your courses?	0	0	6	7.3	27	32.9	**33**	**40.2**	16	19.5	3.71	.859
55. choosing learning objectives for your own studies?	0	0	3	3.6	20	24.1	**36**	**43.4**	24	28.9	3.97	.826
56. choosing learning materials in your courses?	0	0	12	14.5	29	34.9	**28**	**33.7**	14	16.9	3.53	.941
57. choosing learning materials for your own studies?	1	1.2	4	4.9	21	25.9	**35**	**43.2**	20	24.7	3.85	.884
58. evaluating your learning?	0	0	7	8.5	23	28.0	**33**	**40.2**	19	23.2	3.78	.897
59. evaluating your courses?	0	0	8	9.6	21	25.3	**37**	**44.6**	17	20.5	3.75	.891
60. identifying your weaknesses in courses?	2	2.4	8	9.6	11	13.3	**44**	**53.0**	18	21.7	3.81	.964
61. deciding what you should learn next in your courses?	2	2.4	13	15.7	22	26.5	**27**	**32.5**	19	22.9	3.57	1.08
62. deciding how long to spend activities in courses?	1	1.2	9	10.8	25	30.1	**29**	**34.9**	19	22.9	3.67	.989

Upon comparing the students' responses to both sections (C and E), it seems that there is a consistency between their perceptions of responsibilities and decision making abilities. For instance, in accordance with the findings in Table 5 which shows that they are mostly responsible of identifying their weaknesses, here, Table 6 below also shows that more than half of the students (53%) think that they would be good at identifying their weaknesses (item 60). The students who see themselves mostly responsible of identifying their weaknesses in courses think that they would be good at identifying their weaknesses as well.

2.3. How do the students perceive their motivation level in terms of studying on departmental courses?

In section A, item 5 asks to indicate their motivation level in terms of studying on departmental courses. This is a multiple choice question and there are five choices. The mean score of this item is 2.69 with a standard deviation of .88. It means that the students are not so highly motivated to study for their departmental courses but almost motivated to study.

Table 7: Students' Perceptions of Their Motivation for Studying on Departmental Courses

Item		Frequency	Percent
Motivation for studying on departmental courses	not at all motivated to study	6	7.2
	slightly motivated to study	30	36.1
	motivated to study	32	**38.6**
	well motivated to study	14	16.9
	highly motivated to study	1	1.2
	Total	**83**	**100.0**

Table 7 shows that the highest percentage is 38.6. This analysis points out that the students are motivated to study on their courses. Only a small part (1.2%) of the students state that s/he feel highly motivated to study while 7.2 % of the students express that they are not at all motivated to study. If two percentages are combined, it is better to analyze. Two highest responses given respectively are 36.1 and 38.6 which shows that the number of the students who feel they are *slightly motivated* and *motivated* to study is higher than those who consider themselves *highly motivated*, *well motivated* and *not at all motivated to study.*

2.4. To what extent do the students engage in autonomous activities throughout their university education?

In section D, the students are asked to indicate the frequency of the autonomous activities they perform throughout their university education on a five point scale ranging from *never, rarely, sometimes*, *often* to *always.*. There are fourteen items about various different autonomous activities. The table displays the frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of each item in this section separately.

The combined mean score of all the items in this section is 3.32 with a standard deviation of .57, which shows that the students *sometimes* perform these autonomous activities listed in Table 8.

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Table 8: Students' Autonomous Activities

Items	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always		M	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
38. make suggestions to your teachers about courses?	8	9.6	31	37.3	**32**	**38.6**	12	14.5	0	0	2.57	.857
39. talk to your teachers for your own studies?	2	2.4	16	19.3	**39**	**47.0**	20	24.1	6	7.2	3.14	.898
40. ask your teachers when you don't understand anything?	1	1.2	8	9.6	28	33.7	**32**	**38.6**	14	16.9	3.60	.923
41. go to library for self-study?	6	7.2	**36**	**43.4**	27	32.5	10	12.0	4	4.8	2.63	.957
42. do revision which is not required by teachers?	4	4.9	14	17.1	**33**	**40.2**	25	30.5	6	7.3	3.18	.964
43. do assignments which are not compulsory?	13	15.7	**27**	**32.5**	25	30.1	14	16.9	4	4.8	2.62	1.08
44. discuss learning problems in class?	5	6.0	24	28.9	**35**	**42.2**	16	19.3	3	3.6	2.85	.925
45. set goals for your own studies?	0	0	3	3.7	23	28.0	**36**	**43.9**	20	24.4	3.89	.811
46. monitor your own learning progress?	0	0	5	6.0	15	18.1	**41**	**49.4**	22	26.5	3.96	.832
47. make plans about your studies?	1	1.2	2	2.4	18	21.7	**35**	**42.2**	27	32.5	4.02	.869
48. determine your own learning strategies?	1	1.2	3	3.6	21	25.3	28	33.7	**30**	**36.1**	4.00	.937
49. note down new information about your courses?	1	1.2	7	8.4	14	16.9	29	34.9	**32**	**38.6**	4.01	1.00
50. make research which is not compulsory about your courses?	6	7.2	17	20.5	**33**	**39.8**	23	27.7	4	4.8	3.02	.987
51. read books about your courses in addition to your course books?	5	6.0	25	30.1	**27**	**32.5**	17	20.5	9	10.8	3.00	1.09

As presented in Table 8, especially five activities described in the items (40, 45, 46, 47, 48 and 49) are found to be performed *often* or *always* by the students. These items have the highest score of means among all items as well. The items which have the highest percentage in *always* category are determining their own learning strategies (item 48) and noting down new information about their courses (item 49). The items which fall in the category of *often* are asking their teachers when they do not understand anything (item 40), setting goals for their own studies (item 45), monitoring their own learning progress (item 46), and making plans about their studies (item 47). Besides, items 38, 39, 42, 44, 50 and 51 fall in the category of *sometimes* as it is inferred from percentages of them. These items are making suggestions to their teachers about courses (item 38), talking to their teachers for their own studies (item 39), doing revision which is not required by teachers (item 42), discussing learning problems in class (item 44), making research which is not compulsory (item 50) and reading books about their courses in addition to their course books (item 51). On the other hand, according to their responses, the students *rarely* go to library for self-study (item 41) and do assignments which are not compulsory (item 43). The mean scores of these items are respectively 2.63 and 2.62. Nonetheless, these mean scores are closer to the category of *sometimes* rather than the category of *never*.

Consequently, all these different sections regarding autonomy level of students are combined to get a general idea about their autonomy level. As they are calculated separately, the mean scores and standard deviations are as follows. The mean score of motivation level is 2.69 and the standard deviation is .88 (item 5 in section A). The mean score of responsibilities section is 2.95 with a standard deviation of .63 (section C). The mean score of autonomous activities is 3.32 with a standard deviation of .57 (section D). The mean score of decision making abilities section is 3.75 with a standard deviation of .15 (section E). When all these sections regarding autonomy level of students are computed altogether, the mean score is 3.32 with a standard deviation of .45. It can be concluded that the participant students in the study are moderate autonomous learners.

4.2.3. Language Engagement

The third variable is students' language engagement. In section B, the students are asked to express their frequency of engaging language activities to improve their English or keep up their proficiency level. The students are requested to respond on a five point scale ranging from *never, rarely, sometimes*, *often* to *always.* There are nineteen items about various activities in the section.

Research Question 3: *To what extent do the students engage in English language activities throughout their university education?*

The combined mean score of all items in the section is 3.15 with a standard deviation of .58. This statistical analysis indicates that the general tendency of engaging language activities among the students is that they *sometimes* engage in language activities to improve their English or keep up their proficiency level throughout their university education. It may be concluded that the students' engagement in language activities on a moderate level. The table displays percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviations of items one by one.

Table 9: Students Engagement in English Language Activities

Items	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always		M	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
8. take notes about new words	2	2.4	12	14.5	22	26.5	**32**	**38.6**	15	18.1	3.55	1.02
9. read books in English	2	2.4	15	18.1	**37**	**44.6**	21	25.3	8	9.6	3.21	.937
10. read magazines. journals in English	4	4.9	29	35.4	**32**	**39**	16	19.5	1	1.2	2.76	.859
11. read newspapers in English	7	8.4	**35**	**42.2**	33	39.8	6	7.2	2	2.4	2.53	.845
12. watch TV/movies in English	2	2.4	11	13.3	**25**	**30.1**	**25**	**30.1**	20	24.1	3.60	1.06
13. listen to radio/songs in English	2	2.4	13	15.9	20	24.4	**28**	**34.1**	19	23.2	3.59	1.08
14. use Internet in English	1	1.2	7	8.5	8	9.8	**35**	**42.7**	31	37.8	4.07	.959
15. chat online in English	11	13.3	13	15.7	**33**	**39.8**	16	19.3	10	12	3.01	1.17
16. keep diary in English	**57**	**68.7**	15	18.1	9	10.8	1	1.2	1	1.2	1.48	.831
17. do exercises in English on your own	8	9.6	25	30.1	**30**	**36.1**	10	12	8	9.6	2.81	1.08
18. do translation studies on your own	7	8.4	**28**	**33.7**	21	25.3	14	16.9	13	15.7	2.97	1.21
19. talk to foreigners in English	2	2.4	20	24.1	**34**	**41**	18	21.7	9	10.8	3.14	.989
20. practice using English with your friends	9	10.8	30	36.1	**34**	**41**	8	9.6	2	2.4	2.56	.899
21. study English on your own	0	0	17	20.5	23	27.7	**30**	**36.1**	13	15.7	3.46	.991
22. write English emails to your friends	10	12	20	24.1	21	25.3	**25**	**30.1**	7	8.4	2.98	1.17
23. take opportunities to speak in English in class	12	14.5	31	37.3	24	28.9	15	18.1	**82**	**98.8**	3.51	.953
24. try to find new ways to improve your English level	2	2.4	13	15.7	28	33.7	**32**	**38.6**	7	8.4	3.35	.928
25. set your own goals to improve your English level	2	2.4	10	12	**32**	**38.6**	25	30.1	14	16.9	3.46	.991
26. look for opportunities to use your English	1	1.2	5	6	26	31.3	**34**	**41**	17	20.5	3.73	.898

As it can be inferred from the percentage (68.7%) presented in Table 9, the students *never* keep diaries in English (item 16). The percentage is the lowest of all language activities. Even if it is *rare*, the students read newspapers in English (item 11) and do translation studies on their own (item 18). The percentages of these items are respectively 42.2% and 33.7%. Furthermore, the students' responses to items reflected that majority of the students *sometimes* read books in English (item 9), read magazines, journals in English (item 10), chat online in English (item 15), do exercises in English on their own (item 17), talk to foreigners in English (item 19), practice using English with their friends (item 20) and set their own goals to improve their English proficiency level (item 25). The categories of *sometimes* and *often* share the same percentage (30.1 %) for the item 12. That is to say, most of the students have a positive tendency towards engaging in watching movies or TV in English.

For the rest of the items, the students report that they *often* engage in the activities defined in these items. These activities which majority of the students list in the category of *often* are to take notes about new words (item 8), listen to radio or songs in English (item 13), use internet in English (item 14), study English on their own (item 21), write English e-mails to friends (item 22) and try to find new ways to improve English level (item 24). Taking opportunities to speak in English in classes is the unique item that the students list in the category of *always* and it attains the highest percentage (98.8 %) of all.

To analyze the findings in general, the responses put forth that the students engage in majority of the activities listed in the section apart from keeping diaries in English. This can be considered as a sign of language engagement or interest among the students.

3.1. How do the students perceive their motivation level in terms of engaging in English language activities throughout their university education?

In section A, item 6 asks students to indicate their level of motivation in terms of being an EFL learner in general. This is another item in the form of multiple choice questions in the questionnaire. The mean score of this item is 3.50 with a standard deviation of .92. It means that the students feel to be pretty motivated as an EFL learner.

This item can be an auxiliary to make sense about the students' interest in engaging in improving or keeping up their proficiency level of English.

Table 10: Students' Motivation for English

Item		Frequency	Percent
Motivation for English	not at all motivated to learn English	1	1.2
	slightly motivated to learn English	7	8.4
	motivated to learn English	**38**	**45.8**
	well motivated to learn English	23	27.7
	highly motivated to learn English	14	16.9
	Total	**83**	**100.0**

As for the analysis of the responses, the higher percentages in the table fall in the choice of *motivated to learn English, well motivated to learn English* or *highly motivated to learn English* as compared to lower percentages falling in the choice of *not at all motivated to learn English* or *slightly motivated to learn English*. Table 10 reveals that the students are motivated to learn English still (45.8 %). Only a small number (1.2%) of the students report that s/he feel to be *not at all motivated to learn English* and the students (8.4 %) state that they feel to be *slightly motivated to learn English*. When their frequencies of the responses are computed together, only 8 out of 83 students have a lack of motivation. However, the majority of the students consider themselves to be motivated about learning English. This may imply that they are still excited about learning new things about English and improve their language skills. These findings can be related to their frequency of language engagement. Most of the students feel motivated so they engage in related language activities so as to improve or keep up their proficiency level of English.

Research Question 4: *How do the students perceive themselves regarding their proximity to the autonomous learner profile identified in the current study?*

To determine the students' autonomy level, they are asked to complete the sections C, D, E and answer the item 5. The total mean of these sections point out their autonomy level. In addition to their responses to the items listed in these sections, item 7 also ask the

students to display their perception of proximity to autonomous learner profile as it is described in the study. By taking this definition of autonomous learner given in this section of the questionnaire, they determine their proximity on a bipolar scale ranging from '1' representing *teacher-dependent* to '5' representing *autonomous.*

Table 11: Students' Self-perceived Autonomy Level

Item 7	M	SD
Self-perceived autonomy level	3.60	.81

The descriptive analysis shows that the mean score of the item 7 is 3.60 with a standard deviation of .81. This score of mean indicate that they feel themselves on mid-point of the scale but somewhere closer to the profile of *autonomous* student. In other words, they perceive themselves to be closer to *autonomous* student and in a more distant point of being *teacher-dependent student.*

4.1. Is there any relationship between their self-perceived autonomy level and the autonomy level indicated in the questionnaire?

The students are asked to indicate their self-perceived autonomy level in item 7 and the total mean score of the sections (C, D, E and item 5) related to autonomy level in the questionnaire are obtained. Here the table illustrates if there is any relationship between the students' own perceptions of autonomy level and the autonomy level which is calculated by taking their responses to items in related sections of autonomy into consideration. To measure this relationship existing between these autonomy levels, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is conducted.

Table 12: Relationship between Their Self-Perceived Autonomy Level and the Autonomy Level Indicated in the Questionnaire

		Autonomy Level	Self-perceived Autonomy Level
Autonomy Level	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.374[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	83.000	83
Self-perceived Autonomy Level	Pearson Correlation	.374[**]	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	83	83.000

According to De Vaus (2002: 340), as compared to physical sciences, a correlation of 0.30 can be accepted to be relatively strong in social sciences. Additionally, he suggests that a correlation of 0.30-0.49 can be considered moderate.

Table 12 reveals that there is a statistically positive, moderate and significant correlation between the students' self-perceived autonomy level and the autonomy level inferred from the total score of autonomy sections in the questionnaire (r=.374, p< 0.05). The results of this analysis maybe indicate that the students at least are aware of their potential and know themselves on a moderate level.

4.2.4. The Relationships among Students' Academic Achievement, Learner Autonomy and Language Engagement

The main purpose in the current study is to determine the relationships among the students' academic achievement as it is measured by their GPAs, their autonomy level and language engagement of the senior and junior students in the Department of English Language and Literature.

Research Question 5: *What are the relationships among the students' achievement level, learner autonomy and their engagement in English?*

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is conducted so as to see if there is any relationship among these variables. In the following parts, there are related tables and findings addressing respectively each research question asked about the relationships among the variables.

5.1. Is there any relationship between the students' achievement level as measured by their GPA and their language engagement?

Table 13 presents the findings regarding the relationship between the students' achievement level as measured by GPA and English language engagement.

Table 13: Relationship between the Students' Achievement Level As Measured By their GPA and their Language Engagement

		Academic Achievement	Language Engagement
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.329[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	83.000	83
Language Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.329[**]	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	83	83.000

As it is inferred from Table 13, according to De Vaus (2002), the relationship between the students' achievement level and language engagement is positive and significant. Between two variables, a moderate statistically significant relationship is found(r=.329, p< 0.05). This result suggests that as students' language engagement increases, their academic achievement increases, too.

5.3. Is there any relationship between the students' achievement level as measured by their GPA and their level of autonomy?

Table 14 displays the relationship between the students' achievement level as measured by their GPA and their autonomy level of the students.

Table 14: Relationship between the Students' Achievement Level As Measured By their GPA and their Level of Autonomy

		Autonomy Level	Academic Achievement
Autonomy Level	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.348[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	83.000	83
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.348[**]	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	83	83.000

Regarding the relationship between academic achievement and autonomy level, a statistically positive and significant relationship also exists. There is a moderate statistically significant relationship between the two variables (r=.348, p< 0.05). However, this moderate level of relationship is higher as compared to the relationship existing between the students' achievement level and language engagement (r= .329). This correlation analysis reveals that as the students' autonomy level develops, they achieve more academically.

5.4. Is there any relationship between the students' level of autonomy and their language engagement?

Table 15 below reveals the findings about the relationship existing between students' autonomy level and their engagement in English language activities throughout their university education.

Table 15: Relationship between the Students' Level of Autonomy and their Language Engagement

		Language Engagement	Autonomy Level
Language Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.671[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	83.000	83
Autonomy Level	Pearson Correlation	.671[**]	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	83	83.000

Table 15 indicates that there is a positive relation between the students' language engagement and autonomy level. Additionally, there is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), with a very strong correlation ($r = .671$) as it is shown in Table 15. De Vaus (2002) states that the correlation values between the 0.50-0.69 can be interpreted as substantial to very strong. This kind of relationship suggests that as language engagement increases, the students' autonomy level increases accordingly.

As it is concluded from all of these tables above, the statistics reveal positive and significant relationships among learner autonomy level, language engagement and academic achievement of the participant students. While the highest correlation value is found between the students' language engagement and autonomy level, the lowest correlation value is found between the students' achievement level and language engagement when all correlation results are taken into consideration. All in all, there are statistically significant and positive relationships among all the variables.

4.3. Analysis of the Qualitative Data: The Interview

In this section, the data collected during the face to face interviews are analyzed qualitatively in accordance with the research questions addressed in the current study.

4.3.1. Academic Achievement

The students participating face to face interviews are purposively selected as it is mentioned in the methodology. Their academic achievement level is considered for the purposive sampling.

Research Question 1: *What are the characteristics of the students regarding their academic achievement as measured by GPAs and study hours?*

Of all the participant students in the current study, four students who have the lowest GPA among their classmates and four students who have the highest GPA among their classmates are selected. In this way, two high-achieving students and two low-achieving students are selected among both junior students and senior students. Thus, the interviews are conducted with a total of 8 high and low achieving students. Here is the table describing the students participating in the qualitative data collection part:

Table 16: Characteristics of the Students

Achievement Level	Interviewees	Class	GPA
High Achieving (H)	Informant H1	Senior	95.10
	Informant H2	Senior	93.70
	Informant H3	Junior	87.16
	Informant H4	Junior	84.60
Low Achieving (L)	Informant L5	Senior	61.73
	Informant L6	Senior	59.16
	Informant L7	Junior	54.03
	Informant L8	Junior	37.93

With the aim of making inferences about the perceptions of each group of students, throughout the qualitative analysis, the students are identified with their achievement level

as high and low achieving. When all the GPAs here are computed together, the mean score is found 71.25 which is similar to the mean score of GPAs computed in the questionnaire.

As for their study hours, it seems that high achieving students tend to spend more time on studying for their courses as compared to low achieving students. While high achieving students report that they study for their courses daily and regularly for exams, low achieving students do not see any reason to study every each day and they study especially for passing exams. To illustrate this, here are some samples from the interview:

Informant H1: *I take notes about courses in class and begin to study them at home. I do not put off studying; I try to study for exams before days.*

Informant H3: *Especially, I study more for the courses that I find difficult to understand. I do regular revisions for courses and try to study before classes because in class time, teachers may ask some questions about the course that I do not know. I should come to class well-prepared.*

Informant L6: *I am not a persistent student, well, I study one day and do not another day. If teacher asks anything to do, I can do it or not, it depends on my mood.*

Informant L7: *I study for exams, only try to pass my exams. I generally do not study before coming to classes.*

It seems that there is again a consistency between their achievement level and the time they spend on studying for courses. The students who tend to spend more times on studying for courses are relatively more successful students. Low achieving students generally express that they study mostly for exams and do not study regularly or systematically for their departmental courses.

4.3.2. Learner Autonomy

In the face to face interviews, the interviewees are asked about teachers' and students' roles and responsibilities, the concept of authority, motivation, in-class and out-of-class practices about courses, decision making abilities. They are asked about self-perceptions of their own autonomy level after they are informed about the concept of learner autonomy.

Research Question 2: *To what extent are the students autonomous in their departmental courses?*

In this semi-structured interview, seven questions are asked to reveal their perceptions of the autonomy. The analysis of these questions about different constructs of autonomy may provide a general understanding of students' autonomy level. Here, the qualitative data regarding autonomy level is analyzed in accordance with related research questions below.

2.1. ***How do the students perceive their own responsibilities and that of their teachers'?***

A common point in the statements of the informants about roles and responsibilities of teachers and students is that they regard their teachers as guide in almost all aspects of the learning process from choosing learning activities, preparing class materials to evaluation process. Regardless of their achievement level, that is, both high and low achieving students consider that teachers first should at least show the way to go. To support the idea here, it is better to share the students' self-reports:

Informant H2: *First, for example, in a translation classes, teachers should show us some strategies, then we can choose appropriate ones. Students already have some strategies to study; they can do it on their own. I want teachers to ask our opinions about the things.*

Informant H4: *These responsibilities depend on courses, for example, for literature courses, it is very broad field. Since we do not know many things, teachers' role here constitutes 80% of all.*

Informant L6: *Teachers first should determine students' levels and then, all responsibilities should be on teachers' side. Without dominating or exercising power over students, teachers can do everything. This is better, I think.*

Informant L8: *Teacher should decide what to do and how to do in a classroom. They should have a program for courses. But on evaluation, it depends. Teachers can ask students' their opinions about giving exams, take-home exams, projects. They can present alternatives for their students.*

As it is seen above, low achieving students tend to see their teachers responsible in many respects regarding learning process. Generally, they want to share their ideas on evaluation part of this process. High achieving students focus on another point. They generally need to get their teachers help because they feel that they are like a fish in an ocean. They just want to see the way to go. The rest is in their responsibility.

When it comes to their own responsibilities, the students think that they are responsible of studying for courses efficiently, doing assignments on time, participating classes regularly. Some of the statements are as follows:

Informant H4: *As students, we should have our materials in class and come to class prepared, take notes in class and do revision at home for one-two hours.*

Informant L6: *Our responsibilities are like doing projects, assignments, taking part in classes. Sometimes, students should come to the front seats rather than sitting back and participate in course.*

Informant L8: *Students should participate in courses and do assignments, projects on time.*

They generally want to see their teachers responsible about the learning process in class time. When they are reminded about various aspects such as choosing learning activities, objectives, materials for courses, high achieving students support that they can share their ideas with their teachers if they are given an opportunity to do so. Low achieving students consider that teachers are like bosses and they are the ones who should know such kind of aspects and they express that they expect almost everything from teachers.

2.2. *What are the students' perceptions of their decision making abilities?*

Almost all the interviewees share a common point on perceptions of decision making abilities. They claim that they are not asked about their opinion on such kind of issues. If their ideas are valued, they state that they can share their ideas.

Furthermore, they report that they are not accustomed to voice their opinions about the issues such as choosing learning materials, objectives or activities for courses and they do not see themselves competent or sophisticated enough to involve in taking such kind of responsibilities. Here are some related statements:

Informant H1: *I think before deciding materials, activities, content etc., students' opinion should be obtained. For instance, which method to use or which book to use in class? However, sometimes students have no background knowledge, therefore teachers can decide, nevertheless, they should want their students to share their ideas as well.*

Informant H2: *The last word should be in teachers' mouth but he can ask for our opinions, by evaluating and including our opinions he can decide about the things in the end. Provided that they ask our opinions first, they can decide on your own.*

Informant H4: *I regard myself good at performing my own responsibilities. However, for example if teacher asks for our opinion, students' opinion, about course content and material choosing in modern English literature course, I cannot know or say anything more than a few things because it is the teacher who knows*

everything about it. However, if he brings novels and asks for our opinion about choosing among them, then we can decide about the material, we can say ok teacher, we can do this or that.

Informant L6: *The teacher should determine everything and he can know and decide the better for us.*

Informant L8: *Teachers should decide everything on the first day of the courses since we do not know anything and they should choose interesting things for students.*

Particularly, for some departmental courses, high achieving students assert that since they have no background knowledge they cannot decide to do anything like choosing a book or determining a learning activity or objectives. However, low achieving students relatively want their teachers decide on everything for them.

The interviewees are asked about authority concept in the classroom; both high and low achieving students generally want to see their teachers as authority figure. However, high achieving students want to share this authority more while low achieving students tend to leave the authority to their teachers more. In their own words:

Informant H2: *We shall share this authority, in fact, not half and half but teachers can have 60% and students can have 40%.*

Informant L6: *Students always criticize something; therefore, teachers know the best. The authority should be the teacher in class.*

Informant L7: *Everybody says teacher should be a guide but I think teachers are everything, they should be the authority. I expect 80% of everything from teachers. They should be the authority but without making students feel bored or oppressed.*

Informant L8: *Teachers should decide on many things, otherwise it can turns into a state of chaos.*

It is understood clearly that low achieving students tend to be more teacher-dependent student. They expect much from their teacher about issues regarding class management and providing necessary knowledge.

2.3. How do the students perceive their motivation level in terms of studying on departmental courses?

When they are asked about their willingness or motivation about studying departmental courses, there is an obvious difference in their responses. Especially, low achieving students state that they are not so motivated for their departmental courses as follows:

Informant H2: *I know I am motivated since I like English and the department. My interest rooted in my secondary school years. I used to like English then and still love it. I like to study courses accordingly. Especially, I like translation.*

Informant L6: *To say frankly, things changed when I came to university. I do not concentrate on things, grading system, courses. For example, I used to like literature before. Now, I am bored. I am not so motivated about the department.*

Informant L7: *No matter how much we dis/like it, we have to do it. For instance, linguistics, how can it be enjoyable? It is boring. We should memorize the things so it is not so nice to study for our departmental courses. It is not like learning a language. Things go into deep in departmental courses; they are more than a language.*

Informant L8: *My motivation level for courses depends on various things from teachers to course content. Sometimes, I just study compulsorily. Well, there is nothing definite about my low motivation level in general but there can be something about the city, environment or friends.*

As it is clearly seen above, while high achieving students state that they are relatively motivated to study and like to study, low achieving students admit that they are

not so motivated to study and they put forward some reasons or activities resulting in their reluctance.

2.4. To what extent do the students engage in autonomous activities throughout their university education?

As for autonomous activities they engage in, there is again difference in both high and low achieving students' thoughts and practices. It is inferred from their expressions and opinions that the high achieving students do revisions, research, assignment even if they are not asked to do so by their teachers and they determine their own learning strategies much more as compared to low achieving students. Low achieving students report that they do not read books extra, make plans about their studies or go to library for self-study. Here are some sample statements:

Informant H2: *Let's say I have poetry course, I read the texts, poems a day before the class. I make research about it, read articles written about the poem. Even if teacher does not want anything regarding that poem, I prepare for the class. I do it even if teacher does not want it and if I need something to ask, wonder something; I can go and ask teachers. For example, I went often for academic writing course and linguistics. I can suggest something about the course if I have an idea. I do not study only for exams but for improving my skills.*

Informant L5: *Whatever teacher asks, we, students, do it. I can go and ask my teacher if I need to learn something. If students are prepared before the class, then it will be more enjoyable. I try to study before especially literature courses rather than linguistics.*

Informant L6: *If something attracts my attention too much, I can maybe search about it. But it depends on my mood. I cannot do it always. If teacher does not want anything to do, I do not do something extra. When teacher asks students to do something, I do it if I wish. I do not think that I should study for this or that. No special effort I make. But I can go and talk to my teachers especially when I have projects or assignments. I am good at this. I view the department an outsider,*

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everybody is so engrossed in courses but academic achievement is not everything, socialization is also important.

Informant L7: *This is something related with my interest and motivation. I study mostly for exams. I do not do anything like making plans, revision, making research, if there is nothing forcing me to do so. I can talk to my teachers if I need something.*

The common point here is that both group of students talk to their teachers and they ask their teachers' assistance if they feel they really need to do so. When it comes to suggesting anything about course to their teachers, low achieving students seem that they do it rarely while high achieving students seem that they do not hesitate to do so if they have an idea. Another fact is that low achieving students focus on more issues regarding motivation and interest. They are not so much interested in such kind of activities if they are not forced to do or asked to do so.

4.3.3. Language Engagement

The students are asked about English language activities they do so as to keep up their proficiency level of English. In this section, students' responses regarding language engagement are presented.

Research Question 3: *To what extent do the students engage in English language activities throughout their university education?*

Almost all the interviewees share the point to be interested in English language activities. This is maybe because of the nature of their department. They are students studying at department of English language and literature. Here are samples regarding their language engagement:

Informant H2: *I am interested in learning words. I like to note down words and try to use them. I like listening music and read newspapers in English. I also like to do translations of poems and lyrics.*

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Informant H3: *I try to do listening activities to improve my pronunciation. I have pen friends. I prefer watching English TV channels.*

Informant L5: *I like reading short stories. I try to improve my reading skill. I watch movies and listen to music in English.*

Informant L6: *From time to time, I do translations, I watch movies in English. Especially, I want to improve my speaking skills and translation. If there is any need like interpreter, I want to go and do translation.*

Informant L7: *I look new words up in dictionaries while reading newspapers; I am interested in new words in agenda of media.*

Even if they are not equally engaged in the language with the special aim of improving their language skills, they at least listen to music or watch movies in English consciously or unconsciously. Low achieving students seem that they do activities without an intention to improve their language. Their statements and body language reveal that their main goal does not deal with improving their proficiency level. But, because they like to do such kind of activities, they do some related activities. However, high achieving students seem to more eager to improve or keep up their English proficiency level and they try to do such activities to learn something new. This is especially inferred from their facial expressions, discourse and body language. For example, while some students talk excitedly or enthusiastically, some students talk with pauses or talk by criticizing themselves.

3.1. How do the students perceive their motivation level in terms of engaging in English language activities throughout their university education?

As compared to their motivation level in terms of studying for departmental courses, the students, particularly low achieving students claim to be more motivated about English language learning.

Informant H2: *I like English very much. I think I like to read and write in English more.*

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Informant L5: *Indeed, there is no definite goal for this but I like to study English.*

Informant L6: *I feel motivated about English learning. I like. If we compare this motivation with the one for studying departmental courses, I can say, I am more motivated for this one.*

Informant L8: *I feel that I am motivated more about English and eager to learn more.*

As statements show clearly, they all seem to be motivated to engage in English language activities. This is probably because of the nature of the department in that students with a considerable proficiency level of English come to the department after passing university examination exam and most of the students willingly prefer the department.

Research Question 4: *How do the students perceive themselves regarding their proximity to the autonomous learner profile identified in the current study?*

When they are asked about their self-perceived autonomous level after they are informed about the characteristics about learner autonomy, low achieving students do not see their own profile close to the autonomous learner profile. Conversely, high achieving students claim that their profile is quite close to autonomous learner profile. Here are some examples to prove the idea:

Informant H2: *I think I am autonomous because I can control over the things regarding my education. Nobody urges me to study or do something else for my education. I already like to do so. In daily life, suddenly something come to my mind about language or courses. I start to think about it.*

Informant H3: *I can say I am closer to autonomous student profile because I like to be interested in things related to department. For instance, in summer, while buying a book, I think of my future studies and choose some books that can contribute to my future education.*

Informant L6: *Well, if I know something, I prefer to speak out and share, but if I do not know anything I cannot do it. There is no consistency in my behaviors. So, not close.*

Informant L7: *In fact, students should be autonomous but sometimes our opinions and actions are not same. But this is something which is resulted from interest or motivation. I like to be an ordinary teacher so just try to pass the exams here, nothing more.*

Informant L8: I think *I am not autonomous. I see, my education life does not show any similarity with autonomy but I believe that students should be autonomous.*

According to the their responses to various questions related to the concept of autonomy, high achieving students stand closer to autonomous learner profile as compared to low achieving students. Even, low achieving students believe that it is necessary to be autonomous student. Nevertheless, they are aware of their potential, weak and strong side as a student even if they are not autonomous as compared to other high achieving students.

4.3.4. The Relationships among Students' Academic Achievement, Learner Autonomy and Language Engagement

In qualitative analysis, the relationships among students' academic achievement, autonomy level and language engagement are assumed to find out by taking students responses into consideration and making inferences about them. They are also asked about their perceptions of the relationships among these three concepts discussed throughout the study.

Research Question 5: *What are the relationships among the students' achievement level, learner autonomy and their engagement in English?*

When interviewees are asked about the relationships among their academic achievement, autonomy level and language engagement, they also express that it is somehow related. In this respect, there is a common view about the relationships.

According to their self-perceptions of the nature of this relationship, there is a linear and positive relationship among them. Self-perceptions about these relationships are presented below in their own words:

Informant H1: *I feel I am autonomous in many respects. I am interested in language improvement. I am aware about my weaknesses. I study hard; as a result, I am successful. I should study more because there are lots of things to learn. I think all these concepts are interrelated.*

Informant H3: *To me, there is a relation among them. I think I am successful since I am an autonomous student. I do not expect everything from teachers.*

Informant H4: *I think autonomy can enable students to be successful. Students, to me, should be responsible and try to study on their own, try to do planning. Even if teachers seem to be responsible about many issues, students, though, should be responsible and try to study more. Teachers are not always near us. We should study, do something on our own.*

Informant L5: *If I was interested in some courses more, I would be more successful. For instance I hardly passed linguistic courses but I am good at literature. Therefore, our effort is more important than the other things. But everything is in hands of teachers, if they had asked about things like choosing learning objectives, material, activities or other related issues, we would have felt more responsible and accordingly would have been more successful academically.*

Informant L7: *In fact, teachers are more responsible about everything, if students were responsible about the similar things, they would be more successful and they would be more involved in everything regarding courses. For example, I like language but not courses and I am not interested in courses too. My autonomy level, I think, is low and my grades are low, too. There can be an obvious link between them.*

As it is inferred from the interviewees' opinions, they are aware of their weaknesses and their academic profile. Both their academic profile that they display and their answers to the questions may prove that there is relationship among their academic achievement level, language engagement and their autonomy level.

Considering all responses throughout the interview, it can be said that the findings are consistent with the findings obtained via questionnaire. Both confirm that there can be a link between students' academic achievement, autonomy level and language engagement in that the students who claim to do autonomous activities for the departmental courses and language activities more seem to have higher GPA. In this case study, especially the students who feel motivated to improve and engage in English language reveal that they have relatively higher autonomy perception for their departmental courses. Accordingly, the students who are engaged in English language and display higher autonomy level for departmental courses are relatively more successful academically. It seems that it is like a prerequisite to be motivated to improve English language for academic achievement at a department like English Language and Literature. All in all, the current study suggests that these three concepts, autonomy level, language engagement and academic achievement may be interrelated as shown in the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study are presented. Additionally, limitations of the study, pedagogical implications, and suggestions for further research are included.

5.2. Conclusions

This case study was designed to determine whether there was a relationship among the autonomy level developed for their departmental courses, their engagement in English language activities and academic achievement level of junior and senior students studying at the Department of English Language and Literature in the academic year of 2010-2011. In order to investigate these relationships, a questionnaire measuring students' learner autonomy level they developed for their departmental courses and engagement in English language activities was employed. Following this questionnaire, some students were invited to a face to face interview so as to get more insight and to back up the data gathered from the questionnaire.

As it is inferred from the findings of the questionnaire and interview, the autonomy level of students that they developed for their departmental courses seemed to be somewhere in the midpoint but closer to the point of being autonomous student. They were relatively far from being teacher-dependent students. This result might refer to the fact that learner autonomy is a kind of "developmental process" (Benson, 2001: 53). Considering this developmental nature of learner autonomy, the students might be assumed to move along in this process. As the results of the questionnaire and their answers to the interview questions were considered together, it could be said that they were moderate level autonomous learners. This current autonomy level of students might be affected negatively due to some facts regarding sub-components of autonomy such as self-perceptions of

responsibilities, decision making abilities, motivation and involvement in autonomous activities.

As for their self-perceptions of their own and their teachers' responsibilities, the students tended to share responsibilities with their teachers rather than taking responsibilities on their own alone. Especially, they wanted to see their teachers responsible for arousing their interest in courses, deciding the objectives of courses and evaluating their learning. Both high and low achieving students did not have an idea about, especially, deciding objectives of courses. The findings in the study carried out by Balçıkanlı (2006) also showed that 40% of the students state that they were never involved in establishing objectives. The students in the current case study mostly took charge of deciding what they learned outside class and identifying their weaknesses in courses on their own. However, they wanted to share the responsibilities with their teachers about the issues such as making them work harder, making sure that they make progress, choosing course materials and evaluating courses. Relatively low achieving students participating in the interview also suggested that teachers could ask for their opinions while choosing materials. Although they left the responsibility of deciding what they should learn next in their courses mostly to their teachers, they wanted to be responsible of deciding what they learn outside class completely.

There was a common view about the decision making abilities. They argued that they, especially relatively high achieving students, felt that they were responsible in an area that they had an idea or background knowledge. Even if all students' attitude towards taking responsibility of deciding objectives of course and evaluation was negative, they believed that they would manage to do it if they were asked to do so. They reported that they needed some guidance since they were not taught and not accustomed to such a kind of education system. If the system had been different in this aspect, they reported that they would have done it well. They seemed to be confident about their ability to decide many aspects of learning process such as evaluation, learning materials, identifying their weaknesses. The students stated that they were not asked about such kind of issues before deciding to do. In other words, they thought that their ideas were not taken into consideration since their ideas were not valued. As compared to responsibilities regarding issues in class, they especially, high achieving students found themselves better in making

decisions about out-of-class activities or self-studies such as choosing a material for their own studies. The overall data showed that if they, regardless of their academic achievement level, had had an opportunity to make decisions about these aspects, most of them consider that they would have done it more than good. The reason behind their assumptions might be associated with the cultural aspect of learner autonomy. As Murase (2007: 6) suggested that "the important thing is that autonomy is not entirely a Western concept and that anyone has some degree of autonomy and can develop greater autonomy; [however], the culture of the context should not be neglected". Therefore, Turkish context should be borne in mind when students' assumptions are considered.

An important component of autonomy concept, motivation might play an important part in being an autonomous learner as it was inferred from the current findings. The role of motivation in learner autonomy was also emphasized by Spratt et al. (2002). In the current study, the students' motivation level for their departmental courses was on a reasonable level. Especially, relatively low achieving students complained about their low motivation level and they considered their low motivation level developed for departmental courses and interest as an essential reason for their failure. Conversely, high achieving students seemed to be more enthusiastic and excited about the departmental courses. But, thinking overall, all the students reported that they slightly motivated to study on their departmental courses.

Among autonomous activities regarding their departmental courses, most of the students stated that frequently, they took notes about newly learnt information, determined their learning strategies, set goals for their own studies and made plans about their studies. Likewise, Dickinson (1993) argued that autonomous students could select and made use of appropriate learning strategies, monitored their use of strategies and their own learning. One of the most common autonomous activities pointed out in the findings were talking and making suggestions to their teachers. No matter how low or high academic achievement level they had, the students could talk to their teachers without hesitation. Except for the item asking talking with teachers, overall findings about the autonomous activities carried out by the students in the current study were similar to the findings revealed at the study conducted by Yıldırım (2008).

When all these components were taken into consideration to determine the student' autonomy level overall, their autonomy level seemed to be on a reasonable level. The findings suggested that students needed to be given more control and responsibility in the learning process. This point was also highlighted in the literature (Bouchard, 2009; Reinders 2000). If they were given more responsibility and control, they felt more connected with learning processes and got more involved in the process. Even if their motivation level was high, they would somehow need to be free from pre-determined learning processes. If their ideas or suggestions were valued and taken into consideration from the beginning to the end of the study, their autonomy level might probably increase. This does not mean that teachers should leave everything to the control of students but negotiation or collaboration is necessary. Here as Little (2009) pointed out, interdependency rather than dependency was required. This perspective was also confirmed by Harkin et al. (2001) who argued that teachers should stand away from being authority figure so as to encourage learner autonomy. In his study, Chan (2003) also concluded that students should be avail of opportunities for more motivation, negotiation and decision-making. Bayat (2011) also confirmed that if students were given opportunity to learn in autonomous learning settings, Turkish students learning English as a foreign language might be autonomous learners.

By determining students' autonomy level, this study tried to shed light on Turkish students' perceptions of learner autonomy concept in our case. In spite of some differences among cultures, this study might attempt to show possibility to adjust learner autonomy in a context different from Western cultural context. In this respect, Schmenk's arguments (2005) that it was possible to reframe learner autonomy concept rather than just trying to promote it in non-Western cultural contexts should be taken into consideration and glocalization of autonomy concept could be acquired with necessary intercultural negotiations and conceptualizations. At this point, it might be worth asking whether it is really necessary for students to be autonomous in Turkish context.

The students' language engagement activities were the second foci point in the current study. Since the participant students study at the Department of English Language and Literature, they already should have had a considerable level of English. As aforementioned, the department offers various courses including English linguistics,

English literature, American culture and literature, applied linguistics, English language teaching, research methods in education. The students were expected to gain skills in language teaching, translation, and reading literature critically. In order to be successful at such a department, they should always keep up with their proficiency level. Therefore, the students should be engaged in various language activities in addition to the studies done for departmental courses throughout their academic education. In the questionnaire, a list of language activities was presented to the students and they were asked to show their frequency to do these language activities throughout their education. According to findings presented, the students engaged in such kind of language activities well enough. The only activity most of the students never did was dairy keeping in English. The majority of the students preferred to read books, magazines or journals in English. They also sometimes chatted online in English, talked to foreigners in English and tried to practice their English with friends. Many students reported that they frequently studied English on their own, tried to find new ways to improve English proficiency level and watched movies in English or with English subtitles.

Especially watching movies in English or with English subtitles, listening to English songs or taking notes about unfamiliar words were among the most frequently done activities among students regardless of their academic achievement level. While relatively low achieving students did not set goals for improving English level, high achieving students relatively did more. One single practice done always by almost all students was that they tried to take opportunities to speak in English in class. Overall result here was that majority of the students generally tried to engage in language activities or practices so as to improve their proficiency level. This was an expected result because of the nature of the department. As for their motivation level about language learning, it was concluded that they are more motivated about English as compared to their motivation for studying departmental courses. This result signified that the students were probably eager to learn and improve their proficiency of English.

As for the relationships among students' autonomy level that they developed for their departmental courses, engagement in English language activities and their academic achievement as measured by their GPAs, the study revealed significant relationships among them. The nature of the correlations was positive. The positive nature of the

correlation was important in that it might help to understand the reasons why the relationship exists, which to another issue should be investigated in further research.

Specifically, the study showed that the strongest relationship occurred between language engagement and autonomy level of students that they developed for their courses. This was also obvious from the statements by high and low achieving students. High achieving students were relatively more interested in improving their English proficiency level and engage in language activities. Furthermore, they were autonomous in many respects; especially they left behind low achieving student in terms of defining their responsibilities, decision making abilities, motivation level and engaging in autonomous activities in their learning processes.

The findings proved that the relationship between students' academic achievement, their GPAs, and their frequency of engaging in English Language activities was a positive, significant and moderate relationship. The fact indicated that the changes in engagement in English Language activities tracked consistently with students' academic achievement in our case. The findings here might point to investigate whether language engagement could signal to academic achievement.

The current study also suggested that there was a positive and significant relationship between the students' autonomy level determined as a result of the questionnaire and the autonomy level that the students perceive, that is, self-perceived autonomy level. This relationship was on a moderate level as well. This result indicated that students were aware about their autonomy level and they were conscious about their potentials. It was supposed that if they were so conscious about the realities, it could be relatively easier to encourage learner autonomy and increase their autonomy level. At this point, teachers' positive attitude to students' readiness for autonomy and their support was necessary. As Chan (2003) confirmed, developing positive attitudes towards learner autonomy and providing flexible teaching culture were significant to the development of learner autonomy.

The final major finding indicated that there was a positive, significant and moderate relationship between students' autonomy level and their academic achievement as

measured by their GPAs. This finding implied that the more autonomous students were the more successful they are in their departmental courses. Similarly, the findings of the study conducted by Lowe (2009) showed that there was positive and significant relationship between GPA and learner autonomy profile of the adult learners attending at a university in USA. Rooney (1996) in his study rejected the hypothesis of no relationship between levels of autonomy and GPA, either. In Turkey, there appeared no study investigating this kind of relationship but they mostly aimed to determine students' level of autonomy. However, there were rare studies investigating relationships between learner autonomy and achievement level, but they took generally language skills individually rather than taking academic achievement shown in all courses. Sancar (2001 cited in Bayat 2011) pointed out that there was a relationship between student autonomy and academic achievement in his study. This result was consistent with that of the current case study. For example, the study conducted by Bayat (2007; 2011) showed that there was a significant relationship between autonomy and reading comprehension of university students. Likewise, the findings in the study designed by Gökgöz (2008) revealed that there was a positive correlation between speaking grade levels of the students and their reported degree of autonomy. As it was aforementioned, there seemed scarcity in studies which aimed to investigate the relationships between learner autonomy, language engagement and academic achievement, in this respect, the current case study might contribute to fill this gap in the literature.

5.3. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations of the current study should be noted. First, students' GPA was taken into consideration as a manifestation of academic achievement level of students. It is a reality that GPA alone might not show students' academic achievement level and there could be other measurements to consider. Other parameters regarding students' academic achievement might be included. Second, autonomy level of students were calculated through the data collected questionnaire and interview in the current study. Process-oriented studies like keeping journals, portfolios might be considered to measure students' autonomy level as well. Third, time was another limitation in that if there was more time, classroom observations might be done in addition to the questionnaires and interviews conducted. They might provide much more rich data.

5.4. Pedagogical Implications of the Study

Despite the limitations reported above, this case study may make some contributions as well. The findings of the study implicates that both roles of teachers and students should be revisited in the frame of requirements of learner autonomy. Teachers should act as counselors and also as facilitators by motivating learners and helping them to be autonomous student. Teacher are regarded as role models, therefore they should be autonomous teachers by displaying exemplary behaviors.

It is argued that the education in our age is more student-centered. However, there is extra need for promoting learner autonomy. Therefore, students should be given more opportunity to share their ideas and make decisions about different aspects of learning process from the very beginning of the academic education. The students' potential of being autonomous should be uncovered by providing necessary learning environments. Students should be encouraged to behave autonomously; in this way, they can be more responsible students in the school and in the society accordingly.

5.5. Suggestions for Further Studies

This case study concluded that there was a positive relationship among academic achievement, autonomy level shown for departmental courses and English language engagement of senior and junior students studying at Department of English Language and Literature at Karadeniz Technical University. There could be some suggestions for further studies.

First, this study was a case study and it was not possible to generalize findings. However, literature says that "case studies can achieve the status of generalizability when findings from many studies are aggregated" (Nunan and Bailey, 2009: 174). Therefore, other case studies might be conducted in different settings so as to get a more realistic picture about the issue. In the end, it could be possible to compare findings and make inferences about findings.

Second, time was one of the limitations in the current study. The study could be replicated on a larger sample in similar departments in order to get more different perspectives and more sound results.

Third, this case study presented cross-sectional data which maybe failed to show students' real autonomy level. As it is confirmed by Macaskill and Taylor (2010), because of the nature of leaner autonomy concept, researchers could measure learners' only current state of autonomous learning in a short period of time. A longitudinal study could be needed so as to get a real profile of the students regarding their autonomy level. Furthermore, in a longitudinal study, autonomy level could also be measured via various different instruments.

Fourth, there could be several ways to measure students' academic achievement. This study took the students' GPA as a measure of students' achievement because of the time limitation and nature of the study. A further research might be needed to show relationship between learner autonomy level and academic achievement by taking a more objective tool or including more than one data collection tool for providing more reliability. Alternatively, students' academic achievement in a single course could be taken as a variable rather than taking students' academic achievement in all departmental courses.

Last but not least, a further study could be conducted to investigate the relationships between learner autonomy and learners' personality or other learner characteristics such as self-esteem, learner beliefs.

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Participant Consent Form

March, 2011

You are being invited to participate in a case study investigating the relationships between learner autonomy, language engagement and academic achievement. This study is being conducted by Raşide DAĞ AKBAŞ, a research assistant doing her master degree in Applied Linguistics, at the department of Western Languages and Literature, Karadeniz Technical University. This study is being conducted for the researcher's master thesis. There is no cost to you as a participant. If you decide to be a participant in this case study, you should be sure that there are no known risks. The information you provide will be used to determine the relationships between learner autonomy, language engagement and academic achievement. The questionnaire will take at most fifteen minutes to complete. The information obtained in this study will provide benefits for future academic studies. This survey is anonymous. Please do not write your name on the questionnaire and be sure that no one will be able to identify you or your answers. No personal information will be shared and the collected data will be used only for the researcher's master thesis. Your participation in this study is voluntary and we very much value your views. Please be sure that your participation will no way affect your grades in any class. You are free to skip any particular question you do not want to answer for any reason. Please be candid in your answers. Completing and returning the questionnaire to the researcher means that you agree to participate voluntarily.

If you have any questions or comments about the study, please feel free to contact the researcher at Western Languages and Literature, Karadeniz Technical University, rdag@ktu.edu.tr.

Section A : Please answer the following questions by ticking the answer and/or by filling the gap.

1. **Gender:** ☐ **Female** ☐ **Male**

2. **Class:** ☐ **Junior (3.)** ☐ **Senior (4.)**

3. **Grade-point Average (GPA- Genel Akademik Not Ortalaması): ………………**

4. **How many hours do you spend on your studies per day in general?**

   ☐ Not at all ☐ Fewer than 2 hours ☐ 2-4 hours ☐ 5 and more hours

5. **How would you describe yourself in terms of studying for your courses in general?**
   ☐ Not at all motivated to study
   ☐ Slightly motivated to study
   ☐ Motivated to study
   ☐ Well motivated to study
   ☐ Highly motivated to study

6. **How would you describe yourself in terms of being an EFL learner in general?**
   ☐ Not at all motivated to learn English
   ☐ Slightly motivated to learn English
   ☐ Motivated to learn English
   ☐ Well motivated to learn English
   ☐ Highly motivated to learn English

7. **How would you define yourself as a learner?**

Autonomous learner feels motivated to learn, controls over learning processes and does not consider the teacher to be only decision-maker in the learning process and feel responsible for all decisions concerning learning process including setting objectives, choosing course content, materials, activities, evaluation.

Section B: Here are some activities regarding your interest in English Language. Please answer the following questions by putting a cross (x) in the appropriate box.

Throughout your academic education, **how often** do you	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
8. take notes about new words?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
9. read books in English?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
10. read magazines, journals in English?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
11. read newspapers in English?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
12. watch TV/movies in English?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
13. listen to radio/songs in English?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
14. use Internet in English?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
15. chat online in English?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
16. keep diary in English?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
17. do exercises in English on your own?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
18. do translation studies on your own?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
19. talk to foreigners in English?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
20. practice using English with your friends?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
21. study English on your own?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
22. write English emails to your friends?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
23. take opportunities to speak in English in class?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
24. try to find new ways to improve your English level?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
25. set your own goals to improve your English level?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
26. look for opportunities to use your English?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Section C: Here are some questions about responsibilities. Please answer the following questions by putting a cross (x) in the appropriate box.

Whose **responsibility** should it be to	Completely teachers'	Mostly Teachers', partly mine	Half mine, half teachers'	Mostly mine, partly teachers'	Completely mine
27. make sure you make progress?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
28. stimulate your interest in courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
29. identify your weaknesses in courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
30. make you work harder?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
31. decide the objectives of courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
32. decide what you should learn next in your courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
33. decide how long to spend on each activity?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
34. choose what materials to use in courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
35. evaluate your learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
36. evaluate your course?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
37. decide what you learn outside class?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Section D: Here are some activities regarding your courses at the department. Please answer the following questions by putting a cross (x) in the appropriate box.

Throughout your academic education, **how often** do you	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
38. make suggestions to your teachers about courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
39. talk to your teachers for your own studies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
40. ask your teachers when you don't understand anything?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
41. go to library for self-study?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
42. do revision which is not required by teachers?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
43. do assignments which are not compulsory?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
44. discuss learning problems in class?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
45. set goals for your own studies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
46. monitor your own learning progress?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
47. make plans about your studies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
48. determine your own learning strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
49. note down new information about your courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
50. make research which is not compulsory about your courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
51. read books about your courses in addition to your course books?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Section E: Here are some questions about abilities. Please answer the following questions by putting a cross (x) in the appropriate box.

If you have the opportunity to do so, **how good** do you think you would be at	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
52. choosing learning activities in class?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
53. choosing learning activities for your own studies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
54. choosing learning objectives in your courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
55. choosing learning objectives for your own studies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
56. choosing learning materials in your courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
57. choosing learning materials for your own studies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
58. evaluating your learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
59. evaluating your courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
60. identifying your weaknesses in courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
61. deciding what you should learn next in your courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
62. deciding how long to spend activities in courses?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

APPENDIX-3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What should teachers' and students' role in learning process?

2. Do you think teachers should be authority in your classes? Or do you think both of you, teachers and students, should share this authority in class?

3. What do you think your responsibility should be as a student?

4. How well do you think you are managing your responsibilities in learning process?

5. How often and in what conditions do you need your teachers' assistance?

6. Do you feel motivated to study for your courses and to be successful?

7. Do you feel motivated to improve your language level?

8. What kind of activities do you think beneficial for you to improve your English? Do you do such kind of activities or practices?

9. Autonomous Learner is defined to feel motivated to learn and control over learning processes. Furthermore, autonomous learner does not consider the teacher to be only decision-maker in the learning process and feel responsible for all decisions concerning learning process including setting objectives, choosing course content, materials, activities, evaluation.

   – Based upon this definition, do you think how much you are autonomous? In what way?

10. Do you think being an autonomous learner brings success to you?

11. What are you doing to be successful academically?

12. What do you do to foster your academic achievement?

13. Do you think there is any relationship between your autonomy, your language engagement and academic success?

CURRICULUM VITAE

Raşide DAĞ AKBAŞ was born in Trabzon, 1986. After graduating from Tevfik Serdar Anatolian High School, she attended to the Department of English Language and Literature at Cumhuriyet University. Following the first year, she transferred from Cumhuriyet University to the Department of English Language and Literature at Karadeniz Technical University. During the academic year of 2006-2007, she studied at the Department of Anglistik und Amerikanistik at Technology University of Chemnitz in Germany within the framework of Erasmus Exchange Programme. She graduated from Department of English Language and Literature in 2008 and started to do her MA degree in Applied Linguistics at Karadeniz Technical University in the same year. She is currently a research assistant at Department of English Language and Literature. She knows English at advanced level and German at intermediate level.