Available online at ijci.wcci-international.org

International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction 11(1) (2019) 269–292

IJCI
International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction

The Effect of the Application of Learning Activities Based on Learner Autonomy on the 6th Grade Students' English Achievements, Attitudes, and Learner Autonomy

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Abstract

The study aims to determine the effects of learning activities based on learner autonomy on the English achievements, attitudes, and learner autonomy of 6th grade students by allowing students to choose activities to be conducted in English language teaching. The study was conducted on experimental and control groups. Research data were collected through the use of achievement tests, the scale of attitudes toward English lesson, learner autonomy scale, interviews and observation based on researcher's journal form. The study results showed that the achievement levels of the experimental group that used learning activities based on learner autonomy learning and those of the control group that used the activities within the framework of the curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of National Education increased. However, the experimental group was seen to be more successful than the control group. There were significant differences between students in experimental and control groups with respect to achievement, attitude, and learner autonomy scores but all the differences were in favor of the experimental group. As a result of the content analysis method, it was reached that learning English with various classroom activities based on learner autonomy was effective because of the fact that it facilitated, reinforced and retained students' learning process. Also, this learning process enhanced cognitive, affective, and self and peer assessment skills of students.

Keywords: Learner autonomy; English course; achievement; attitude; 6th graders

1. Introduction

Language learning is like a journey that begins in a language class and lasts forever. In learning process, students should be taught and guided in order to become

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This article is produced from a PhD dissertation entitled, *The Effect of the Application of Learning Activities Based on Learner Autonomy on the 6th Grade Students' English Achievements, Attitudes, Learning Autonomy and Retention of Knowledge*, Gazi University, Graduate School of Educational Sciences, Ankara, Turkey.

autonomous learners and develop their language skills by undertaking the responsibility for their learning. After leaving the school, students should be able to be in charge of their own learning and select appropriate learning activities suitable for their interests and needs. It has been observed that successful language learners have the ability to utilize autonomous and learning strategies in a correct way (Oxford & Leaver, 1996). In summary, active and effective language learning experience entails learner autonomy and strategies. For this reason, learner autonomy is recognized as an essential principle of language learning (Orakcı & Gelişli, 2017).

Learner autonomy, which means that the learners reflect on themselves and that they take responsibility for their own learning processes, has in fact become an important matter in the recent history of language teaching (Burkert & Schwienhorst, 2008; Lamb & Reinders, 2006; Lamb & Reinders, 2007; Little, 2009; Murphy, 2008; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003; Smith, 2000). However, language teachers strive to foster learner autonomy or to stimulate the idea of autonomy in language classes (Brajcich, 2000). Learner autonomy means encouraging students to "set objectives, define content, select methods and techniques to be used, monitor and evaluate what is acquired". Through this process, he/she finally sets up his/her own personal agenda for learning by planning, progressing step by step, evaluating the monitoring and learning process (Chan, 2003; Little, 1994). Learner autonomy is centered on the idea that when learners become involved in decision-making during teaching-learning process, they are likely to be more eager to learn and that they may be more focused on learning (Chan, 2001; Dam, 1990; Little, 1991; Littlejohn, 1985). The fact that students have the power and right to learn for themselves is also considered as an indispensable element of learner autonomy (Smith, 2008). To make contributions to the improvement of learner autonomy in language classes, it is crucial that students should become involved in decision-making in their own learning. Students' ability to behave in an autonomous way, as autonomy depends on creating an acceptable classroom culture, has a crucial role for teachers within this process (Barfield, 2007). The fact that students who learn a foreign language participate actively in decision-making in the teaching-learning process improves their learner autonomy and contributes to their learning target language better. In this respect, important tasks and responsibilities fall into foreign language teachers (Gömleksiz & Bozpolat, 2012). In order to develop autonomy in students, teachers should enable students to choose their learning duties, as well as supporting their students in identifying their interests, goals, and values. They can create opportunities to provide autonomy for students. Teachers can encourage students to self-assess, plan their activities, and enable them to think about themselves as learners, thus providing autonomy-supportive coaching (Sierens, 2010). They should try to learn about students' feelings and thoughts about their learning duties, let them criticize and encourage them to think independently (Assor, Kaplan & Roth, 2002). Besides the responsibilities of the

teacher, students also have some responsibilities. When students take on responsibility, they perform more meaningful and successful learning (Boyno, 2011). Likewise, students are expected to select activities from the textbooks according to their needs, expectations as well as interests and internalize them. They are also expected to produce their own questions and use their visuals in the most efficient way (Christophorou, 1994). In fact, it means that motivated and self-confident learners can become successful learners not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. Thus, creating an environment that enables learners to develop in an autonomous way has a great importance in enhancing student motivation and confidence. Another way to improve autonomy among students is to engage students in the decision-making process, particularly through activities that can enhance student motivation in the classroom (McGrath, 2013). To promote students to task-based, collaborative and project-based language activities that will strengthen them by increasing their self-respect, autonomy and language skills is one of the methods to increase learner autonomy (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

Dewey (1916) puts emphasis on the features of "Learner Centered Curriculum" and thinks that the aim of a curriculum is to help learners understand (comprehend) subject matter and to have necessary skills and knowledge to become autonomous in their learning process. Within this context, it is seen that learner autonomy plays a vital role in curriculum. In addition, Holden and Usuki (1999) state that teacher-centered teaching during which the learners are engaged with lower level learning activities in the classroom with the control of teacher makes learners passive in learning process. Unfortunately, "school curriculums", "course materials used in classrooms", "approaches used by teachers in classrooms", "learning activities" and "classroom setting up" which constitute the basic elements of Turkish education system are not appropriate for improving the learner autonomy in practice (Tedmem, 2018). In a study conducted by Kırtık (2017), Turkish education system is shaped according to teacher-centered approaches. Therefore, passive-learning occurs in a setting in which the teacher is the focus and thus learner autonomy is ignored. In the current study, this study tries to fill the gap in the body of literature by investigating the effects of learning activities based on learner autonomy in terms of 6th grade students' English achievements, attitudes, and level of learner autonomy.

1.1. The Aim of the Study

This study aims to examine the differences between experimental and control groups in terms of level of achievement, attitude, and learner autonomy after the experimental procedure and to reveal students' opinions about the application of learning activities based on learner autonomy.

1.2. Research questions

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1: What are the differences between experimental and control groups in terms of level of achievement, attitude, and learner autonomy after the experimental procedure?

2: What are the opinions of students in the experimental group about the application of learning activities based on learner autonomy?

1.3. Limitations of the Research

The research has certain limitations to be considered. Firstly, the findings about the application of learning activities based on learner autonomy are limited to data obtained from the data collection instruments carried out with experimental and group students in only one school. Secondly, the study lasted only 9 weeks. Thirdly, the study included only three units- "After School", "Yummy Breakfast" and "A Day in My City". Finally, it should be taken into account that this study is limited to the purpose of attracting the attention to the importance of the application of learning activities based on learner autonomy rather than giving a general perspective about this important matter.

2. Method

In the study, the mixed method was chosen. In order to determine whether application of activities was effective in the experimental group, both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques were used. In this study, experimental embedded design, which is one of the mixed method designs, was used. It was thought that the findings of the experimental group may be more understandable.

In the current study, students' achievement, attitudes and level of learner autonomy were determined firstly. Then, experimental group was lectured with application of activities based on learner autonomy whereas the control group was lectured with a teaching process in which current curriculum was followed. After completion of the 9-week experimental process, the achievement levels, attitudes and level of learner autonomy of the students in the experimental group at the end of the application were re-determined. While this part of the study formed in the mixed method constitutes the quantitative dimension, the fact that the interviews were realized in order to find out the reasons behind the success of the students deeply and these interviews were supported with the reports of researcher observations and evaluation reports constitutes the qualitative dimension of the study. In the study, a quasi-experimental design with pretest-posttest control group was applied because of the lack of random assignment to

obtain the data necessary for the quantitative dimension of the study (Büyüköztürk, 2013).

Activities based on learner autonomy were applied to the experimental group. The curriculum which was prepared by the MoNE curriculum was applied to control group. In order to equalize students' prior knowledge before the application, the English achievement test was administered to both groups. In addition, the learner autonomy scale and attitude scale developed within the scope of the study were used to match groups in terms of students' level of learner autonomy and attitude. Experimental and control groups with approximate scores were formed in terms of the scores got from the English achievement test, learner autonomy and attitude scale. During the 9-week experimental process, the experimental group itself chose the activities based on learner autonomy, whereas the control group did all anticipated activities prepared by MoNE. Following the experimental application, each of the achievement test, attitude and learner autonomy scales as a post-test were re-administered to both groups at the end of the experimental application. In the study, both groups were compared with each other based on quantitative data.

"Semi-structured interview forms" were applied to the students in the experimental group in the learner autonomy environment to support quantitative data obtained in the research. In addition, the reports of researcher observations and evaluation reports about the application of activities based on learner autonomy constitute the qualitative dimension of the study.

For this study, necessary formal permissions were obtained from MoNE and students' families. In addition, volunteer students were chosen in order to carry out interviews. Then, permissions were asked for their families, a written consent was obtained from the students and it was determined to have interviews with them.

In addition, after the application for the study ended in the 9th week of the study, the activities that were developed based on the learner autonomy were seen to be effective in the application and they were applied to the students in the control group in elective English courses.

2.1. Sample / Participants

The study was conducted in a secondary school in Altındağ district of Ankara, Turkey during the 2016-2017 fall term. Experimental group was composed of 32 students whereas control group consisted of 33 students. 6/B class of the school was assigned as an experimental group whereas 6/C class was assigned as a control group. The scores of the students' English achievement, their attitude towards the English course and learner autonomy in the groups were tested to identify whether they were approximately equal. Equivalence of groups before experimental procedure was ensured in terms of the scores

of the students' English achievement, their attitude towards the English course and learner autonomy in both groups.

In forming a study group with regard to the qualitative dimension of the study, it was decided to interview some of the students in the experimental group in order to carry out in-depth research on "the application of activities based on learner autonomy" in the experimental group. As to the qualitative dimension of the study, the study group was formed on the basis of volunteering from the upper, middle and lower group of students in terms of achievement scores. In addition, whether there was a homogeneous distribution in terms of gender was taken into account to ensure diversity. In sum, a total of 9 students, five of whom were male and four of whom were girls, constituted the study group with regard to the qualitative dimension of the study.

2.2. Instruments

With the aim of measuring 6th graders' English course achievement, English Achievement Test was developed by the researchers. The expert opinions were considered to ensure evidence of the validity of the prepared achievement test. A standard achievement test of 41 items that evaluate 24 acquisitions was rated as "1 point for each correct answer and 0 for each wrong answer". The reliability of the final test was found to be 0.89 for the KR-20.

With the aim of determining students' attitudes for English course in experimental and control groups, Attitude Scale toward English course was developed by the researchers as no attitude scale toward English course created in Turkish that determine 6th grade students' attitudes for English course and serve the aim of the research was found in literature. The scale was composed of 16 items which provided a two factor structure for the scale. At the end of exploratory factor analysis, factor load values of the scale were found between 0.42 – 0.81 for factor 1 and 0.42 - 0.73 for factor 2. The "Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient" of the first factor (behavioural dimension) of the scale which was composed of 10 items was found as 0.91, the second factor (affective dimension) composed of 6 items was found as 0.88, and all of them was found as 0.89. The variance explained is 58.33%. The values of "Chi-square" and "degree of freedom" got from "Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)" are $\chi 2 = 438.32$, ($df= 205$, $p<.01$), and the ratio of $\chi 2/sd = 2.14$ is obtained.

Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) was developed by the researchers to determine the autonomy level of students towards English lesson in experimental and control group as no learner autonomy scale created in Turkish that determine 6th grader's level of learner autonomy and serve the purpose of the research was found in the literature. The scale was composed of 14 items that provided a single factor structure for the scale. According to the results of "exploratory factor analysis", item-total correlations are between 0.692 and 0.916. The factor load values of the scale were found between 0.672 and 0.912. The

variance explained is 74% and this value is thought acceptable (Büyüköztürk, 2013). The reliability value of the scale was found 0.965, which is considered as highly reliable (Özdamar, 2013). It has also been seen in the exploratory factor analysis that the scale revealed only one factor. Therefore, the varimax rotation method was not realized. The values of "Chi-square" and "degree of freedom" got from "Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)" are $\chi 2 = 112.08$, ($df=53$, $p<.01$), and the ratio of $\chi 2/sd = 2.11$ is obtained.

"Researcher's Diary" and "Semi-Structured Interview Form" developed by the researcher were also used with regard to the qualitative part of the study.

For "Researcher's Diary", all English lessons were observed for 9 weeks and they were recorded with the help of the diary. During the application process, the researcher kept the diaries to note the experiences in the process with the help of expert opinions. In order to conceal the identities of the students in the experimental group, nicknames were used. Through the diaries, the researcher got a data source after observation of classroom activities. Student views were presented using direct quotations.

For "Semi-Structured Interview Form", question pool was prepared for the semi-structured interview form firstly. In order to examine the semi-structured interview form (interview questions, alternative questions and probes) for the students, four different experts' opinions were taken, and pilot interviews were conducted with three students from the experimental group and the questions of semi-structered interview form were examined. The comprehensibility of the questions was tested. Following expert opinions and pilot interviews, the interview form was finalized.

2.3. Data analysis

As the scores of achievement test, attitude and learner autonomy scales obtained from the experimental group did not display a normal distribution, "Mann Whitney U Test" was applied.

"Deductive and inductive content analysis" was employed in the analysis and interpretation of the qualitative part of the study. For content analysis, the data were read several times to gain a general viewpoint and were coded in two cycles. In the first cycle, the data were divided into meaningful sections with the use of open and descriptive coding. The meaning every section conceptually explained was tried to find. Then, the second cycle was realized. In this phase, categories were re-formed with pattern and axis coding. Then, they were themed.

2.4. Validity and Reliability for Qualitative Data

In qualitative research, the concept of "credibility" is used instead of internal validity. According to Meriam (2009) and Patton (2014), "triangulation", "long-term interaction", "expert examination" and "participant confirmation" are methods used to increase credibility in qualitative research. In this study, multiple data collection tools such as academic achievement test for English course, attitude scale and learner autonomy and

semi-structured interview form for the application were used as a requirement of "triangulation" method in gathering qualitative data. Thus, it was attempted to provide credibility of the research by ensuring that the findings obtained confirm each other mutually. Another method employed to increase the credibility of the research is "long-term interaction". In this study, the researcher worked with the students for 9 weeks and was able to spend more time with the participants in the role of implementer. Thus, problems that may arise due to the presence of the researcher were reduced and efforts have been made to increase the credibility of the research. The other method used to increase the persuasiveness of the research is the "expert examination". Two experts who are specialized in qualitative research methods were requested to examine the process from the design of the research to the gathered data, analysis of it and reporting of the results. The report was finalized in the direction of feedback from both experts. In qualitative research, methods such as "detailed description" and "purposeful sampling selection" were used to provide transferability used instead of external validity. "Detailed description" is the rearrangement of the raw data gathered in the scope of the research according to the emerging themes and transfer to the reader without adding comments (Linkoln & Guba, 1985). With the help of researcher observation notes, evaluation reports and students' opinions, it was tried to help the reader visualize the setting in which the data were obtained by detailed description. In addition, as Meriam (2009) emphasizes, transferability was tried to be increased by paying attention to the selection of samples in the research. Students were selected from the upper, middle and lower groups in terms of achievement scores on the basis of volunteerism and so diversity in the selection of interviewed individuals was provided. In addition, to make the consistency of the research possible, another researcher was requested to help in the analysis of the data as suggested by LeCompte and Goetz (1982) and the results reached were provided to be confirmed (as cited in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). After the application, students' responses to open-ended questions were examined separately with a coding key by both two experts working on qualitative research methods and researcher. The categories and themes formed from the obtained data were discussed (Benson, 2006; Chan, 2003; Little, 1994). As a result of the calculation by "Miles and Huberman's reliability formula"; "[P= (number of agreements /total number of agreements + disagreements) ×100", an agreement of 81% was reached. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), "an inter-rater reliability 80% agreement between coders on 95% of the codes is sufficient agreement among multiple coders." Therefore, this estimate is considered reliable for research (p. 64).

3. Results

3.1. Measurements for English Achievement, Attitude and Learner Autonomy in terms of Pre-Test, Post-Test, and Retention Test

In the study, English achievement test, attitude and learner autonomy scales for the English course were applied to the experimental and control groups separately as pre-test and post-test before and after the research implementation. In addition, both experimental and control groups were subjected to retention tests nine weeks after completion of the experimental procedure. Descriptive statistics calculated as a result of the applications are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

		N	$\overline{X}$	Median	Mod	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Min	Max	Range
Experimental Group	Achievement Test (Pretest)	32	9	9	8	1.4	0.5	-0.3	7	12	5
	Achievement Test (Posttest)	32	24.6	25.5	19	5.6	0.1	-1.2	16	35	19
	Achievement Test (Retention test)	32	29.9	32	32	6.3	-0.9	-0.3	16	38	22
	Attitude Test (Pretest)	32	35.6	35	35	6.3	0.3	-0.3	25	50	25
	Attitude Test (Posttest)	32	47.9	45	45	7.7	0.6	-0.1	35	65	30
	Learner Autonomy Test (Pretest)	32	27.7	25	20	8.3	0.9	-0.4	20	45	25
	Learner Autonomy Test (Pretest)	32	39.1	35	35	9.3	1.0	0.7	25	65	40
Control Group	Achievement Test (Pretest)	33	8.9	9	9	1.3	0.4	-0.2	7	12	5
	Achievement Test (Posttest)	33	14.5	14	14	4.1	2.9	9.0	10	30	20
	Achievement Test (Retention test)	33	16.4	16	14	4.3	2.9	9.8	12	34	22
	Attitude Test (Pretest)	33	34.1	35	35	5.5	0.2	-0.2	25	45	20
	Attitude Test (Posttest)	33	38.5	40	40	8.1	0.4	0.1	25	55	30
	Learner Autonomy Test (Pretest)	33	27.1	25	20	8.4	0.9	-0.3	20	45	25
	Learner Autonomy Test (Pretest)	33	29.7	25	25	8.4	1.2	1.1	20	50	30

When Table1 is carefully examined, it is clear that

• While the highest score to be got from the achievement test was 49, it was determined that the mean score from the pre-test was 9 (mod 8). According to these data, it can be said that there was a considerable success increase in the experimental group.

• The highest score to be got from the attitude scale was 80, whereas the mean score obtained from the pre-test was 35.6 (mod 35) and the post-test score was 47.9 (mod 45). According to these data, it can be said that there was a remarkable positive attitude increase in the experimental group.

• The highest score to be got from the autonomy scale was 70 while the mean score obtained from the pre-test was 27.7 (mod 20), and the final test score is 39.1 (mode 35). According to these data, it can be said that there was a significant increase in terms of the level of autonomy in the experimental group.

On the other hand, when Table1 is looked at carefully again, it is clear that

• While the highest score to be got from the achievement test was 49, the mean score obtained from the pre-test was 8.9 (mod 9), the mean score of the post test was 14.5 (mod 14) and the mean of the retention test was 16.4 (mod 14). According to these data, it can be said that there was an increase in success in the control group.

• The highest score to be got from the attitude scale was 80, while the mean score obtained from the pre-test was 34.1 (mod 35), and the post-test score was 38.5 (mod 40). According to these data, it can be said that there was some positive attitude increase in the control group.

• The highest score to be got from the autonomy scale was 70, while the mean score to be got from the pre-test was 27.1 (mod 20), and the post-test score was 29.7 (mod 25). According to these data, it can be said that there was a slight increase in terms of the level of autonomy in the control group.

3.2. Findings and Comments on Academic Achievement

As the data did not have normal distribution, the Mann Whitney U test was employed for determining whether there was a significant difference between post-tests of both groups. The test results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of final post-test achievement scores of experimental and control groups

	Variable	N	Rank Mean	Median	Rank Sum	U Value	P
Post- Test	Experimental	32	47.88	25.5	1532.00	52.000	0.000*
	Control	33	18.58	14	613.00		

*P<0.05

When Table 2 is looked at carefully, results of the "Mann Whitney U Test" revealed that there was a significant difference (U= 52,000, p<.05) between experimental and control groups in terms of achievement scores. This difference is on the side of the experimental group. When rank means and median values are examined, the mean of post-test scores of the experimental group is significantly higher than the mean of post-test scores of the control group. According to this, it can be stated that the application of activities based on learner autonomy increased achievement in the experimental group more than in the control group.

3.3. Findings and comments on attitude towards English course

As the data did not have normal distribution, the "Mann Whitney U test" was used for determining whether there was a significant difference between post-tests of the experimental and control group. The test results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of post-test attitude scores of experimental and control groups

Variable		N	Rank mean	Rank sum	Median	U Value	p
Post Test	Experimental	32	43.19	1382.00	45	202.000	0.000*
	Control	33	23,12	763,00	40		

*P<0.05

When Table 3 is looked at carefully, results of the "Mann Whitney U Test" showed that there was a significant difference (U=202,000, p<.05) in both groups with regard to attitude towards English course. When rank means and median values are examined, it is seen that this difference is on the side of the experimental group. As shown in Table 3, the mean of post-test scores of the experimental group is significantly higher than the mean of post-test scores of the control group. According to this, it can be said that the application of activities based on learner autonomy in the experimental group has increased students' attitudes for English lesson higher than the application of English curriculum by MoNE in the control group.

3.4. Findings and Comments on learner autonomy

As the data did not have normal distribution, the "Mann Whitney U test" was used for determining whether there was a significant difference between post-tests of the experimental and control groups. The test results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Comparison of students' post-test learner autonomy scores in experimental and control groups

	Variable	N	Rank mean	Rank sum	Median	U Value	p
Post Test	Experimental	32	42.83	1370.50	35	213.500	0.000*
	Control	33	23.47	774.50	25		

*P<0.05

When Table 4 is looked at carefully, results of the "Mann Whitney U Test" revealed that there was a significant difference (U=213,500, $p < .05$) in the experimental and control group with regard to students' learner autonomy. When rank means and median values are looked at carefully, it is seen that this difference is on the side of the experimental group. As shown in Table 4, the mean of post-test scores of the experimental group is significantly higher than the mean of post-test scores of the control group. According to this, it can be said that the application of activities based on learner autonomy in the experimental group has increased students' level of learner autonomy higher than the application of English curriculum by MoNE in the control group.

The last research question of the study is "What are the opinions of 6th grade students about the application of learning activities based on learner autonomy?" After the end of the application of activities based on learner autonomy, 9 students in the experimental group were interviewed and students' opinions about the application were interpreted with direct quotations from researcher observations and researcher evaluation reports. A code list was formed as result of analysis of the students' opinions about the application process. Thanks to the examination of this code list, six main themes about the application process were identified. In Table 5 below, a model for the application process of activities based on learner autonomy is presented as a result of a content analysis.

Table 5. The model for the application process of activities based on learner autonomy

Themes	f
Contributions to the learning of the application of activities based on learner autonomy	30
Learning	21
Facilitating learning	8
Making Learning Permanent	7
Reinforcing Learning	6
Participation in the Course	9
Increasing Participation in the Course	9
Behavioral results of application of activities based on learner autonomy	59
Affective Outcomes	2
Developing Positive Attitude	7
Developing self-esteem and self-confidence	7

Table 5 (continued)

Developing risk taking ability	7
Developing a feeling of autonomy-independence	6
Developing a feeling of responsibility	5
Cognitive Outcomes	27
Developing prediction ability	7
Developing decision making skills	6
Developing research inquiry skills	6
Developing creative thinking skills	5
Developing problem solving skills	3
Developing language skills	29
Developing Speaking Skills	8
Developing Listening Skills	7
Developing Writing Skills	7
Developing Reading Skills	7
Contribution to the evaluation skills of the application of activities based on learner autonomy	13
Developing Self-Assessment Skills	7
Developing Peer Assessment Skills	6
Students' selection criteria for activities based on learner autonomy	44
Friend influence	8
Being Interesting	8
Intriguing	7
Love of activity	7
Being funny	6
Being easy	6
Being difficult	2
Courses to be useful of the application of activıties based on learner autonomy	19
Turkish	5
Math	5
Sciences	4
Social Sciences	3
Religion	2

The opinions of the students on the "Learning" category, which is one of the sub-dimensions of the main theme named "contributions to the learning of the application of

activities based on learner autonomy" are mostly about "facilitating learning" (f=8); and "making learning permanent" (f=7), and "reinforcing learning" (f=6) respectively. The students' opinions about the sub-dimensions of the "learning" category are given below:

S2: "It was very interesting and fun to learn by means of activities. I think it made learning process easier for us." (Learning, Facilitating learning)

S8: "I could remember what I learned at school easily because we learned them with different activities. There was not much homework left at home since we learned what we have to learn in the class "(Learning, Making learning permanent)

S9: "Different kinds of activities reinforced my learning process." (Learning, Reinforcing Learning)

S3: "With this practice, the students became more involved in activities in the classroom. In the past, I did not participate in the activities too much. These activities have increased my participation, and I could find many opportunities to express myself more easily." (Participation in the Course, Increasing Participation in the Course*)*

Arguments of researcher observations and evaluation reports overlap with students' views. The researcher's notes about "contributions to the learning of the application of activities based on learner autonomy" for the fifth week of his study are given below:

"Today, most of the students chose the "Role Play" activity. Almost all of them were happy and excited when they went to the board after they had done the activity among themselves. During the "Role Play" event, all students were willing and participation level of students increased. Sometimes I saw Şeyda behaving her role timidly. Kenan and Burak, who were not active in the lesson, did not start speaking before, were talking and participating actively in the activities." 27.10.2016

"…. The students had the opportunity to reinforce what they learned through the activities, learned new words by looking up the meaning of the words in the dictionary they did not know their meaning. It was also seen that all of the activities selected by the students also enhanced participation in the class. Being active in the course facilitated learning and made learning permanent…." (Researcher Evaluation Report-Third Week, 13.10.2016).

It was seen that the category, "Behavioural results of application of activities based on learner autonomy" (f=59) formed from the opinions of the students is composed of sub-dimension called "Affective Outcomes" (f=32) which are: "Developing Positive Attitude" (f=7), "Developing self-esteem and self-confidence" (f=7), "Developing risk taking ability"(f=7), "Developing decision making skills" (f=6), "Developing a feeling of

autonomy-independence" (f=6), and "Developing a feeling of responsibility"(f=5). Students' opinions relating to these findings are given below:

S4: "We had lots of fun in the activities we did, and we enjoyed them very much." (Affective Outcomes, Developing Positive Attitude Development).

S2: "Due to these activities, my self-confidence increased. My legs were shaking during a presentation before but now I am relaxed during my presentations." (Affective Outcomes, Developing self-esteem and self-confidence)

S8: "While I was learning in the lesson, I experienced a lot of stress and felt nervous at the beginning but I do not have such a feeling anymore. Thanks to the activities, I became more motivated to participate in the lessons. I also took risks by devoting myself more to activities. As a result, I overcame the fear of making mistakes" (Affective Outcomes, Developing Risk Taking Ability)

S8: "I improved my English and I enjoyed it very much. Mostly I liked the "Memory Game" activity. I improved my memory, too. It was a very good feeling to choose the activities we wanted because the activities were interesting or difficult for me. Having the right to choose whatever I wanted was the best feeling for me." (Affective Outcomes, Developing a feeling of autonomy-independence)

S3: "Group activities showed that we could cooperate. Everyone had a responsibility. We also learned to fulfil our responsibility." (Affective Outcomes, Developing a feeling of responsibility)

It was seen that the category, "Behavioural results of application of activities based on learner autonomy" (f=59) is also composed of sub-dimension called "Cognitive Outcomes" (f=27) which are: "Developing prediction ability" (f=7), "Developing decision making skills" (f=7), "Developing research inquiry skills" (f=6), "Developing creative thinking skills" (f=5), and "Developing problem solving skills" (f=3). Students' opinions related to these findings are given below:

S5: "We did these activities and I was very pleased. We developed our prediction ability" (Cognitive Results, Developing prediction ability)

S3: "As far as I've seen, everyone was excited when we would choose the activities. That's why this method enhanced decision making skills" (Cognitive Outcomes, Developing Decision Making Skills)

S1: "My teacher, I was worried about how to do it when I first selected the activities. However, I learned by searching and asking you and my group friend. I tried to look up the meaning of the words I did not know or you helped me learn them by showing the pictures. I also did research on the writing assignments you gave at the end of the unit from the internet. But I wrote it myself because you said that I would understand whether

or not you found it from the internet" (Cognitive Outcomes, Developing Research Interrogation Skills)

S2: "I always started choosing different activities with my group. In fact, I can say that different activities developed my creative skill. Last week in social studies class, our teacher told us to make a presentation. I used especially picture strip story activity for the presentation of the social studies course (a presentation with the title "Technology and Effects") because I loved it a lot in the English course. I got the highest mark in the class" (Cognitive Outcomes, Developing Creative Thinking Skills

S4: "I felt like I had solved a math problem myself especially in the "Baker Street" and "Matching Time" activities. I also solved it with the help of you and my friend." (Cognitive Outcomes, Developing Problem Solving Skills)

It was seen that the category, "Developing Language Skills" (f=29) is also composed of sub-dimensions. These are: "Developing Speaking Skills" (f=8), "Developing Listening Skills (f=7)", "Developing Writing Skills" (f=6), and "Developing Reading Skills" (f=7). Students' opinions related to these findings are given below:

S9: "If we go on like this, I think I can talk and understand easily." (Developing Language Skills, Developing Speaking Skills, Developing Reading Skills)

S2: "Some of the activities increased my speaking skills, some of the activities increased my reading skills. Also, I could answer by listening to the questions my friend asked. Namely, my listening skills were improved. My writing skills were also improved thanks to your writing assignments."

The researcher's notes on "Developing Language Skills" for the fourth week of his study are given below:

"Today was the fourth week of application. I see great changes in the students in a positive sense. Initially, students had prejudices about reading and speaking skills. However, thanks to the activities I saw that this prejudice was broken and that the students' learning and speaking skills were improved highly. The fact that the activities were colorful and also illustrated made them easier to understand and encouraged them to speak English." (27.10.2016)

It was seen that the category, "contribution to the evaluation skills of the application of activities based on learner autonomy" (f=13) is composed of two sub-dimensions. These are: "Developing Self-Assessment Skills" (f=7), and "Developing Peer Assessment Skills" (f=6). Students' opinions related to these findings are given below:

S5: "I marked my strengths and weaknesses. It enabled me to see my progress. I could see wherever I had shortcomings. I revised content learned in the previous lesson to make up for the shortcomings" (Contribution to the evaluation skills of the application of activities based on learner autonomy, Developing Self-Assessment Skills)

S6: "Thanks to this application, I had the opportunity to evaluate my friend. This was a very good application. I loved it very much. It gave us a different perspective. The forms that you gave us enabled me and my friend to see our own achievements and failures." (Contribution to the evaluation skills of the application of activities based on learner autonomy, Developing Peer Assessment Skills)

It was seen that the other category is, "students' selection criteria for activities based on learner autonomy". It is composed of seven sub-dimensions. These are: "Friend influence" (f=8), "Being Interesting" (f=8), "Intriguing" (f=7), "Love of activity" (7), "Being funny" (6), "Being easy" (6) and "Being difficult" (2). Students' opinions related to these findings are given below:

S4: "My friend affected me in choosing activities. We also decided to choose difficult activities with my group of friends. Because we thought we would learn a lot more if we learned difficult topics." (Friend influence, Being difficult)

S9: "We took into account that the activities we would choose should be interesting. We thought that it wasn't useful to choose the same activity. We always wondered what we could do with different activities. I chose the activities that I loved and were easy to do." (Being Interesting, Intriguing, Being easy, Love of activity).

The researcher's notes on "students' selection criteria for activities based on learner autonomy" are given below:

"*Today was the fifth week of application. After lecturing, I distributed the activity list to the students. Students decided to select the activities they wanted to do from the activity lists in groups of two. During break time, students asked each other what activities they had chosen. I became involved in their conversations. I asked them what activities and why they chose them. The majority of the students said that they chose the activities their friends preferred. They also said that they chose activities that were fun, interesting and intriguing. As far as I can see and understand, students work in harmony with their friends and also learn better by choosing interesting and intriguing activities for them by having fun."* (20.10.2016)

It was seen that the category, "courses to be useful of the application of activities based on learner autonomy" (13) is composed of five sub-dimensions. These are: "Turkish" (f=5), "Math" (f=5), "Sciences" (f=4), "Social Sciences" (f=3), Religion (f=2). Students' opinions relating to these findings are given below:

S7: "I would like to have such an application in Turkish, Math, Sciences, Social Sciences and Religion. Because you feel more relaxed and you speak more comfortably." (Turkish, Math, Sciences, Social Sciences, Religion)

S2: "It would be great if there were such activities in the math lesson. Nobody likes this lesson. By means of interesting and funny activities, students may like math class." (Math)

4. Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

When all the findings for the achievement test are considered, it can be said that compared to the control group, the application of activities centered on learner autonomy in the experimental group increased the achievement significantly in the experimental group. The finding that the application of activities based on learner autonomy in the experimental group increased the achievement overlaps with the finding that the improvement of the learner autonomy can bring the success of language with it as a result of the literature and similar studies about the relation between learner autonomy and language achievement (Dafei, 2007; Zhang & Li, 2004; Zimmerman & Risenberg, 1997). The results of this research coincide with the results of the study by Okumuş Ceylan (2014) that promoting learner autonomy using cognitive and metacognitive strategies in second or foreign language teaching can develop students' English proficiency and success. Similar findings are seen in other studies. Risenberg and Zimmerman (1992) along with Ablard and Lipschultz (1998) argued that the correlation between linguistic competence and learner autonomy was not based on a simple causal relationship. On the other hand, Zhang and Li (2004) found that there was no significant difference between learner autonomy when students' English self-efficacy was not significantly different, but that there was a significant difference between learner autonomy when their English proficiency was significantly different. The activities based on learner autonomy were found to significantly increase permanent learning and similar studies (Biçer, 2011; Durusoy, 2012; Zeybek, 2016) support this. It was revealed that the application in the experimental group increased the attitude toward English course significantly. It is thought that the students in the experimental group increased their scores because they were given the opportunity to increase their motivation by considering the needs and interests of the students in the experiment group. This increase in the experimental group may have been resulted from the activities, tasks and teacher. As a result of this, it can be said that the tasks and the activity list in the study have a great importance because they allowed the students to have the opportunity to select what they wanted to do or perform. Based on the results of the study, it can be said that similar findings can be reached in groups with similar characteristics. Chen and Pan (2015) found that the correlation among learner autonomy and foreign language learning motivation and self-efficacy belief was positive and that the correlation between learner autonomy and foreign language learning anxiety was negative. Cotterall (1999) also suggested that learning motivation contributed to the development of learner autonomy conducting a study on the level of self-efficacy. Xu and Xu (2004) claimed that learner autonomy was influenced by learning motivation, which drives self-directed learning and motivates learners. It was found that the application in the experimental group significantly increased the learner autonomy of the students in the experimental group. This finding of the study overlaps with similar studies (Okumuş Ceylan, 2014). In

addition, it can be said that in this research, giving students the opportunity to choose improved their learner autonomy. In fact, Holec (1981) stated that giving the students the opportunity to choose was essential for learner autonomy. Cotteral (1995) emphasized the concept of selection in the center of learner autonomy. These views of the researchers support the findings obtained from the quantitative part of the research.

The students' views were applied to find an answer of the last research question that constitutes the qualitative part of the study. According to students' opinions, observation and evaluation reports, it was determined that the application facilitated students' learning, enabled them to reinforce their previous learning, made their learning permanent, and increased their participation in the lesson. In addition, the application made a contribution to the students in terms of affective properties such as "Developing Positive Attitude", "Developing self-esteem and self-confidence", "Developing risk taking ability" "Developing decision making skills" "Developing a feeling of autonomy-independence" and "Developing a feeling of responsibility". This finding of the study overlaps with similar studies (Başbay, 2006; Johnson, 2007; Yılmaz, 2010; Biçer, 2011; Gün, 2012; Öner, 2012; Caughie, 2015).

The application was found to develop students' prediction, decision making, research inquiry, creative thinking and problem solving skills. This finding of the study overlaps with similar studies (Başbay, 2006; Biçer, 2011; Lasovage, 2006; Morgan, 2006; Öner, 2012; Stenhoff, Davey & Lignugaris Kraft, 2008; Yılmaz, 2010). At the same time, the application contributed to the development of language skills of students. This finding of the study is supported by similar studies (Aziz, 1995; Brown, Bransford, Ferrara & Campione, 1983; Chipman & Segal, 1985; Dafei, 2007; Dansereau, 1985; Nakatani, 2006; Segal, Chipman & Glaser, 1985).

As a result of the interviews made with the students in the study, the application contributed to the self and peer assessment skills of the students. The finding that students' self-assessment skills developed thanks to the application in the study overlaps with similar study findings (Durusoy, 2012; Koç, 2013; Yılmaz, 2010). From the opinions of the students, "students' selection criteria for activities based on learner autonomy" are composed of "Friend influence", "Being Interesting", "Intriguing", "Love of activity", "Being funny", "Being easy" and "Being difficult". This finding of the study coincides with the results of Aydoğuş (2009), Yılmaz (2010) and Koç's (2013) studies. Students expressed that the application would be the most useful for Turkish lesson and then respectively "Math", "Sciences", "Social Sciences" and "Religion" lessons. This finding of the study is supported by similar studies (Aydoğuş, 2009; Biçer, 2011; Durusoy, 2012; Gün, 2012; Koç, 2016).

- When it was taken into account the findings and data got from the research, it was revealed that the students who participated in learner autonomy-based teaching practice were much more successful than the students in the existing application of

MoNE. This result can be thought of as an indicator that the application should be used in all levels of education, starting from the pre-school. In fact, the more learner autonomous learning skills are gained to students at an early age, the more competent students become to undertake their own learning and the more likely they are to succeed in their future education.

- Learning is a lifelong process. Learners always may not find teachers by the side of them every term. Thus, learner autonomy can be gained to the students not only through formal education but also through curricula developed for non-formal education.

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