

A BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN RELATION TO
LEARNER AUTONOMY

The Graduate School of Education
of
Bilkent University

by

ÖZLEM BİTLİS

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of
Teaching English as a Foreign Language
Bilkent University

ANKARA

July 2011

BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
MA THESIS EXAMINATION RESULT FORM

July 7, 2011

The examining committee appointed by the Graduate School of Education
for the thesis examination of the MA TEFL student

Özlem Bitlis

has read the thesis of the student.

The committee has decided that the thesis of the student is satisfactory.

Thesis Title: Blended Learning Environment in Relation to Learner
Autonomy

Thesis Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. JoDee Walters
Bilkent University, MA TEFL Program

Committee Members: Asst. Prof. Dr. Julie Mathews-Aydinli
Bilkent University, MA TEFL Program

Dr. William Snyder
Teachers' College, Columbia University (Japan)

ABSTRACT

BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN RELATION TO
LEARNER AUTONOMY

Bitlis, Özlem

M.A., Department of Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Supervisor: Vis. Asst. Prof. Dr. JoDee Walters

July 2011

The study investigated whether a blended learning environment supports learner autonomy in the Turkish EFL context and what aspects of this blended learning environment help to foster learner autonomy. A software language learning program called ‘My English Lab (MeLab)’ was integrated in the traditional classroom environment to create a blended learning context.

The data collection procedures included a questionnaire, administered to 36 students of the preparatory school at Fatih University. Student group interviews and individual teacher interviews were held. In addition, learner logs were collected and lesson observations were conducted.

The results revealed that the blended learning approach helped to foster learner autonomy and the aspects of this learning model believed to support learner autonomy encouraged students to practice their autonomous abilities. It was found that most of the students engaged in the autonomous activities, at least some of the time in the blended learning environment. The results suggested that a blended learning environment could be created to help the students practice their autonomous abilities and to foster learner autonomy in the Turkish EFL context.

Key Words: blended learning, learner autonomy

ÖZET

HARMANLANMIŞ ÖĞRENME ORTAMININ ÖĞRENCİLERİN BAĞIMSIZ ÖĞRENME BECERİLERİ İLE İLİŞKİSİ

Bitlis, Özlem

Yüksek Lisans, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi Programı

Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. JoDee Walters

Bu çalışma, harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamının, öğrencilerin bağımsız öğrenme becerilerini, Türkiye’deki İngilizce Yabancı Dil Öğrenme ortamında destekleyip desteklemediğini ve bu harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamının ne gibi özellikleri bağımsız öğrenme becerilerini teşvik etmeye yardımcı oluyor sorularını araştırmak için yürütülmüştür. Harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamı oluşturmak için bir dil öğrenme programı olan ‘My English Lab (MeLab)’ adlı bilgisayar programı geleneksel sınıf ortamına entegre edilmiştir.

Bilgi toplama yöntemleri, Fatih Üniversitesi hazırlık bölümünde okuyan 36 öğrenciye verilen bir anketi kapsamaktadır. Grup öğrenci görüşmeleri ve bireysel öğretmen görüşmeleri yapılmıştır. Ayrıca, öğrenci günlükleri toplanmış ve ders gözlemleri yapılmıştır.

Sonuçlar göstermiştir ki harmanlanmış öğrenme yöntemi, öğrencilerin bağımsız öğrenme becerilerini desteklemiştir ve bu ortam, bağımsız öğrenmeyi teşvik etmiştir. Harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamında, çoğu öğrenci, en azından belli bir süre, bağımsız çalışmalarda bulunmuştur. Sonuçlar harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamının, bağımsız öğrenme davranışlarını pratik yapmaya yardımcı olması için ve Türkiye’deki İngilizce Dil Öğrenme ortamında öğrencilerin bağımsız öğrenme becerilerini desteklemek için oluşturulabileceğini göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: harmanlanmış öğrenme, öğrencilerin bağımsız öğrenme becerileri

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this thesis was very challenging but it was also a great experience. Achieving this would not have been easy without the guidance and encouragement of many people to whom I would like to express my gratitude.

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. JoDee Walters for her invaluable comments, perfect guidance and continuous patience. She always helped me throughout the process with her endless energy which I sometimes found hard to keep up with. She has always inspired and motivated me while accomplishing this work. I have learned a lot of things from her and this thesis would not have been possible without her.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude for all the faculty members of MA TEFL Program, Dr. Philip Durrant, Dr. Maria Angelova, and Dr. Julie Mathews-Aydinli for their assistance. It was a great opportunity to work with them and benefit from their experience. I am also grateful to William Snyder for his encouragement and being helpful.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for being with me during hard times and helping me throughout the process. You are the most wonderful family a person could have. I owe special thanks to my beloved husband for being with me all the time with his compassion and great encouragement. Thank you for always believing in me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZET.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction	1
Background of the Study.....	2
Statement of the Problem	5
Research Questions	7
Significance of the Study	7
Conclusion	8
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	9
Introduction	9
Definitions of Learner Autonomy	9
Characteristics of autonomous learners	11
Learner Autonomy and Culture	12
Learner Autonomy in Turkey	17
Blended Learning	18
Conclusion	23
CHAPTER: 3 METHODOLOGY	24
Introduction	24
Setting	24
Participants.....	25
Materials and Instruments	27

The Questionnaire	27
Interviews	29
Learner Logs	30
Researcher's Observations	31
Online Course	32
Procedures	33
Data Analysis	35
Conclusion	36
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS.....	37
Introduction	37
Data Analysis	37
Results	38
Blended Learning Environment in relation to Learner Autonomy	38
Aspects of the Blended Learning Environment in relation to Learner Autonomy.....	48
The teacher's and the students' role	55
Practicing autonomous abilities.....	57
Possible problematic parts of the BL context.....	58
Conclusion	60
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	62
Introduction	62
Discussion of the Findings	63
Students' Autonomous Practices in the Blended Learning Context ..	63
Aspects of the Blended Learning Environment and Learner Autonomy	68
Ask questions of the teacher	68

Receive instant feedback and use the feedback tool of the software program	68
Use the communication tools of the program.....	69
Use the personalized grade book of the program and the language learning performance charts	70
Relate the content in the MeLab program to in-class learning	71
Do individual tasks in a personalized learning environment..	71
The teacher's and the student's role.....	72
Problematic Parts of the BL environment.....	73
Pedagogical Implications	74
Limitations of the Study.....	77
Suggestions for Further Research	78
Conclusion	79
REFERENCES.....	80
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRES IN ENGLISH AND TURKISH	84
APPENDIX B: STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	86
APPENDIX C: TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	87
APPENDIX D: SAMPLE STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT	88
APPENDIX E: SAMPLE TEACHER INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT	91
APPENDIX F: SAMPLE LEARNER LOGS	93
APPENDIX G: GUIDELINE FOR WRITING LEARNER LOGS	94
APPENDIX H: GUIDELINE FOR OBSERVING THE CLASSROOM	96
APPENDIX J: SAMPLE SCREEN-SHOTS OF THE ONLINE COURSE.....	98

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 - Frequencies for the learner autonomy items in the questionnaire	39
Table 2 - Frequencies for the aspects of the blended learning items in the questionnaire	49

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

A well-known proverb says ‘Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn.’ This quote reveals the importance of a context where learners are actively involved in the learning process and provided with the opportunities to make their own decisions. With the recent innovations in technology, a shift has taken place from traditional approaches to more independent learning contexts. Learners have found chances to become more and more independent in controlling their own learning. They can practice their autonomous abilities by setting their own goals, choosing materials according to their needs and evaluating their learning process, thanks to the opportunities of online activities. However, in more traditional educational cultures where learners are mostly dependent on teachers, it may be more difficult for students to benefit from these online activities since their learning context does not support learner autonomy (LA). It is claimed that traditional approaches to learning can change when there is an educational context in which learners are exposed to the appropriate conditions to practice learner autonomy (Gieve & Clark, 2005). The blended learning (BL) environment as a new context may provide this type of exposure. It combines the face-to-face interaction of the traditional classroom with online practices, and a flexible learning environment is created to better serve learners’ needs. This study aims to investigate whether the blended learning environment supports learner autonomy in the Turkish EFL context and which, if any, of the aspects of this specific learning context support autonomous learning without challenging the culture of learning in the Turkish EFL context.

Background of the Study

Learner autonomy (LA) has been a prominent topic in language teaching and is defined as ‘the ability to take charge of one’s own learning’ (Holec, 1981, p.3). It is also seen as the degree of independence a learner is given in terms of setting goals, choosing materials and evaluating the process (Dickinson, 2004). It has been widely accepted by researchers that learner autonomy has a significant role in successful language learning since learning becomes more meaningful and continuous if learners take responsibility for their own learning, as they learn what they are ready to learn (Benson, 2001; Chan, 2003; Reinders, 2010).

Although there are many definitions of the term, there is a consensus on the principles of learner autonomy. Autonomous learners are considered to be responsible for their own learning, they know how to make their own decisions on what to learn, they are aware of their needs, they can reflect on their learning critically and they are able to broaden their opportunities to practice the language both inside and outside of the classroom (Asik, 2010; Benson, 2001; Chan, 2003; Dickinson, 2004; Little, 1999). However, it is argued that not every student possesses the same level of autonomy in learning and therefore, several attempts have been made to explore the variables affecting LA. Among these, there is the variable of culture. So far, the literature has shown contrasting findings about learners’ attitudes towards learning in terms of learner autonomy, related to their culture of learning. It is claimed that while learners in Western cultures are able to take charge of their own learning, in Eastern cultures, learners tend to accept the teacher’s authority and show passive attitudes towards learning (Adamson, 2003; Palfreyman, 2003; Sert, 2006). As Little (2002) points out, in a traditional learning context, it is hard for learners to

accept responsibility for their own learning and reflect on their learning process. Likewise, in Turkey, the educational context can be described as authority- and exam-oriented, and responsibility for learning is not encouraged (Erdogan, 2003; Karabiyik, 2008; Sert, 2006; Yumuk, 2002).

Even though such differences in students' behaviors have been attributed to their educational cultures, some researchers have claimed that learner autonomy can also be successfully achieved in non-western cultures (Chan, 2002; Gieve & Clark 2005; Littlewood, 1999; Mei, 2009; Parks & Raymond, 2004; Usuki, 2002; Yumuk, 2002). These studies show the appropriateness of autonomy in non-western settings, suggesting that learners are willing and able to manage some principles of autonomous learning when provided with a context which suits their needs. Therefore, the significance of providing learners with appropriate learning models in which they can develop their autonomous abilities (Harmer, 2007) is emphasized. It is claimed that if learners are given the appropriate situations to practice LA, traditional approaches towards learning can adapt to a more autonomous learning situation (Gieve & Clark, 2005). That is, students' attitudes towards learning might change depending on the model in which they experience learning, regardless of their educational culture. In addition, it is proposed that learners who are not aware of their autonomous abilities are capable of developing them when appropriate conditions and preparation are provided (Benson, 2001). Therefore, it is necessary to develop learning models that may help to promote learner autonomy in various contexts.

With the recent innovations in technology, researchers have conducted studies to examine the effectiveness of online learning materials and computer

programs on the development of learner autonomy (Beatty, 2003; Blin, 2005). It is suggested that learners are able to set their own goals and develop study plans and strategies as well as evaluate their learning process, thanks to the opportunities online learning environments offer, so that active learner involvement is provided.

However, as mentioned previously, learning approaches can discourage or encourage students taking an active role in their learning process (Chan, 2003; Mei, 2009; Oxford, 1990). Regarding this, several attempts have been made to investigate the effectiveness of blended learning (BL) in language learning (Abraham, 2007; Dalsgaard & Godsk, 2007; Lanham & Zhou, 2003). The term blended learning refers to the combination of different training technology devices to create an optimum training program for a specific audience (Hastie, Hung & Chen, 2010). It combines traditional classroom features with technological materials which are claimed to better meet students' needs. Researchers have compared the BL environment to fully online contexts in terms of language learners and they have suggested that the social interaction learners need is better provided in the blended learning environment (Akkoyunlu & Soylu, 2008; Wong & Tatnall, 2009).

Although there are not many empirical studies on blended learning, a few studies have shed light on its benefits for learners in terms of learning language in a flexible learning environment (Abraham, 2007; Lanham & Zhou, 2003; Sanprasert, 2010). Abraham (2007) for instance, compared a blended learning environment to a traditional classroom. It was found that students' grades were better in the BL environment than in the traditional approach and those who preferred studying online also wanted to attend the face-to-face sessions. In another study, Lanham and Zhou (2003) investigated whether a blended learning approach would meet the needs of

students who have different approaches to learning. The results indicated that Asian students were also able to benefit from the online learning, like their Australian peers, thanks to the flexibility of the blended learning environment. Similarly, Sanprasert (2010) compared a blended learning approach to a traditional classroom setting, aiming to find out Thai students' perceptions about the extent to which they believe they are autonomous and whether they would show a change in their behavior towards their language learning. It was found that in the blended learning environment their behaviors were changed to some extent and they believed they were autonomous, in contrast to those students in the traditional approach. The studies mentioned above examined the blended learning environment from various aspects; however, no research has been done to examine specific aspects of a blended learning model in relation to learner autonomy.

Statement of the Problem

In the language teaching field, learner autonomy (LA) has caught the attention of many researchers since it has been shown to foster effective learning for language learners (Benson, 2001; Chan, 2003; Holec, 1981; Littlewood, 1999). However, in the literature, although some studies that have been conducted in non-western cultures reveal students' attitudes towards learning as passive, obedient and uncritical (Benson, 2001; Palfreyman, 2003), others demonstrate that learner autonomy can be an achievable goal for these students (Gieve & Clark, 2005; Littlewood, 1999; Sanprasert, 2010). Therefore, rather than making general statements about students' behaviors related to their educational cultures, there is a need to explore different learning models suitable for learners' needs in promoting learner autonomy. Many researchers have developed approaches and methods that

foster learner autonomy (Egel, 2009; Littlewood, 1996; Mei, 2009). However, no empirical study has investigated a blended learning environment, which combines online and traditional learning methods, in relation to learner autonomy. For this reason, the aim of this study is to investigate whether a blended learning environment supports learner autonomy and which aspects of this environment, if any, help to foster learner autonomy.

It has been proposed that learners who are not aware of their autonomous abilities can develop those capabilities when appropriate conditions and preparation are given to them (Benson, 2001; Gieve & Clark, 2005). Arguably, Turkish students could also be described as also not being aware these abilities. In the educational culture of preparatory schools in Turkey, students are exposed to more traditional teaching and their autonomous abilities are not developed (Egel, 2009; Karabiyik, 2008; Sert, 2006; Yilmaz, 2007; Yumuk, 2002). As in the same situation at Fatih University, some students are reluctant to use online class applications and they are dependent on their teachers. In addition, they ask for guidance constantly and are unable to control their own learning process. Therefore, in an attempt to find appropriate conditions for learners to practice learner autonomy, there is a need to investigate whether and how students' autonomous practices are fostered in a blended learning environment in which online and traditional learning methods are combined.

Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions:

- Does a blended learning environment support learner autonomy in the Turkish EFL context?
- What aspects, if any, of the blended learning environment support learner autonomy?

Significance of the Study

Recently, studies that have examined the appropriateness of learner autonomy have offered contradictory ideas about students' attitudes towards learning for different contexts. While some studies support the idea that learner autonomy is appropriate only for students in western cultures (Chan, 2002; Dafei, 2007; Mei, 2009), others claim that it can also be an achievable goal for students in non-western cultures (Gieve & Clark, 2005; Parks & Raymond, 2005; Usuki, 2002). Therefore, these findings suggest that there is a need to explore different models which include autonomy fostering opportunities for various learners, rather than making broad generalizations about learners' educational cultures. In this sense, the current study aims to examine a learning model, blended learning, in relation to learner autonomy, since it is claimed that if learners are provided with the appropriate conditions to practice learner autonomy, they can develop their autonomous abilities (Benson, 2001; Gieve & Clark, 2005). The study is expected to contribute to the existing literature by helping to find different models that help to promote autonomous practices for various students. The results of this study might help to avoid making strong claims about learners' culture of learning and their autonomous practices, by examining a blended learning situation in relation to learner autonomy.

When locally considered, the results of this study are expected to be useful to students by helping them practice their autonomous abilities in a flexible and socially-interactive learning environment and benefit from the blended learning environment effectively to meet their needs. Furthermore, it may be seen that students can overcome the constraints of the educational culture they are familiar with and continue learning language outside of the classroom after experiencing the blended learning environment. In addition, the results of this study may help to contribute to design curricula in which students will be exposed to models that better address their needs and help them to become aware of their autonomous abilities while learning language.

Conclusion

In this chapter, an overview of the literature on learner autonomy and blended learning has been provided. The statement of the problem, research questions, and the significance of the study have also been presented. In the second chapter, the relevant literature on learner autonomy and blended learning is reviewed in more detail. In the third chapter, the methodology of the study is explained. In the fourth chapter, the findings of the study are presented and the data is analyzed, and in the last chapter, conclusions are drawn from the data in the light of the literature.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, the relevant literature for this study will be reviewed. First of all, the definitions and different interpretations of researchers about learner autonomy will be presented. In the following section, characteristics of autonomous learners in the literature will be described. Subsequently, the concept of culture of learning as a factor that influences learner autonomy will be discussed in detail by presenting several research studies conducted in different settings. Next, learner autonomy in Turkey will be discussed with reference to culture of learning. Lastly, the blended learning environment as a specific context will be discussed in relation to learner autonomy and some studies will be presented related to this study.

Definitions of Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy (LA) has been defined by many researchers in connection with language learning over the last three decades. Due to the fact that it encompasses many concepts, it is hard to define LA. The most quoted definition in the field, by Holec (1981) defines autonomy as ‘the ability to take charge of one’s own learning’ (p.8). It is seen as an issue of students taking greater control over the content and methods of learning by ‘determining the objectives, defining the contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the procedures of acquisition, and evaluating what has been acquired’ (p.3). Little (1996) states that autonomy requires a positive attitude towards the purpose, content and process of learning. In addition, Chan (2003) puts forward that autonomy is in the individual’s acceptance of his or her own responsibility for learning.

Therefore, from all of these definitions it can be concluded that the learner is seen as a decision maker who has the capacity for choosing tools among available resources to create the means for learning (Chan, 2003).

In the literature, in order to avoid misconceptions about the term autonomy, researchers have tried to highlight some points and have looked at what autonomy does not refer to (Esch, 1997; Little, 1999). According to Esch (1997), autonomy does not mean ‘learning in isolation’ (p. 165). In addition, Little (1999) stated that:

[L]earner autonomy is not merely a matter of organization, does not entail an abdication of initiative and control on the part of the teacher, is not a teaching method, is not to be equated with a single easily identified behaviour, and is not a steady state attained by a happy band of privileged learners. (p. 4)

The above excerpt indicates that autonomy does not mean leaving learners alone, working independently without the teacher; indeed, the teacher’s guidance is needed for promoting learner autonomy. It cannot be described easily due to the variables affecting it, such as learners’ age and their individual needs and styles. Another important point from Little is that the permanence of autonomy cannot be assured and being autonomous in one area does not mean that it can be applied to other areas of the learning process. This view is shared by Ellis (1994), who states that learners may show different levels of autonomy at different times and for different reasons (as cited in Blin, 2005).

These varying definitions mentioned above clearly illustrate the fact that different authors have characterized learner autonomy in different ways. In addition, besides its apparently varying interpretations, the central concept of the term learner autonomy also includes both social and individual aspects. Therefore, as Benson (2001) claims, the contexts of our research and practice in which we can identify

autonomous behaviors are important. That is, the factors which are conducive to LA should be taken into consideration while examining the behavioral changes of learners (Egel, 2009).

So far the different views of scholars on the definition of learner autonomy have been given, and ‘taking the responsibility for one’s own learning’ appears to be the commonly shared concept of the term. In light of these definitions it can be seen that autonomy has gained importance in learning languages, as a shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach began during past decades. It has become apparent for many teachers that not everything can be taught in a classroom context (Cotterall & Murray 2009). Therefore, rather than seeing learners as a passive receiver of the teacher’s ideas, they are starting to be seen as people who actively shapes their learning experiences with the purpose of self-development and fulfillment (Benson & Nunan, 2005 as cited in Reinders, 2010).

Characteristics of autonomous learners

In the literature so far researchers have attempted to describe the qualities of autonomous learners and put forward ideas about their characteristics (Benson, 2001; Dickinson, 2004; Little, 1999). Being aware of their needs and determining their own objectives on what and how to learn accordingly are the main characteristics that are attributed to autonomous learners. In addition, these learners seek opportunities to use the language outside of the classroom as well as inside (Benson, 2001). Thus, learners’ accepting the responsibility in their own learning process is an important initial quality of being an autonomous learner. Other characteristics that are described by researchers are as follows:

- Taking an active approach to the task

- Self-motivated and able to take initiative
- Aware of their strengths and weaknesses
- Having learning styles and strategies
- Willing to control their learning
- Exploring ways to improve learning
- Setting goals and determining ways to reach that goal
- Choosing their materials and techniques
- Evaluating the learning process
- Establishing a personal agenda (Little, 1991, p. 431)

A similar description is added by Asik (2010), who sums up the above mentioned qualities of an autonomous learner as someone who has an independent capacity to decide and carry out the choices which govern their own actions. However, not every learner can possess these characteristics at the same level, due to variables affecting the promotion of autonomy, such as beliefs, motivation, metacognitive strategies and the culture of learning. LA and its relationship to one of these variables, educational culture, are discussed in the next section.

Learner Autonomy and Culture

The idea of LA is mostly promoted by Western teachers, and implementing it in other cultures has brought about some difficulties which stem from the cultural differences of other contexts compared to Western norms (Palfreyman, 2003). There are studies in the literature that portray the learning habits of students from different cultures in terms of learner autonomy, and the idea of the inappropriateness of LA in eastern-cultures is supported by some researchers. A study conducted by Chan (2002) with university students in Hong Kong investigated students' attitudes and behaviors towards learner autonomy and how ready students were for autonomous language learning. A questionnaire was given to 508 undergraduate students from

various departments. The findings of the study revealed that, according to most of the students, choosing materials, evaluating the learning process and deciding what to learn are the responsibilities of teachers. It is claimed that when students are taught in more teacher-centered contexts in which the educational system encourages the authority of the teacher, they tend to have passive behaviors towards learning rather than being in the center of their learning process.

It is concluded that some students are not ready for autonomous language learning, due to a culture of learning that sees the teacher as the authority. A similar view is echoed by other researchers who note that in Asia, memorization, attention to detail and lack of critical thought are the most preferred learning styles (Chan, 2002; Dafei, 2007; Mei, 2009). In addition, Adamson (2004) described Thai students as being passive, obedient, uncritical and unwilling to challenge the authority of teachers. These characteristics were attributed to the educational culture in which the learners were taught. Moreover, Thai teachers also found it difficult to make a transition from being the source of knowledge to being a counselor or guide in class (Adamson, 2004). It was further shown that teachers in this culture talk for a large part of the lesson and they feel like they are not teaching when they talk less.

Although, in the studies described above, the non-autonomous attitudes are attributed to the learners' culture of learning, there are contrasting ideas about the implementation of learner autonomy in different cultures. In the literature, some researchers support the idea that the concept of autonomy can also be achieved in non-western cultures. In a study conducted in China, for instance, Mei (2009) reviewed different language teaching methods and their influences on Chinese students with the aim of showing a picture of an evolutionary process in the language

learning culture that gives students more responsibility. In an attempt to develop learners' abilities in autonomous learning, different classroom activities were used by the teachers. For instance, a second classroom was opened where the students could find themselves in a more relaxing and real life-like learning environment. They practiced their oral English in the English Corner, attended academic lectures, listened to broadcast programs and had classes on the internet on their own. Although students asked for support and help from teachers to adapt themselves to the new conditions, they were able to engage in activities and practice their autonomous abilities. The author attributed students' need for guidance to their past educational culture, in which they were characterized as teacher-dependent and lacking the initiative to manage their own learning. However, with the implementation of student-centered contexts, students were able to take the responsibility for their own learning.

There is also a study which reveals Canadian students' learning habits in contrast to those of Chinese learners (Parks & Raymond, 2004). The study's aim was to show the effect of social context on developing new strategies, which can be related to the characteristics of autonomous learners, as discussed in the previous sections. The study was conducted in an MBA course and participants were observed in terms of their learning habits or the strategies they use in their learning process. The Chinese students were studying in the MBA course with the Canadian students; however, they were also attending an English language course in order to develop their language skills. Canadian students were aware of their needs and they were able to choose appropriate materials in order to reach their goals. In addition, they were seeking every opportunity to use their course knowledge during lessons and had a

higher participation level than Chinese students. In contrast, the study showed that Chinese students were incapable of controlling their learning and they were very much dependent on the teacher at the beginning of the course. In addition, they were reluctant to participate in lessons and asked a very small number of questions. The authors interpret this picture as supporting the idea that the culture of learning may constrain the development of autonomous abilities. However, at the end of the course, the results demonstrated that the Chinese students were able to change their learning habits, and they took an active role towards their own learning. They were able to compete with Canadian students and they showed a significant change in their attitudes as responsible language learners. The authors explain these findings as emphasizing the importance of the context rather than the culture itself. In addition, it is clear from the results that even though culture of learning can have a negative influence on students' learning habits, the learners tend to change when the appropriate context is provided.

In a study conducted by Littlewood (1999) in Hong-Kong, both the Asian and the European students were taking an English language course. The students' perceptions about autonomous learning were explored through a questionnaire. Items in the questionnaire reflected students' ideas about what kind of a learner they were - independent or dependent on the teacher. The fifty participants were from eight Asian and three European countries. As the author stated, as a result of the educational context provided for Asian students, they showed passive classroom behaviors. However, in the study when their responses were compared, the results indicated that Asian students would like to be independent learners like European students and they were aware of their needs in language learning. A similar view is

shared by Usuki (2002), who examined Japanese students' perceptions about autonomy. The findings revealed that there is a mismatch of ideas between the assumed characteristics of students as being passive and learners' actual perceptions about themselves in the learning process. He concluded that they were aware of their needs as autonomous learners and they believed in the importance of being active.

In another study, conducted by Gieve and Clark (2005), learners' reflections about a self-directed learning program and tandem learning were gathered. Responses from Chinese students were compared with European Erasmus students' written reflections about the program. Findings indicated that Chinese students made as much use of this autonomous learning opportunity as European students did. It is suggested by the authors that traditional approaches to learning can change depending on the context that is provided for students. Hence, these results support those of the previous studies.

According to Harmer (2007), the social context in which learning takes place is highly important for educational success. In addition, learning situations gain meaning in their social contexts (Palfreyman, 2003). Even though it is a commonly shared view that cultural influences and educational norms can be obstacles in promoting autonomous learning, students are able to acquire new habits in learning when they are involved in the learning process, as can be seen from the previously mentioned studies. According to Harmer (2007), learners' attitudes to learning a foreign language are mostly determined by the educational context in which they are exposed to it.

The next section focuses on the discussions of authors related to autonomy and the culture of learning in Turkey, since it can be regarded as having a similar

situation to other eastern cultures in terms of teacher dependency and students' passive attitudes towards learning.

Learner Autonomy in Turkey

As has been demonstrated before by studies conducted in Eastern cultures, learners possess passive classroom attitudes in the learning process, which results in difficulties in promoting autonomous learning. Likewise, similar characteristics can be attributed to students in the Turkish educational context. According to Yumuk (2002), for instance, recitation is a common mode of teaching in Turkey and most learners are exposed to traditional methods in which the teacher is the authority, and the students are recipients of the knowledge that is transferred by the teacher. Additionally, while attempting to implement the European Language Portfolio as a self-directed tool, Ceylan (2006) describes Turkish learners in her review as being dependent on the syllabus, passive and not able to manage their learning process due to the educational culture that makes learners learn only for the exams. As a result, they do not develop autonomous behavior.

Another study, conducted by Erdogan (2003) at a Turkish secondary school, aimed to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of student autonomy. The results revealed that due to the educational system teachers were trained in, they were unable to change their traditional teaching habits. As a result, this became a hindrance for students to develop autonomous abilities. Another study, conducted by Sert (2006), aimed to investigate Turkish EFL student teachers' ability to direct and monitor their learning process for autonomous learning. The study was conducted in a Turkish university among fifty-seven students. The results showed that students were unable to assess and control their learning despite the instruction they received

to promote autonomy. Sert states that because of the teacher-led language instruction in Turkey, learners perceive themselves as passive receivers of information and so it is harder for them to develop learner autonomy. She emphasizes that guidance is needed for students to get accustomed to their new positions as active learners.

The common idea these studies demonstrate is that education in Turkey is greatly controlled by authority and therefore has a negative influence on the development of learner autonomy. However, while some studies conducted in other cultures and in Turkey indicate that culture of learning can be a hindrance for students to adopt autonomous abilities and can discourage learner autonomy, other studies reflect an opposite view, that such learners can develop autonomy. These contrasting findings suggest the need to look into more specific contexts rather than the broad view of culture while examining learner autonomy. These studies reveal the complexity of promoting learner autonomy in different cultures, and it is shown that students with passive classroom attitudes might change their habits when an appropriate context is provided for them to practice learner autonomy. The question that remains here is how learners who are trained in more traditional contexts can better practice learner autonomy within a familiar learning environment related to their culture of learning. Therefore, the next section focuses on the blended learning (BL) environment as a more specific context in relation to learner autonomy.

Blended Learning

The term blended learning (BL) is new in the field and it refers to a learning environment which combines traditional classroom-based learning with technology-based learning (Sanprasert, 2009). BL comes from the idea that face-to-face interaction has benefits as well as online learning methods and it is suggested that

combining these different components would promote student-centered learning and increase teacher and student interaction (as cited in Abraham, 2007). Furthermore, it is suggested that the traditional educational context can be improved with the use of technology, and learning with technology can be supported with face-to-face sessions. So far, it has been shown that technology has a crucial role in language teaching and learning (Blin, 2005; Shana, 2009; Ying, 2002). Moreover, it is seen to have a positive effect on developing autonomous abilities by providing students with personal learning environments (Beatty, 2003; Blin, 2005; Ying, 2002). However, the interaction between the students and the teachers is reduced in these environments. Therefore, the integration of face-to-face sessions to online learning, as in blended learning, is seen as important (Abraham, 2004; Akkoyunlu & Soylu, 2008; Sagarra & Zapata, 2008; Zhou, 2003). Recent research has reported the benefits of a BL approach in relation to various issues, such as a flexible learning environment for international students, reducing the class time, and more student-centered learning (Hastie, Hung & Chen, 2010; Sagarra & Zapata, 2008; Zhou, 2003). In addition, studies have been conducted that compare the BL environment with traditional methods or pure online environments (Orhan, 2008; Sagarra & Zapata, 2008; Shana, 2009). Others have investigated students' perceptions of providing them with more control over their learning (Samsa, 2009; Sanprasert, 2009). A study by Sagarra and Zapata (2008) investigated the impact of an online workbook on the attitudes of 245 Spanish learners. A survey was administered in order to find out students' attitudes towards the online workbook. It was found that most of the students had positive attitudes and they benefited from using this application in their lessons. In another study, Shana (2009) examined the impact of

integrating a discussion forum to an educational technology course on the achievement of 34 science and technology students. The results revealed that the treatment group showed improvement in their learning by the use of discussion forums, here as the control group did not show a significant improvement. Further studies are discussed in more detail below since their focus of research is directly about the blended learning environment and they are more related to the research aims of this study.

Abraham (2007) compared a blended learning approach to a traditional course for graduate engineering students in an Australian university. The study lasted for two semesters. She investigated students' exam results and their behaviors after being exposed to the blended learning environment. The BL approach included a face-to-face and an online component which was delivered by using a WebCT software program. This allowed students to get into discussions with other classmates and their teacher, reach their books online and participate in a forum for presentations. The results indicated that the students' grades were better in the blended learning than in the traditional approach. Although face-to-face sessions were not compulsory, learners attended and took responsibility for their own learning. According to the study, learners who wanted to study online conveniently also wanted the social interaction of the face-to-face component. The author attributes this to the need for flexibility in the student-centered learning environment, and she suggests that the BL approach helps provide this flexibility by balancing the delivery of a subject in both online and face-to-face settings.

In Lanham and Zhou's (2003) study, they investigated whether a blended learning approach would be a solution to meet the needs of students from different

cultures. Due to the increasing number of international students in Australia, especially from Asia, a cross-cultural classroom setting has emerged. Researchers identified that students from different cultures learn differently and have varying approaches to learning. It is further stated that international students were not successful in online lessons and they asked for the teacher's help and approval of their work constantly. The authors attribute the students' reliance on the teacher's support to their culture of learning. In contrast, Australian students were much more comfortable and confident in working in student-centered environments such as online learning. Therefore, a blended learning approach was implemented and it provided greater flexibility to learning by combining the two approaches, face-to-face interaction and online learning together. As the results indicated, the blended learning enabled the Asian students to benefit from the online learning efficiently and be as successful as their Australian peers. According to the authors, it is important to provide students with a context in which they would feel comfortable to study. It is stated that learners are confident in what they know. Hence, integrating a traditional approach to online learning creates a familiar learning environment that can serve a variety of learning cultures.

In another study, Sanprasert (2009) investigated to what extent learner autonomy could be fostered in a blended learning situation. The purpose of the study was to identify whether students' perception of themselves and their autonomous behaviors change when a course management system is used with their regular lessons. He compared the traditional classroom with the blended learning environment by integrating a technology program in the latter. The participants were Thai students in two groups, one serving as a control and the other serving as an

experimental group. It was stated that the experimental group used a course management system; however it is not mentioned how it was used. Moreover, there was no information about the situation in the control group and it was not stated how the researcher used this group for comparison. Participants' level of autonomy was measured through a questionnaire adapted from Cotterall (1995) and students were asked to keep learning journals in order to see the amount of change they showed in terms of behavior. Pre- and post-questionnaires showed that there was a significant difference in the experimental group in terms of their perceptions about being autonomous. The learner logs, demonstrated that students in the blended learning situation developed their autonomy to some extent and engaged in independent study. In contrast, the traditional classroom did not give much chance for learners to develop autonomous abilities. There was no significant difference found between the pre- and post-questionnaire results of the control group. The study suggested that the students did not know how to achieve autonomy since it is a challenge in Thailand's educational context and, for this reason, they needed to be supplied with the appropriate tools and opportunities by the teacher. Thanks to the flexible situation in the BL context, the students could get the guidance they needed. Therefore, the findings showed that blended learning can provide greater flexibility compared to fully traditional settings.

Sanprasert looked for a change in students' learner autonomy levels in a blended learning environment; however the aims of his study differ from this current study's. The purpose of this study is to examine students' experience specifically with the BL environment in terms of learner autonomy and investigate the aspects of the blended learning approach in relation to learners' autonomous practices. In

addition, more qualitative research methods will be used for this study in order to reach more data and assure the reliability of results.

The above mentioned studies have investigated the blended learning approach from various perspectives and they have some consistent findings, in that the BL environment provides students with flexible learning opportunities or with more student-centered learning. However, these studies may not be generalized to different groups of students in other educational contexts. In addition, these studies do not examine the blended learning context in relation to learner autonomy. The study described in the thesis, therefore aims to investigate whether a blended learning environment supports learner autonomy in the Turkish EFL context; it will not only reveal a general picture related to the blended learning environment and learner autonomy, but it will also shed light on the aspects of the BL environment which support LA.

Conclusion

An overview regarding learner autonomy in education and language learning has been provided. The studies reviewed demonstrate that there is a need to investigate learner autonomy in a more specific context rather than making generalizations about its appropriateness in different cultures. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining students' experiences related to learner autonomy in a BL environment, as a specific learning context. The next chapter will cover the methodology used in this study, including the participants, instruments, data collection and data analysis procedures.

CHAPTER: 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate whether a blended learning (BL) environment supports learner autonomy (LA) in the Turkish EFL context and what aspects of the BL context, believed to support LA, contribute to the students' autonomous practices.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Does a blended learning environment support learner autonomy in the Turkish EFL context?
2. What aspects, if any, of the blended learning environment support learner autonomy?

This chapter consists of five sections. In the first section, the setting where the study was undertaken is described. In the second section, the participants who took part in the study are described. Next, in the third section the instruments are explained in detail. Then, the data collection process and the BL context are explained. Finally, the data analysis procedure is described.

Setting

The study was conducted at Fatih University Preparatory School in Istanbul. It is a private university and the departments require an upper-intermediate English level from students. It is a full English-medium university. Therefore, at the beginning of the academic year students are required to take a proficiency test and those who do not score at least 70 points cannot start studying in their departments. A placement test is also conducted to determine their levels and they are placed

according to their scores. Four levels are formed from low to high: A1 (elementary), A2 (pre-intermediate), B1 (intermediate), and B2 (upper-intermediate).

The program is a modular system and each module lasts for 8 weeks.

Students take an achievement exam every two weeks and an exit exam at the end of each module. The courses that are given at the institution consist of four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. In addition to these, vocabulary and grammar lessons are given. There is also an online course called ‘My English Lab’ conducted in the program, which is integrated with the course book. Teachers and students are encouraged to use this component to teach and study part of the courses online. Since using the program is not compulsory and students are not graded, teachers ask students to use it independently. Some of the teachers, however, graded their students’ using the program independently. They were not using it in class; therefore there was not a direct connection between their in-class learning and the content of the program. Very few of them used the software program since using the program required students’ independent study. The teachers were grading them only by checking students’ progress from the charts and they were giving a plus or minus. Grading them was hard and time consuming for the teachers and the grade had only a small effect on students’ overall grade.

Participants

The participants were 36 students who enrolled in the preparatory school English program at Fatih University for one year and two teachers who were responsible for the group. At the beginning of the academic year students are placed into classes according to their levels depending on their scores on the placement test. Every level lasts 8 weeks and then, they take an exit exam at the end of the module.

Later, they pass to the next level or they repeat the level again if they fail. Therefore, at the time of the study the participants were those who had reached B1 level (intermediate) without repeating previous levels. Their proficiency levels were equal and they were placed into the same class according to their scores on the exit exam. The study was conducted with one group only. The group consisted of 19 female and 17 male students from different departments. This level was chosen for the study because the B1 level course book could be integrated with the online program. In addition, it was the administration's suggestion in terms of schedule concerns.

Teachers' teaching experiences and their willingness to take part in the study were taken into account while choosing them. It was also important to choose the teachers who were teaching different skills to the same class, for the reliability of the results. Two teachers were chosen for the study, one male and one female. The male teacher, who has a degree in ELT, has been teaching English for 18 years and he is the chief person for conducting the technological programs and materials at school. He is interested in vocabulary and using technology in language learning. The female teacher has been teaching adults for 8 years and she also has a degree in ELT. She is one of the level coordinators and she gives introduction sessions for teachers on how to use the online course. For the study, one of the teachers was responsible for the writing class and the other was responsible for the reading, listening and vocabulary classes and was using the 'Academic Connections' book, which was related to the 'My English Lab' online course. The teachers were responsible for discussing, with students, in face-to-face sessions, problems that they encountered while studying online. In addition, they checked students' individual study plans and integrated part of their lessons with the online program.

Materials and Instruments

The instruments of this exploratory study consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. A questionnaire, teacher and student interviews, learner logs, and the researcher's observations were conducted to collect data. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were necessary in order to provide more reliable and clearer research findings. An online course called 'My English Lab' (MeLab) was also used as materials in the study.

The Questionnaire

Conducting questionnaires allows researchers to gather information from a greater number of students at a low cost and they are easy to administer (Munn & Drever, 1999). The items in the questionnaire were developed based on the literature review done by the researcher. The related literature provided some aspects of autonomous learners, which were discussed in the previous chapter. Since there was not a specific questionnaire related directly to my topic, I developed the items in the questionnaire based on the applications in the online course and on learner autonomy questionnaires from Cotterall (1995), Little (2003) and Karabiyik (2008). The 18 Likert-scale items in the questionnaire addressed the aspects of an autonomous learner described in the literature and students were asked to describe the blended learning context according to these aspects. The questionnaire was designed to investigate students' experiences related to their learner autonomy during the BL environment and to find out what aspects of the BL context support learner autonomy. Students were also required to answer questions about their previous learning environment to help them differentiate between the new setting and the previous one easily. In order to assure the content and face validity of the

instruments, items in the questionnaire were shown to advisors at Bilkent University and the administrators at Fatih University. After the items were evaluated, they were revised according to the feedback received.

The items in the questionnaire were developed in English. Therefore, considering the student participants' language levels, the items were translated into Turkish to prevent any misunderstandings. Then, the Turkish version of the questionnaire was given to two instructors from Fatih University Prep. School and they were asked to translate the items into English. Finally, both of the English versions of the questionnaire, taken from the teachers, were compared by the other English instructors at school and necessary revisions were made to assure accurate translation.

In order to avoid any misunderstandings, the questionnaire items were piloted once with a different group who were not the participants of the study and necessary changes were made. The students were asked to fill in the questionnaire by considering only the 'last term' part because they did not experience the BL environment. While piloting the questionnaire, some students asked for clarification of some items. They had problems with understanding some of the items because they did not know some terms related to the autonomous practices. Depending on their questions, I made changes to some sentences in the questionnaire in order to prevent any misunderstandings. (See Appendix A for the final version of the questionnaires both in English and in Turkish).

Interviews

The interview questions were developed by the researcher, based on the related literature review, and some components of the online program were also focused on in creating the questions. It was necessary to conduct interviews for the study since individual experiences during the BL experience could supply different detailed information. According to Brown (2001), interviews can provide detailed data since they are flexible and personal. Therefore, the data from the interviews gives a chance to get further information for the data analysis. It is said in the literature that semi-structured interviews are more flexible compared to the structured interview since the former allows new questions to be asked during the interviews according to what the interviewee says (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Student group interviews were administered with eight students and each group consisted of four students who were present during the whole BL experience. They volunteered to take part in the interviews and they were interviewed once when the procedure was finished. The interviews were held in Turkish in order to allow students to express their opinions easily about the BL context and they were recorded (for student interview questions in Turkish and in English, see Appendix B).

Both teachers who helped to conduct the study were interviewed individually. They were interviewed once when the study finished. The interviews were in Turkish and were recorded. The questions were prepared in advance by the researcher after reviewing the related literature. The items in the interview were written in order to get more detailed information from the teachers' point of view about their experiences in the BL context in terms of teachers' roles and their ideas about the context in terms of learner autonomy. They were also asked about the

possible problems that would emerge if a blended learning environment was established in this institution (for teacher interview questions in Turkish and in English, see Appendix C).

The interviews were transcribed after all of them were completed. These transcriptions were analyzed in Turkish. However for purposes of the inclusion in the thesis, some parts of the interviews were translated into English (for sample student interview transcripts, in Turkish and in English see Appendix D and for sample teacher interview transcripts see Appendix E).

Learner Logs

The learner log is an educational tool which students use to record their reflections about what they are learning and their experiences of how this learning is going on. In the literature it is suggested that learner logs are useful since they promote metacognition and that they are also helpful both for the teacher and students to track the students' learning (Caviglioli & Harris, 2002). Therefore, among the participant students, ten students were asked to volunteer to keep learner logs on a weekly basis. Three of the students were different from the interview students, and three students did not send their logs once so there were 47 logs in total. The information in these logs was used to investigate students' ability to engage in autonomous actions in the blended learning context. They were asked to write down the process of their learning, the actions they practiced, their reflections, suggestions and complaints about the blended learning environment. No specific writing format was required for the learner logs. The students wrote in a listing or in a paragraph format. In addition, they were asked to write the logs in Turkish since students' expressing themselves completely and freely were a priority for the study.

A guideline was given to students to include all the items that were needed for the data collection procedure (for sample learner logs and the guidelines, in Turkish and in English see Appendices F and G). They were asked to write which strategies they had used for their set goals, and what they had found useful or not very useful about the online course and about the face-to-face sessions in terms of practicing their autonomous abilities. Since there was not a chance to interview all the students, learner logs helped the researcher to learn more about students' opinions related to their practices in BL. Students were required to write these logs on the computer and send them to the researcher weekly in order to prevent any information loss and because the researcher was not present during the last two weeks of the study. They were also reminded to write logs by their teachers in class times and by using the announcement application in the online course.

Researcher's Observations

The observation I made with the participant students in their classroom was semi-structured. The highly structured type of observation involves attending lessons with a specific focus and with concrete observation aims. In addition, it includes completing an observation scheme to be used while observing (Dornyei, 2007). However, the guideline used in this study was more flexible in its form and content. Each of the lessons lasted 45 minutes and I attended four lessons. I sometimes walked around the classroom to see what the students were doing in terms of autonomous practices. Other times I sat at the back of the class and observed the participants. I did not record anything but I took down detailed notes. During the observations, I did not interact with the students but after the class I asked for informal feedback from some of them. I wrote a guideline to be used while observing

the students. The items in the guideline were written according to the research aims of the study. It included items such as how the students used face-to-face sessions, what the students' attitudes were in these sessions in terms of LA, and what aspects of the blended learning environment helped students practice autonomous abilities (see appendices H and I, for the guideline and a sample of observation notes in Turkish and in English).

Online Course

At Fatih University teachers are encouraged to use an online program called 'My English Lab' (MeLab) for their classes. It is a component that enables students to study part of their classes online. They can login with their passwords and user names, which are provided at the beginning of the term. Later, they enroll in the course which their classes are connected to. There are six book sets that can be followed through this online course but in this study the book called 'Academic Connections 1', which the B1 module students were responsible for, was used. The tools in the program consist of e-materials, an online announcement board, individual learning plans, grade book, and language learning performance charts. The online announcement board is used by the teacher to convey messages to the whole class. E-materials include the activities, lesson notes, and tests which students can choose from according to their needs. The teacher can also add to these materials. Teachers and students can also customize their web pages in terms of the content, activities and general tools. The course provides individualized instruction and practice for the units, instant feedback, and assessment tools which show students' learning and progress. One of the most useful features of the program is that teachers can monitor what each student does during their studies and how well they perform. The system

also alerts both the students and the teacher to the weaknesses of the learners and their low scores. Therefore, learners can track their success and the teacher can help students individually if they are in need (for sample screen-shots of the online course, see Appendix J).

Procedures

Permission was asked from the institution to conduct the study and the procedure was initiated on the 28th of February and lasted for five weeks. First of all, the teachers were introduced to the aim and the function of the study. Next, I met with the students and asked them whether they would like to participate in the study. All the students agreed to take part in the study. Next, the aim and the procedures of the study were explained to students. In this study, a blended learning context was created which integrated both the online and traditional teaching environments. Only the participants of the study and the researcher could access the MeLab online course. Students were able to choose from the links according to the topics they needed to focus on. They could use materials such as audios, practice sheets, reading texts, writing works, grammar and vocabulary exercises. Students had access to materials prior to the face-to-face classes. They attended these classes after they took part in the online discussion and performed activities after the session. The study lasted five weeks and students had 24 hours of regular classes each week. The classes consisted of reading, writing, listening, vocabulary and grammar. These classes were used to continue online discussions with face-to-face class interaction and all the lessons were integrated with the online content. Students were required to bring their own computers and they were given an hour for each class to study on their own. In addition, instructors provided guidance for the students' problems

related to the online activities and gave feedback about their progress and checked their study plans in these sessions when students asked for help. It is important to note that students were not obliged to but they were encouraged to use the online component and instructors did not grade them.

Students completed their learner logs and sent them to the researcher at the end of each week, by e-mail. Students who forgot to send their logs on the date were reminded by the teachers by using the announcement application in the online course. The observations took place during the first three weeks of the study. I observed one lesson in the first, two lessons in the second and one more lesson in the third week. A suitable time for all the participants, free classes, exam and portfolio days were considered while determining the date, the time and the place to administer the questionnaire. It was made sure that the conditions were suitable for everyone and the participants were informed about the date. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher the day after the procedure finished. It was given to each student on paper and all of the 36 students who were chosen for the study completed it. Student interviews were conducted over two days with eight students who volunteered. The interviews took place in the meeting room which was given to the researcher to conduct the study and each lasted for approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were done on half days and after classes. All the interviews were recorded for the data analysis and the participants were aware of this. Interviews were conducted with both of the teachers who took part in the study. They were conducted in teachers' offices in their free hours and the interviews were recorded.

Data Analysis

The first step after the data collection process was to analyze the data gathered from the learner logs, questionnaires, observations and the interviews. The data gathered from the questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Learner logs and the observations were examined to find data for answering the research questions of the study and common patterns based on the information in these logs and the observations related to the learners' practice of their autonomous abilities. Based on Dornyei's (2007) description about analyzing qualitative data, the interviews were transcribed, coded, interpreted, and conclusions were drawn based on the characteristics of autonomous learners mentioned in the literature review section and the aspects of the blended learning context. The qualitative data was analyzed as described in Seidel (1998) by noticing or coding, collecting and thinking about the data. Analyzing qualitative data requires sorting, searching for types, processes or patterns. The aim of this process is to reconstruct the data in a meaningful way (Jorgensen, 1987). Therefore, after collecting the data, I read the data several times, searched for common patterns, and organized the data according to the research aims. In addition, it is also suggested in the literature that other than looking for common patterns, data that is not repeated very much can be taken and analyzed intensively for coding (Agar, 1991). In this respect, I also looked for the data related to the research aims although they were not repeated several times. While coding the data, I used a 'template organizing style' (Crabtree & Miller, 1999 as cited in Dornyei, 2007). According to this style, a template is prepared in advance and transcribed data is coded using this predetermined table. Therefore, I examined

the themes that emerged related to learner autonomy in previous studies and prepared a template based on this background information.

Conclusion

This chapter covered the research methodology of the study including the participants, instruments, data collection procedures and methods of data analysis.

The detailed analysis of the data will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This study was designed to investigate whether a blended learning (BL) environment supports learner autonomy (LA) in the Turkish EFL context and what aspects of the BL environment help students practice autonomous learning. The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. Does a blended learning environment support learner autonomy in the Turkish EFL context?
2. What aspects, if any, of the blended learning environment support learner autonomy?

The study was conducted with one intact class of 36 prep school students. The class was taught in a blended learning environment for five weeks by combining traditional classroom instruction with a software program. The quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire completed by all of the students who participated in the study. The qualitative part of the study included the learner logs of the students, teacher and student interviews, and the classroom observations conducted by the researcher.

Data Analysis

The frequencies of each individual item in the questionnaire were analyzed to see how the participants responded to each item. The data collected from learner logs, interviews and the observations were analyzed qualitatively to find common patterns or themes in these various texts. The aim while looking for these patterns or

themes was to find support for the questionnaire items and interview questions. The researcher was also looking for any other theme that emerged from the data.

Results

The questionnaire items were grouped and presented in two sections. In the first section, the items related to learner autonomy are analyzed. In the second section, the analyses of the items related to the blended learning environment are presented. While discussing the questionnaire items, the data from the overall findings of the learner logs, interviews and the researcher's observations are also used in detail. Some of the themes that emerged from the qualitative data are also discussed separately. This chapter will present the results of these data gathered during and after the procedure.

Blended Learning Environment in relation to Learner Autonomy

After being taught in a blended learning environment for five weeks the class was required to fill in the questionnaire. It was in a Likert-scale format, and it included 18 items rated on a five point Likert-scale. While answering the questions, students selected one of five options: never, rarely, sometimes, often and always. The items related to learner autonomy were intended to find out how often the students were able to practice actions associated with learner autonomy in a blended learning environment. The other items, related to the aspects of the blended learning environment believed to support learner autonomy, were designed to find out how often the participants were able to make use of these aspects. These items ask about the characteristics of the software program and its incorporation in the classroom environment and how often these characteristics are used by the students. In the questionnaire, participants were asked to answer the same questions for 'last term',

in order to help them to think about the context in which they were taught before the procedure so that they could assess the BL experience better. However, since the aim of this study was not to look for a difference between the traditional and the blended learning contexts, the section about the ‘last term’ was not used while analyzing the data.

The data obtained from students’ responses to the questionnaire were entered into SPSS and the frequencies for each of the responses to the items were examined for the analysis related to the research questions of the study. Table 1 below presents the frequencies for the items related to learner autonomy in the questionnaire.

Table 1 - Frequencies for the learner autonomy items in the questionnaire

How often were you able to	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. determine your own objectives according to your needs?	-	6	20	10	-
2. select materials to accomplish your learning goals?	-	-	8	20	8
3. define the place of your learning?	-	2	13	21	-
4. define the pace of your learning?	-	-	10	26	-
5. use the language outside of the classroom?	-	-	10	24	2
6. evaluate your own learning process?	-	-	9	21	6
7. conduct the learning plan alone?	-	-	9	21	6
8. apply learning strategies alone?	-	5	14	17	-
9. decide what to learn for the next lesson?	-	-	5	25	6
10. take control of your own language learning?	-	2	14	20	-

Table 1 demonstrates that most of the students were able to determine their objectives according to their needs at least some of the time (Item 1). The data from

the logs showed that some students set their own learning goals according to their own needs rather than expecting the teacher to determine goals for everyone and follow them, as can be seen in the following excerpt from a student log:

My goals for learning English are about reading and using new vocabulary. I want to improve my reading because it is important for my department. I want to understand the reading books and hard texts. For this, I use the texts provided in the reading section of the MeLab program. I can read the one I want and post a comment. For learning new vocabulary I write sentences and the teacher checks them. (S1)

Another student wrote that:

This week, I want to improve my listening skills because I'm not very good at that. For this, I started to listen to various audios from online content and then I answer questions related to that. I can find many audios from different subjects that I'm interested in. I try to listen to two audios a day. I hope my vocabulary knowledge will also increase as I listen. (S2)

However, one student stated in her log that she had difficulty determining her goals on her own:

I have many weaknesses in grammar and vocabulary. I need to learn more about simple past tenses so that I do exercises and read short stories to improve it. It is easy to find exercises for grammar but I find it hard to find a way to improve my vocabulary knowledge. I sometimes memorize words but then I forget. I don't know how to start improving it. It is easier when the teacher gives word lists and tells some ways to learn them. (S8)

Differences in ability to set personal learning goals may stem from students' individual learning styles. For instance, one student may accept more responsibility for her learning and therefore she might want to engage in some autonomous actions on her own; however the other may see the teacher in the center of her language learning and so she might accept the teacher's authority easily. In addition, some may need more time to get used to seeing the teacher as a guide rather than a

determiner. The issue of student and teacher roles emerged as a separate theme in the qualitative data, and will be discussed later in this chapter.

According to the researcher's observations in the classroom it was seen that some students asked the teacher to determine objectives for them because they were not sure about how to choose objectives and plan their learning process. However, they also expected the teacher to explain to them in detail the reason why they have those objectives. For instance, I observed that while the students were studying on their own using the software program, one student asked his teacher to determine goals for the reading skill because he stated that answering comprehension questions is hard for him. He pointed out an objective he found and asked the teacher if it was good or not. The teacher suggested another one and asked him to narrow down his goals. Then, the student asked for an explanation about the difference between his and the teacher's objective. In another situation I observed that one student asked her friend what his goal was for the vocabulary. He told her that it was to study last unit's vocabulary because they were going to have a test that week. Then they argued about its correctness and asked the teacher whether it could be written in their learning plan or not. The teacher explained to them how it should be by giving examples. I observed similar situations like these a number of times. Therefore, it can be said that although some of the participants could not determine objectives on their own, they were eager to learn the rationale behind the given objectives. They tried to decide their goals on their own but they expected the teacher's approval to make sure that they were doing it right. This might be explained by the traditional, teacher-led learning style that the students were used to throughout their language learning experience.

All of the students said that they were able to select materials in order to accomplish their goals at least some of the time, with most of the students saying they were often able to do this (Item 2). It can be seen from the student logs that they chose materials to accomplish their goals:

In the writing lessons I can choose the topic I want to write about from the writing section of the MeLab and I can write about as many topics as I can. I do not want the teacher to give me a topic which I don't like and waste the whole lesson writing about only one topic. (S10)

Another student stated that:

My listening grades are very low so I want to improve it. I can choose listening audios from the program according to their topics and listen to them whenever I want. I learn and practice new listening strategies as I listen. (S3)

In the student interviews, selecting materials was mentioned as an action that was liked by many of the interviewees (Interview Item 2). One of them said, for instance:

I liked to select materials according to my own needs and interest the most because the activities that the teacher gave us were similar most of the time. However, I could find various exercises for one subject on the MeLab and I could use the one I chose in the classroom. (S7)

The statements above demonstrate that the teacher did not provide students with one single activity or make the material selection for them. On the contrary, the students made the decision of selecting materials by considering their own language learning. For instance, during the observations I saw that after the teacher presented the grammar subject about 'If clauses', the students did activities by choosing from the MeLab program. I noticed that some of them chose writing sentences whereas

other preferred filling in the blanks. In addition, some students who finished early, continued to study other things.

The majority of the students said that they could define the place of learning, at least some of the time (Item 3). For defining the pace of learning, all of the students said that they were able to do this, at least some of the time, and most of them said they could do it often (Item 4). These responses could be linked to the fact that students can reach the MeLab program from outside of the class, and it also might be due to the fact that they can also use the program in class because they are in a blended learning setting. The students could study using the program during their lessons and after the class at their own paces and either in class or at home. A student log demonstrated that:

I can reach extra activities from my MeLab page. So that I can study even from home or it's the weekend. I used the classroom notes of the reading lesson last week because I couldn't go to school. It helped me to do my homework. (S5)

The same student another week wrote that:

I couldn't understand the grammar subject today very well. So, I studied example sentences from the teacher's notes through the page and I did extra activities during the time I was studying on my own in class. It is good that I can find notes to study again at my own speed. (S5)

In the student interviews it was also mentioned by one of the participants that (for Interview Item 2):

I liked the idea of being able to study even after the class and I could also repeat the subjects that I didn't understand very well in the lesson through the classroom notes part of the program. (S2)

These statements reveal that students took some kind of responsibility through studying online. In addition, they didn't restrict their learning to the classroom situation, which will also be discussed in the following item.

Using the language outside of the classroom was practiced by all of the students, at least some of the time, and the majority was able to do it often (Item 5). This might be due to the fact that the students could access their classroom materials and do extra work through the MeLab program. This can be seen from the following excerpts:

I wrote some paragraphs yesterday while I was in my room and my teacher checked it after I sent them to her. I corrected my sentences again using her feedback. I also listened to various audios and answered the questions about them. (S1)

Another student wrote that:

I chatted with my friends in English through the chatting application of the MeLab program. We talked about a movie we watched in the lesson. I can express my ideas more easily this way. (S4)

In the student interviews, the eight interviewees mentioned that they liked the opportunity to do activities related to their classroom practices both inside and outside of the classroom by using the software program (Interview Item 2). One student said that:

I continued studying according to my learning plan after the class with the online materials. I could find the similar activities as we did in the classroom. This helped me to study on my own when I'm at home. (S3)

The data reveals that students continued to use the language outside of the classroom and it was also emphasized the appropriateness of the online content was also helpful.

The frequencies for Items 6 and 7 reveal that all of the students were able to evaluate their learning process, (Item 6) and conduct the learning plan alone (Item 7) at least some of the time. Although the items are not directly related to each other, the pattern of responses is the same. This might be due to the fact that conducting a learning plan alone includes evaluating one's learning process. Many of the students mentioned in the learning logs that they were able to see their weaknesses or strengths and make changes in their plan accordingly. Many of the student logs included information about evaluating their learning process and how they conducted their learning plan, as in the following excerpts:

I had a learning plan last module but I made it after I got a bad grade from the exam. However, I was able to do my own learning plan with my teacher at the beginning of the lessons this module. It helped me because I was aware of my weaknesses before the exam so that I had time to study. (S6)

Another student stated that:

There were some parts in my learning plan that I couldn't complete this week. But I want to add them for the next week. I asked my teacher to help to do a plan and she helped me according to my needs. When I check my plan, I can see how much I learned and what I need. So I can make changes in the plan. (S8)

These excerpts reveal that the students were not conducting their learning plans 'alone' but they were asking for help from their teachers about their learning plans. It is obvious from the data that they needed the teacher's guidance at some point while following their plans. This situation also reveals the importance of the teacher's presence in class during students' working on the software program.

For Item 8, the frequencies show that applying learning strategies alone was rather a difficult action for some of the students. The majority said that they were able to do this, at least some of the time. However, five participants reported that

they were rarely able to do this. This might be linked to the fact that the students needed the teacher's help since there might not have been enough time for them to get used to applying these strategies 'alone'. This result is supported by the following student log entry:

I learned some strategies for vocabulary and reading but I forget most of them while I'm in the exam or studying alone at home. If the teacher shows or reminds me of them, I can apply them very easily. (S7)

This difficulty might stem from a similar reason as in the first item in the questionnaire. It should be remembered that 'determining objectives' or 'applying strategies' 'alone' might take some time for students to get used to. Moreover, their perceptions about the role of the teacher and the students might also affect this process. Still, it can be concluded that although the students expect the teacher's help, they tend to practice these strategies since they have become aware of them.

Items 9 and 10 are related to each other in terms of 'taking the responsibility' for one's own learning. It should be remembered that this characteristic, especially Item 10, is the main component of autonomous learning. It is interesting to note that all of the participants responded that they could decide what to learn for the next lesson, at least some of the time (Item 9). This might be because the students had lessons for studying on their own in the blended learning environment with their computers and they could decide what to study according to their needs. In addition, the frequencies for Item 10 reveal that except for two participants, most of the students responded that they were able to take control of their own language learning, at least some of the time. This result might be linked to the fact that students were given the responsibility for their learning and the teacher was a guide

in the classroom rather than someone who decided everything. The sense of taking the responsibility was mentioned in many of the student logs, as in the following excerpt:

I tried to complete the missing parts in my learning plan today. I made sentences about the linking words we learned this week and asked questions to my teacher about their meanings. It is good to have time for studying what I want and have the teacher to ask questions. (S1)

Another student wrote:

I can study on the subject I want and do as many extra activities as I can from the MeLab activities. I asked my teacher about the subjects I didn't understand and he advised me some extra work to do. I didn't like the weekend worksheets that we used to have because I have more time now to study according to my own needs. (S5)

The responses to the first question asked in the student interviews also support these results. One student, for instance, responded to the question 'were you able to control your own language learning in the BL environment and can you explain in detail' in the following way:

I was able to decide what I want to study and choose the activities I like to do. The learning plan that we followed according to our needs helped me a lot in controlling and assessing my progress. I'm happy that I was given some responsibility both inside and outside of the class because I realized my learning style and practiced the things I learned on my own. (S7)

During another observation, I saw that some students were checking their learning plans of that week. They were coloring the goals box that they could not complete or needed more work and adding it to the next week's plan. One student, for instance, marked the box that was written 'read news about politics and write a short comment' then she wrote the same goal on the next week's plan. Another

student was listening to a text about ‘history of advertising’ and checking his answers to the questions. Based on these various examples it can be said that students were given the opportunity to conduct their learning plans (Item 7), determine their own objectives (Item 1), select their own materials (Item 2), evaluate their progress (Item 6) and decide what to learn according to their needs (Item 9) by using the software program. The teacher was present in the classroom but only as a guide. She answered students’ questions and helped them when they needed. She did not give the students ready-made activities or decide the subjects to study on behalf of them; rather, the students took decisions about their language learning.

In terms of the first research question of this study, it can be concluded from the data that the blended learning environment supports learner autonomy in this EFL setting. It was seen that many of the students were able to practice autonomous activities, at least some of the time, in the blended learning context. This was seen in the responses to the questionnaires and the interview questions, in the learner logs, and in the classroom observations.

Aspects of the Blended Learning Environment in relation to Learner Autonomy

This section shows the items related to the aspects of the blended learning environment believed to support learner autonomy, designed to find out how often the participants were able to make use of these aspects.

Table 2 - Frequencies for the aspects of the blended learning items in the questionnaire

How often were you able to	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
11. ask questions to the teacher while working on the MeLab program?	-	-	8	25	3
12. receive instant feedback to your questions while studying online?	-	2	13	21	-
13. use the feedback tool in the MeLab program?	-	-	6	27	3
14. use the communication tools in the MeLab program?	-	-	-	24	12
15. understand the progress you made using the personalized grade book in the MeLab program?	-	-	1	22	13
16. identify your weaknesses in language learning performance charts in the MeLab program?	-	-	3	22	11
17. relate the content in the MeLab program to in-class learning?	-	-	-	28	8
18. do individual tasks in a personalized learning environment?	-	-	3	21	12

Since three items (Items 11, 12, 13) are related to each other in terms of getting feedback, they are discussed together. The results of Item 11 reveal that all of the students asked questions of the teacher while they were working on the MeLab program at least to some extent, but the majority was often able to do it. This might be the result of the fact that the teacher was in the classroom to guide the students or answer their questions if they needed while they were studying on their own. In addition, it might be due to the fact that the learners were able to communicate with

the teacher even while they were at home. During the observations, one student was checking her mistakes which were marked and graded, in a paragraph. Then, she asked the teacher to explain the mistakes for her. The situation here shows that students needed the teacher although they were studying individually. During the interviews, one student stated that (Interview Item 2):

While I was doing activities on the MeLab and trying to complete my learning plan, I sometimes needed to ask questions to the teacher. And I liked the idea of having the teacher in the classroom while I was working individually because I feel like I'm taking private courses. So I'm more comfortable and the teacher's praises also motivated me on my decisions. (S6)

Similarly, Item 12 shows that most of the students responded that they received instant feedback to their questions while studying online, at least some of the time. This item can be assessed from two sides. First, the students might have received instant feedback while they were studying in the classroom, which is similar to the previous item. Second, they may have received this feedback through e-mail while they were studying at home. The latter option might explain why two students responded 'rarely' to this item; it might be that the teachers were not online when the students were studying and they might have responded to the students late. In the interviews the teachers were asked 'In what ways were face-to-face sessions useful or not useful for the students?' (Interview Item 2). The male teacher responded to this question in the following way:

The sessions were useful because the students had many questions while working on the software program. And, when they get instant help or feedback and solve their language problems, they are motivated and continue studying. In addition, these sessions motivated students because they could feel the classroom interaction even when they were studying on their own. (T1)

The other teacher stated that:

Since the students are not aware of their autonomous abilities, they needed to be introduced in a learning environment where they can practice these. I think the aspect of face-to-face sessions in this context help the students to practice these with the guidance of the teacher. This may give them confidence too because they try and get feedback in class then they also practice when they are alone. (T2)

It can be suggested that these sessions were useful in that learners were able ask for help related to their language problems and they gained confidence to control their learning.

The feedback tool mentioned in Item 13 is a tool in the program which gives feedback to students' activities when they ask for feedback from the program. All of the students reported that they were able to use this tool. However, six of them said they were only able to use it sometimes. This might be linked to the fact that students had the opportunity of getting feedback from their teachers in class. It also might be because the program's explanations might not be easy for them to understand. Many of the student logs supported the results of these three items, as in the following examples:

I like doing activities on the MeLab but sometimes I need the teacher to explain to me the things I don't understand. I can e-mail my questions but I prefer asking her in person while we are in class because it is quicker to ask in class than waiting for her to respond to my question via mail. Although I can get feedback from the program too, I understand the teacher's feedback more easily than the program's. (S3)

Another student wrote that:

While studying online at home, I like the opportunity of asking questions to my teacher and the friends through e-mail or the message board because I sometimes need them to help me in activities. I use this option more at the weekends because it is quicker to get feedback in class. (S9)

In addition, as previously mentioned for item 10 of Table 1, I observed that one student was checking her mistakes in her writing work using the feedback tool; however, she asked for further explanation from the teacher about her mistakes.

The examples from logs also explain the results of Item 14. The communication tools in the MeLab program were used by all of the students. This might stem from the fact that students needed to ask questions or share information while they were studying online. They were able to communicate with their classroom friends and their teachers via e-mail, the message board and the chat place. During the observations, I did not see any one using these communication tools either with their friends or the teacher. This was probably due to the fact that they were able to communicate with each other in person.

Since items 15 and 16 are related to each other in terms of students' assessing their progress, they are presented together. The frequencies of Item 15 reveal that with the exception of one student, all of the students reported that they were often or always able to use the personalized grade book in the MeLab program. The program gives grades for each activity students do and it provides the previous grades they received in order for the students to be able to assess their progress. This item can be linked to the previously explained Item 6, which is about 'evaluating their own learning progress. The result for Item 6 was that all of the students were able to evaluate their own learning progress, at least some of the time. The grade book might have helped the students to assess their learning process and make changes in their learning plan accordingly. The language learning performance charts referred to in Item 16 are a component of the software program which shows students' performance as they do activities online. Students can see their weaknesses from

these charts and study accordingly or set new goals and make some changes in their learning plans. These components also help students to understand their progress on their own and make their own decisions, which might help them be more autonomous. All of the students said they were able to identify their weaknesses in the language learning performance charts in the MeLab program, at least some of the time, (Item 16). An excerpt from a student log offers a possible explanation for the results of these two items (Items 15, 16):

I can see my overall progress from the grade book. It motivates me to work on my weaknesses more because I can see if I'm above or below the average. I also use the performance charts and do extra activities if my grade is low. [Before] I was only able to know about my progress and weaknesses after the exam. However, these charts and the grade book help me know about my progress on my own before the exam. (S10)

In the student interviews, many of the responses to the interview Item 5 ‘How did you find the MeLab program in terms of studying individually? Which components of the program helped you?’ were similar:

The MeLab program helped me organize my language learning because there are many activities which I can choose from according to my needs and interest. (S3)

Another student stated that:

I benefited from the grade book and the performance charts so much because they helped me evaluate my learning. I was able to understand my weaknesses and the progress I made easily by looking at these charts. (S6)

While observing the students, a group of students were doing the unit test. When they finished, their answers were graded. Later, they looked at their overall grades of past unit tests using the online grade book. They also told their grades verbally to each other and compared them.

All of the students said they were able to relate the content in the MeLab program to in-class learning, at least some of the time (Item 17). This suggests that combining the traditional classroom instruction with the software program created an environment in which students were able to make connections to what they learned in class with their out-of-class studying. This situation appeared to motivate students to continue studying with the software program, as can be understood from the following learner log data:

I can easily study with the MeLab program because the activities and the topics are related to the things we do in class and there are various types of activities which interest me. I can continue studying even while I'm at home. (S1)

One of the students interviewed stated that (Interview Item 2):

The most useful thing I liked about the BL environment was to be able to connect the activities or subject that we did in class to my out-of-class studies through the software program. So, I didn't have to wait for the teacher to give me materials or tell me what to study. I could easily study the subject I want before the lesson and do the activities in my own time. (S5)

During one of the observations, the class started to talk about 'smoking ban in closed areas' after they read a text about it. However, since it was the end of the lesson, the teacher told students to continue discussing this topic online after class. The data from students show that creating a learning situation in which they can combine their in class studies with the out-of-class activities motivated them to continue their language learning individually.

On the basis of the responses that the students gave to Item 18 in the questionnaire, with the exception of three students who said 'sometimes', all of the respondents were often or always able to do individual tasks in a personalized learning environment. This might be linked to the fact that in the classroom setting,

the students were given the opportunity to study on their own using the software program. In addition, they could continue their studies outside of the classroom. Therefore, the learning environment was personalized and reached out of the classroom. These results can also be seen from the previous student statements in logs and interviews given as examples.

The major themes related to the questionnaire items that emerged from the qualitative data have been discussed in relation to the quantitative data. However, some themes from the learner logs, interviews and the observations did not directly relate to the questionnaire items. Therefore, those themes will be discussed separately in the following sections.

The teacher's and the students' role

In many of the learner logs a theme about the teacher's and the students' role could be identified. It can be concluded that although some of the students were more dependent on the teacher than others, most of the students saw the teacher as a guide in the BL experience. Their roles can be identified in the following excerpt:

I like trying strategies on my own while learning English. Today, the teacher showed us some strategies in the reading lesson. It doesn't help me when the teacher tells what strategy to use; instead I learn more when I apply them on my own. So I chose some of the strategies and practiced them while reading the unit text. This way, I saw if they work with me or not. (S9)

However, another student wrote that:

I want to improve my reading and listening because I lose points in the exam. I want the teacher to ask me questions about the reading text; I can't express my own idea about it and I want the teacher to tell me my weaknesses. (S2)

The student interviews showed that almost all of the students expressed a similar view about Interview Item 3 'How do you see your role as a language learner

and your teacher's role in the BL context?' stating that they became more active in their language learning and regarded the teacher as a helper. It can be said that they realized a change in their roles and preferred the teacher to be a guide rather than an only authority, as can be understood from the following excerpts:

I see my role as a more active student in the classroom because I can make decisions about what to study, how much time to study or which strategies to use. However, these kinds of things were determined by the teacher most of the time before. And also I liked that the teacher isn't just there but she is like a guide in the classroom. She asks us questions about what we do and helps when we ask a question. (S7)

Another student stated that:

I agree with my friends that it's very important to have a teacher while working online because it can be sometimes hard to study on my own and I can give up. But in the classroom setting my friends and the teacher motivates me. I'm not very used to making decisions for my own learning but I liked and benefited from it very much as I experienced it in the past weeks. (S3)

Another student expressed his idea as:

I think if we learn only as the way our teacher teaches and don't practice or experience it ourselves, then we can never be sure if we learned it very well or not. So, I think that it is very important that we have some opportunity to make decisions for our learning and the teacher guides us. (S4)

To the researcher's question 'what do you mean by guiding?' the above student answered:

For example, when I ask a question, my teacher doesn't give the answer directly; instead she gives clues and wants me to find it by myself. Or, as she checks how we progress, she suggests some other ways that we can follow. And, another thing is I practice many things and learn how to control my learning in this context so that I can continue studying after class with the guidance I get here. (S4)

The teachers were also asked a question related to this issue: ‘Was there a change in teacher’s role in the BL environment?’ (Interview Item 3) and they responded in the following way:

Sure there was. First of all, I don’t see myself as someone who has to bring materials to class and ask the students to finish it in one lesson. The students make decisions about some issues for their learning and this gives them responsibility. I think they started to be more responsible. They know that they can ask questions to me but they also know that they are the ones who have to decide and solve the problem so they see me like a guide.
(T2)

The other teacher responded to the same question in the following way:

I think that students had more responsibility than before because we were like helpers to them and they started to get used to this as lessons passed. I think that providing the students with choices for them to choose put some responsibility on them. (T1)

As can be concluded from the above statements, although it is new for some of the students, they started to see the teacher as a guide in the classroom. In addition, this context helped them realize that the teacher should not be a determiner in their language learning; instead they should take some responsibility. Therefore, this may help them to change their past ideas about the teacher’s and the student’s role in the classroom since they experienced a change in roles in this learning context.

Practicing autonomous abilities

In the teacher interviews Interview Item 1 asked ‘Do you think that the BL context can help students practice their autonomous abilities?’ and the teachers responded in the following way:

I believe that the context provided opportunities that encouraged learners to take control of their language learning. They found chances to try strategies on their own while dealing with a language problem, determined their own objectives and chose

materials for the purpose of accomplishing their goals. Conducting a learning plan also gave them a kind of responsibility for their learning. In this setting, I think, although not every student practiced in the same level, all of them were able to practice some kind of autonomous learning. (T1)

The other teacher stated that:

I think that the software program enabled students a flexible learning environment but considering our students' past learning experiences, I believe that to have a teacher whom students can ask for guidance is important for learners while realizing their abilities and getting used to a more student-centered learning. So, it is obvious that the context helped them to practice autonomous activities. (T2)

During the observations, I encountered consistent patterns that could be associated with autonomous abilities. For instance, in one lesson, some students were checking their learning plans and they were selecting materials from the online content to add to their plans. One student was writing down his weaknesses for the listening skill on a paper and another student was asking for explanations from the teacher about his writing mistakes.

The data reveal that teachers thought that the students practiced some kind of autonomous activities during the blended learning experience. As can be understood from the above statements and the observations the online content and the face-to-face sessions encouraged students to control their own learning and experience a more student-centered learning.

Possible problematic parts of the BL context

The teachers were asked in the interview (Interview Item 4) 'What can be the problematic parts for the teachers and the students if a BL context is decided to be implemented in the Turkish EFL context?' The responses showed that the possible problems can mostly be related to technical issues or the educational culture, as stated by the teachers:

I think that the implementation process of a software program to in-class learning should be considered thoroughly in order to prevent any technical problems such as: registration procedure of the students to the online class, using communication tools of the program, and the internet connection. In addition, I think that not for the private universities but for the state universities in Turkey, providing every student with a computer can also be a big problem. Besides, since the teachers and the students are used to teaching and learning in a more teacher-centered context and the system is more test-oriented, getting used to this kind of learning can take some time. I think the teachers' training and then the learner training are important things to be considered. Here, for example, we are trained on how to use this program and how to approach students in face-to-face sessions. (T1)

The other teacher expressed her ideas in the following way:

Before starting to teach in this context, I think the technical problems should be solved in advance. In Turkey, the biggest problem can be making sure that every student has a personal computer or a computer lab to study in. Other than this, the students' and the teachers' past learning experiences can be a hindrance for the BL context. However, I also believe that by continuing to use a software program with in-class teaching in the guidance of a teacher is an appropriate setting for our context because the learners are practicing autonomous learning in a setting that they are familiar with. The school administration, however, should train teachers regularly. (T2)

During the observations I did not encounter or observe big problems.

However, in one of the lessons, one student did not have his computer with him that day, so he had to use the teacher's computer. It can be concluded that the school registration should consider the possible problems that may stem from the technical issues or from the educational culture that the teachers and the students are used to before implementing a software program in in-class learning.

In terms of the second research question of this study, it can be suggested that the aspects of the blended learning environment, such as the presence of the teacher while students were using the MeLab program, the appropriateness of the online content to students' needs in terms of students' level, interests or needs encourage

students to engage in with autonomous activities. In addition, the components of the program, such as language learning performance charts, the personalized grade book or the feedback tool, help students to practice their autonomous abilities.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the quantitative and the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire, learner logs, teacher and student interviews, and the researcher's observations. First, the results of the questionnaire were presented in two tables. In the first one, items related to the students' practices of learner autonomy were described and in the second table, the items related to the structure of the BL context in relation to LA were presented.

The themes that emerged from the qualitative data were also discussed in accordance with the questionnaire items. However, some themes that did not have a direct connection with the issues discussed in the questionnaire were presented separately. According to these findings, it was found that most of the students were able to practice autonomous actions, at least some of the time. The findings also showed that although the frequencies of students' practicing these actions were different from each other, the BL context provided opportunities for students to practice autonomous learning.

Second, the aspects of the BL context were discussed in relation to learner autonomy. The findings revealed that the teacher's guidance in the face-to-face sessions and the quality of the online content were helpful for students while practicing their autonomous abilities. In other words, students' engagement with autonomous learning was supported by the structure of the BL context. The findings also showed that this context can be suitable for the educational culture of these

students. This suggests that regardless of learners' past learning experiences, the structure of the BL context can encourage learners to experience and practice learning autonomously.

The next chapter will discuss the findings, pedagogical implications of the study, limitations and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore whether a blended learning (BL) environment supports learner autonomy (LA) in the Turkish EFL context and what aspects of the blended learning context, believed to support learner autonomy, help students to practice autonomous activities. The study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods in the data collection process. A blended learning experience was implemented with 36 prep school students from various departments. After the blended learning experience, a questionnaire was administered. The first ten items in the questionnaire aimed to investigate how often the students were able to practice actions associated with learner autonomy in a blended learning environment. The remaining eight items included questions about the aspects of the blended learning environment believed to support learner autonomy and they aimed to explore how often the participants were able to make use of these aspects. The data gathered were analyzed quantitatively by looking at the frequencies of each item and the results were supported with the qualitative data. Ten students were asked to volunteer to keep learner logs weekly during the blended learning experience. They were asked to include information about their own experiences of this context in relation to learner autonomy, suggestions and complaints. Student and teacher interviews were also carried out, aiming to investigate students' autonomous practices in the blended learning context. In addition, the researcher observed some of the lessons throughout the process, aiming to examine the autonomous actions engaged in by the students. The data collected were analyzed by examining the themes emerging from the qualitative data.

This chapter discusses the findings obtained in this study, compares the results with those of similar studies, suggests pedagogical implications, discusses the limitations of the study, and presents suggestions for further research.

Discussion of the Findings

Students' Autonomous Practices in the Blended Learning Context

The first ten questionnaire items were related to autonomous practices, and the students were asked to evaluate their ability to perform these actions in the blended learning environment. The results showed that learners were able to determine their objectives according to their needs, select materials to accomplish their learning goals, and decide what to learn for the next lesson, most of the time. It was reported that they were doing these actions by using the online content of the software program such as reading texts, listening audios or writing exercises presented in various topics. It was seen that students made decisions about their own language learning and chose materials according to their interests and language needs. However, there were a very few students who were less able to do these actions on their own. They sometimes asked for the teacher's approval about their decisions. This suggests that there can be differences in students' engagement with some practices; these differences may be due to their learning styles. This conclusion is consistent with the results found by Akkoyunlu and Soylu (2008) at Hacettepe University. They found that the student views on the blended learning experience and their actions in this context differed according to their learning styles. Some of their participants in the study, called 'assimilators', according to Kolb's (1984) learner style categories, for instance, prefer to work alone, they are good at planning, and they learn by thinking and watching. In this respect, some students in the study

depict a similar learner style. Lim and Morris's (2009) study also supports the result found in the present study. They found that individual learning differences are important factors to be considered in learner-oriented instruction.

In this study, the students who rated these actions 'rarely' reported that they asked for a detailed explanation from the teachers about the rationale behind the chosen objectives. Even though they were rarely practicing those autonomous actions, their questioning reveals that they were eager to apply them when they are encouraged. This result suggests that students can ultimately practice these autonomous actions when they are encouraged and provided with opportunities. This result is also consistent with the results of Karabiyik's (2008) study. She found that although some students felt their decision making abilities would be poor, most of them thought that they could make crucial decisions for their learning if the teachers gave them more responsibility and provided them with the opportunities to do more autonomous actions.

Almost all of the students in this study reported that they could define their place of learning, define their pace of learning, and use the language outside of the classroom, at least some of the time. These actions can be attributed to the fact that students were able to use the software program in class and they were also able to reach the online content from outside of the classroom. This also provided opportunities for learners not to restrict their studies to the classroom setting. It was reported that learners could revise what they need at their own pace from the classroom notes put into the program. In terms of using the language outside of the classroom, students engaged in autonomous learning activities such as listening to English radio programs, communicating in English with their classmates online or

revising their written work based on the feedback they received. These results are in accordance with those of Dalsgaard and Godsk's (2007) study. They emphasized the importance of availability of resources for learners' use because they found that students' repetition of their lessons according to their own needs and solving their language problems are better conducted with self-governed work.

The results showed that all of the students were able to evaluate their learning process and conduct a learning plan, at least some of the time, and the majority of the students reported that they were able to apply learning strategies alone. In the literature, it was stated that learner autonomy can be enhanced by using such metacognitive strategies since it enables students to take responsibility for their own learning (Cotterall & Murray, 2009; Reinders, 2010). In this respect, the results are positive in that students were able to practice these autonomous actions to a certain extent. In addition, by conducting a learning plan, students reported that they were able to identify their weaknesses or strengths and make the necessary changes in their plans accordingly, which also gives them the opportunity to control their own learning. These results are highly consistent with the results found in the study carried out by Cotterall and Murray (2009). They also found that personal language learning plans enable students to evaluate their learning process and use metacognitive strategies. Figura and Jarvis (2007) also found that computer-based materials enable learners to apply learning strategies and their level of autonomy is fostered to an extent. Therefore, these results may suggest that since strategy use enables students to develop learner autonomy, it is important for them to have opportunities to apply them.

On the other hand, in terms of metacognitive strategy use, there were a few participants who chose 'rarely' for this action. This might be due to the fact that applying strategies 'alone' might take some time to get used to and the teacher's help might be needed during this process. Karabiyik's (2008) study concluded that, even though the participants employed metacognitive strategies at relatively low levels, with more guidance and strategy training, learners can be encouraged to have more control over their learning.

In terms of taking the responsibility for their own learning, most of the students reported that they were able to do this most of the time. According to Holec (1981), in order for students to successfully apply autonomous practices, a learning structure which supports them in taking charge of their learning is essential. In this respect, the results reveal that the context enabled students to apply autonomous practices as described in Holec's (1981) model of learner autonomy. He stated that students should be provided with the courses in which they can determine their own goals, choose appropriate materials, decide how they are going to use those materials, monitor their progress, and assess their learning. Thus, the result may indicate that learners can take charge of their learning if they are provided with a learning environment in which they can assume those responsibilities mentioned above. The findings demonstrate that by integrating the software program in traditional in-class learning, the students found opportunities to be more independent, confident and motivated towards their learning. They experienced certain types of autonomous behavior such as: taking the responsibility for their learning, setting goals, selecting materials to accomplish those goals, conducting a learning plan, evaluating their learning process and controlling their language learning. These

results are highly consistent with the results of Sanprasert's (2010) study. It was found in his study that students developed a kind of autonomy and engaged in independent study when a software program was integrated in in-class learning. Abraham's (2007) study also found that the BL environment promoted student-centered learning by empowering students to take control of their learning and increasing the participation of students in online classes. Similarly, the results of this study revealed that learners can practice their autonomous abilities by gradually allowing them to take more responsibility for their own learning.

Another issue that can be discussed according to the results of the study is about the educational culture of the teachers and the students. Drawing on the results, it would be wrong to make generalizations about learners' educational culture and say autonomous learning is not appropriate for the eastern educational context since it was found that a blended learning environment seems to support learner autonomy in the Turkish EFL context. Thus, it can be said that learner autonomy is possible in an eastern educational context, contrary to those studies that have said it is appropriate only in a Western context. In this respect, this result confirms the arguments of several researchers. Gieve and Clark (2005), for instance, claim that traditional learning approaches can change when an appropriate context for learning is provided for students. Similarly, Parks and Raymond (2004) emphasize the importance of the context rather than the culture itself. Therefore, it can be suggested that as in this study, although culture of learning can have an effect on students' learning habits, they tend to change when an appropriate learning context for students' needs is provided.

Aspects of the Blended Learning Environment and Learner Autonomy

The second part of the questionnaire related to the aspects of the blended learning environment believed to support learner autonomy, and were designed to find out how often the participants were able to make use of these aspects. They are discussed in the order that they were presented in the previous chapter.

Ask questions of the teacher

According to the results, all of the students reported that they asked questions of the teacher while working on the MeLab program most of the time. This suggests that the teacher was not the only one speaking in the classroom; rather, the learners also had opportunities to speak and ask questions, which makes them not a passive receiver all the time but rather an active participant in the classroom. This result is in accordance with the result found by Sanprasert (2010). It was stated in his study that students developed a kind of self-confidence and became aware of their role in language learning. Another conclusion that can be made about this result is that the students might have benefitted from the interaction in the classroom with their teachers and their classmates, since it was reported that learners needed the teacher's help while working online and learned from their friends' mistakes sometimes. Therefore, it can be said that the presence of the teacher in the classroom while students are working with a software program helping them to handle problems that they may encounter.

Receive instant feedback and use the feedback tool of the software program

All of the students reported that they were able to use the program's feedback tool; however, some of the students were only able to use it 'sometimes'. This result suggests that the students preferred receiving feedback from their teachers in the classroom since it was reported that the program's explanations might be difficult to

understand compared to the teacher's. Therefore, it can be concluded that the teacher's guidance is needed to help students practice autonomous abilities, which can be provided in the blended learning environment. These results are in accordance with those found by Sagarra and Zapata (2008). They found that with regard to their participants' preferences, the most appreciated tool in their online workbook program was receiving immediate feedback since they felt that they could learn from their mistakes. In addition, it was stated that receiving instant feedback motivated students to spend extra time on other activities in order to get a higher score. Similarly, in the current study, the students continued working on their mistakes by doing other online activities after the feedback they received from their teachers or from the program.

Use the communication tools of the program

The communication tools of the program such as the e-mail, the message board, and the chat place were used by all of the students. These were mostly used out of the classroom, and it was reported that the students asked and received answers to their questions, shared information with their friends, and communicated with their teachers even while they were away from school. These results are also in accordance with those of Shana's (2009) study. It was found that the students' beliefs about the most beneficial activities in their environment of learning with technology were sharing ideas or materials with other students or with the teacher, sending and receiving assignments, and getting feedback or grades. In this respect, the students of this study shared similar perceptions about the communication or interaction aspect of the learning context.

Use the personalized grade book of the program and the language learning performance charts

In terms of learners' evaluating their own progress, except for one student, all of the students reported they were able to use the personalized grade book in the MeLab program most of the time, which enabled them to assess their learning process by making changes in their objectives, trying different learning strategies, and selecting materials according to their needs, which in turn helped them to be autonomous. It was reported that, before the implementation of the blended learning experience, some students were only able to see their progress after they took an exam, which was not efficient. However, obtaining regular feedback or grades for their activities helped them to evaluate their progress gradually before they took an exam.

It was reported that all of the students were able to identify their weaknesses from the online language learning performance charts. While conducting the learning plan, students evaluated their own progress. Therefore, it can be concluded that these components of the program might have helped learners in making changes in their plans accordingly and might have served as a support for students to learn and carry out autonomous practices. In the literature, the issue of support is discussed and it was stated that support can be provided in the form of materials, tasks, interaction, strategies, technology, and advising (Rubin, 2007). In this sense, it might be suggested that the context provided in this study a range of supports with the online materials, learner centered tasks, its opportunities for students to apply strategies for their language learning, and the teachers' guidance with interaction in face-to-face sessions, for students to engage in autonomous activities and study in a learner-centered environment.

Relate the content in the MeLab program to in-class learning

In terms of the appropriateness of the content in the MeLab program, it was found that all of the students were able to relate the online content to their in-class learning at least some of the time. It was also reported that combining in-class studies with out-of-class activities motivated students to experience their language learning individually. This result is consistent with the results that emerged in the study carried out by Shana (2009). It was found that a stronger connection with in-class material and online work, and stronger links between online and face-to-face discussions are needed in the blended learning context. With these stronger connections it was found that learners felt satisfied, motivated and safe while participating in both in-class and online discussions and engaging in activities. In addition, Sagarra and Zapata (2008) also found that online assignments reinforced what the students learned in class and the participants acknowledged a connection between class content and online materials which helped them learn the target language.

Do individual tasks in a personalized learning environment

Another result that emerged from the study is that all of the students were able to do individual tasks in a personalized learning environment most of the time. In this respect, the flexibility of the learning environment provided learners with the opportunity to continue their studies and practices on their own, which might result in controlling their own learning. These results are in accordance with those of the results found in the studies of Abraham, (2007), Dalsgaard and Godsk, (2007), Sanprasert, (2010) and Hou, (2003). They also found that a flexible blended learning environment provides a rich educational experience by emphasizing active learning and increases teaching and learning efficiency. Thus, it can be suggested that the

aspect of flexibility of the blended learning context might help learners practice autonomous actions both in class and outside which in turn might give them more control over their language learning. This theme also has a link with the previously discussed results about ‘defining the place’ and ‘autonomous activities’ that students engaged in. It can be suggested that learners had the opportunity to practice autonomous actions by doing individual activities both in their classroom environment and outside.

Some themes that emerged from the study are discussed separately since they are not directly related to the aspects of the blended learning environment that foster learner autonomy.

The teacher's and the student's role

In terms of the teachers' and the students' roles, it was found that although they are still reliant on the teacher, learners' opinions about the teachers' role did not change much but they realized a change in their own roles while studying in the blended learning context. Similar to the results found by Dalsgaard and Godsk (2007), learners started to see the teacher as a guide in the classroom rather than as a determiner, probably due to an increase in their self-governed work in the classroom. Dalsgaard and Godsk (2007) found that while transforming traditional lectures to problem-based blended learning, the role of the teacher changed from one-way lecturer to a guide for students in the face-to-face sessions which were used for discussion and interaction time. On the other hand, the study by Chan (2002) showed that even though learners were able to take responsibility for some areas of their learning, they still regarded the teacher as someone who makes most of the decisions about their learning. In this sense, the students of the present study might be similar

to those in Chan's (2002) study, but learners' asking for help while studying online or practicing autonomous actions, and seeking the teacher's approval for some decisions should not be attributed to their passiveness; instead, the teacher's support might be perceived as an important need while providing students with the opportunities to practice autonomous behaviors. These results are consistent with the results of the study carried out by Sanprasert (2010). In his study it was found that development of learner autonomy depends on the initiatives taken by the teacher. However, those initiatives are important in that some may encourage learners, whereas others may discourage. Therefore, it was suggested that the blended learning approach can provide flexibility in the teachers' and the students' roles by allowing more room for students to take responsibility for their learning.

Problematic Parts of the BL environment

The other results of the study are related to the possible problematic parts of the blended learning context for the Turkish EFL setting. It was found that some technical issues should be considered before implementing an online software program in classroom teaching. It was reported that the availability of computers for all students, internet connection, the online class registration procedure, and training both for the teachers and the students should be considered.

All in all, it was reported in the study that a software program which has appropriate content for students' needs, using it with in-class teaching, and the teacher's guidance in face-to-face classes are important factors in the blended learning context that help students to realize their abilities and practice autonomous learning. In addition, those factors might also help teachers to take the role of a guide in the classroom.

Pedagogical Implications

The analysis of the data reveals important pedagogical implications that can inform future language teaching practices for language learning students in Turkey. According to the results of the study it was clear that students needed guidance while working on the online program. Therefore, the major pedagogical implication that can be derived from the study is that such programs should not be imposed on students, asking them to work independently, since many students do not have the autonomous abilities to deal with them successfully. It can be suggested that those programs should be integrated in the classroom setting, in a blended learning environment, to help students develop their autonomous abilities. The setting described in Chapter 3 also supports these implications. It was mentioned that the past experiences with the online program at the institution were not beneficial for the students since they were asked to work with it independently at home and the program was not integrated to their in-class learning.

Regarding the question of whether a blended learning environment supports learner autonomy, the data revealed that most of the students were able to practice autonomous abilities, at least some of the time during the blended learning experience. However, some abilities were practiced less than others, which may stem from learners' different individual learning styles or the time needed to get used to those practices. Therefore, school administrations who want to use a blended learning model may draw on the results of this study as an impetus to consider learners' different learning styles while arranging the online content and the applications of the software program. The time needed for the implementation process of the online learning in the traditional classroom should also be considered

in advance, since getting used to practicing some autonomous activities such as determining one's own goals or applying learning strategies alone may take some time for students. Another implication is that making extra materials available for students' use all the time might encourage them to control or plan their own learning and use the language outside as well as in the classroom in their own time.

In terms of the teacher's and the students' role in the blended learning experience, it can be suggested that while designing a model to foster learner autonomy in the classroom, a role transfer from the teacher to the students should be considered. In the study it was found that most of the students were able to see their weaknesses and make changes in their learning plans accordingly. Most of the students were also able to determine their own goals according to their needs and select materials on their own, at least some of the time. In addition, it was found that most of the students were able to evaluate their language learning process, decide what to learn for the next lesson, and apply learning strategies, at least some of the time. The data from the interviews also demonstrated that students were more active towards their learning since they were able to make some decisions on what to study, how much time to study, and which strategies to use. It was also reported that they liked to have some opportunity to take control of their learning. In the interviews, the teachers reported that the students were able to take more responsibility than before the BL environment and they described themselves as helpers in the classroom, rather than someone who is responsible for doing everything in the class. These results suggest that there was a role transfer from teachers to students in the blended learning environment. Similarly, as Cotterall (2009) suggests, in order to promote learner autonomy, course principles should include responsibility transfer from the

teacher to the students. It is argued that these principles should raise students' awareness in controlling their learning. Furthermore, she suggests that those principles should allow learners to discover their own learning styles by practicing which strategy works best for them. Similarly, as Little (2009) points out, involving learners in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning process is an important principle.

When the face-to-face aspect of the blended learning environment is taken into consideration, it can be proposed that the necessary guidance and support should be provided for students while they are working online and trying to practice autonomous activities. Therefore, the teachers should take in-service training on how to help students work with the online content and how to guide them discover their autonomous abilities before implementing a BL model.

It has been suggested that by using learning plans, students can assess their language learning process, become aware of their weaknesses or strengths and in turn, control their own learning (Cotterall & Murray, 2009). The learning plan in their study helped to facilitate reflection and enabled the students to return to it and see their progress. The students noted their goals, materials, and activities, which was similar to the learning plan in this study. Therefore, based on the result of this study, it can be suggested that using learning plans may help students to control and take more responsibility of their learning.

Regarding the technical issues to be considered in a blended learning model, school administrations may provide schools with more self-access centers, computer assisted learning facilities, and an internet connection available for all students. Considering the results of this current study, I believe that this expenditure is

worthwhile for the institutions since the blended learning environment and the software program used for this context seems to support learner autonomy in the Turkish EFL setting.

Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of the current study was the limited amount of time for the participants to get used to the blended learning environment. Students tried to get used to using the applications of the online program and carrying out autonomous practices in five weeks. If they had had more time, learners might have gained more benefit from the blended learning model in terms of developing and practicing autonomous activities.

Secondly, students who were interviewed and kept learner logs were self-selected and many of them may have been more likely to engage in autonomous practices. Therefore, their experiences might not be generalizable to the whole class.

Thirdly, the limited number of groups was another issue for the study. There was only one group with 36 participants. However, with more than one classroom in which there was a blended learning environment, the results of the study might have been more reliable and generalizable. Additionally, if there had been more than one group for the study, comparisons could have been made and the results would have been stronger. Finally, the study lacks a control group that was not experiencing the blended learning environment. If a control group had been included, conclusions could have drawn to see the difference between the two learning environments on learner autonomy.

Suggestions for Further Research

Depending on the findings and the limitations of this study, some suggestions for further research can be made. This study investigated the blended learning environment in relation to learner autonomy and it examined the aspects of this model to see whether they foster learner autonomy. Another study could be conducted to see specifically how the teacher's guidance in face-to-face sessions affects students' experience with the online content and their ability to engage in autonomous activities. Secondly, this study was conducted using the software program called 'My English Lab'. Another study could be carried out in an institution in which a different software language learning program is used. Different and interesting results might be found related to the effect of another software program on students' practice of autonomous activities and the effectiveness of the aspects of the program on students' engagement with the online content. The current study aimed to investigate students' experiences in the blended learning environment related to their autonomous practices. Another study could be conducted to find out whether this kind of learning model has an impact on students' language learning success. Additionally, in this study there was only one group of participants; however, another study could be carried out with one experimental and one control group in order to compare their pre and post autonomy levels, one in a traditional learning environment without using a software program and the other in a blended learning environment. Moreover, this study mostly used qualitative research methods. Another study, however, can obtain quantitative data through multiple sources, such as pre- and post-treatment questionnaires and provide detailed

information concerning learners' autonomous abilities before and after the blended learning experience.

Finally, the results of this study revealed a need for another study on how to integrate an online software program into existing curricula of universities concerning the difficulties, challenges or the outcomes for the students, teachers and the administration.

Conclusion

The current study has provided information about whether a blended learning environment helps to foster learner autonomy in the Turkish EFL context and which aspects support practicing autonomous activities. The results indicate that students were able to use their autonomous abilities, at least some of the time, during the blended learning experience. Although there were some differences in students' frequency of using their autonomous abilities, it can be concluded that all of the participants were able to engage in autonomous activities to some extent. Although the educational culture students are used to may not promote learner autonomy, the results revealed that learners can take an active role in their language learning process and use their autonomous abilities when a model appropriate for their needs, with the aim to foster learner autonomy, is provided. Therefore, in an attempt to promote learner autonomy, different approaches or learning models should be sought, taking into consideration learner differences and learning contexts. In this respect, curricula can be designed for schools that aim to foster learner autonomy by the integration of a software program appropriate for students' needs with the traditional classroom instruction in a blended learning environment.

REFERENCES

- Abraham, A. (2007). Student centred teaching of accounting to engineering students: Comparing blended learning with traditional approaches. *Proceedings ascilite Singapore*, 1-9.
- Adamson, J. L. (2004). Investigating college student attitudes towards learning English and their learning strategies: Insights from interviews in Thailand. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 1(2), 47-70.
- Akkoyunlu, B., & Soylu, M. Y. (2008). A study of student' s perceptions in a blended learning environment based on different learning styles: What is blended learning ? What is learning styles ? *Educational Technology*, 11(1), 183-193.
- Asik, A. (2010). Misconceptions on learner autonomy: A methodological and conceptual renewal. *Ekev Akademi Dergisi*, 43(Bahar), 141-153.
- Beatty, K. (2003). *Teaching and researching autonomy in computer-assisted language learning*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- Benson, P. (2007). Autonomy in language teaching and learning. *Language Teaching*, 40(01), 21.
- Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning*. London: Longman.
- Blin, F. (2005). CALL and the development of learner autonomy: An activity theoretical study. *Educational Technology*.
- Caviglioli, O., Harris, I., Tindall, B., (2002). Thinking skills & Eye Q: Visual tools for raising intelligence. G. Walker, (Ed.). Stafford: Network Educational Press.
- Chan, V. (2002). Autonomous language learning: Hong Kong tertiary students' attitudes and behaviors. *Evaluation & Research in Education*, 16, 1-8.
- Chan, V. (2003). Autonomous language learning: The teachers' perspectives. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 8(1), 33-54.
- Cotterall, S., & Murray, G. (2009). Enhancing metacognitive knowledge: Structure, affordances and self. *System*, 37(1), 34-45.
- Dafei, D. (2007). An exploration of the relationship between learner autonomy and English proficiency. *Asian EFL Journal*, 24(4), 1-23.

- Delialioglu, O., & Yildirim, Z. (2007). Students' perceptions on effective dimensions of interactive learning in a blended learning environment. *Educational Technology & Society*, 10(2), 133-146.
- Dickinson, L. (2004). Talking shop: Aspects of autonomous learning. *ELT Journal*, 47(4), 330-336.
- Egel, İ. P. (2009). Learner autonomy in the language classroom: From teacher dependency to learner independency. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1(1), 2023-2026.
- Ellis, G. (1994). Pourquoi l'autonomie. *Actes du 2ème colloque sur l'autonomie dans l'apprentissage des langues*, UPLEGESS, 20-21 janvier 1994, pp. 8-9.
- Erdoğan, S. (2003). Learner training via course books and teacher autonomy: A case of need. Retrieved July 10, 2011 from <http://lc.ust.hk/~ailasc/newsletters/onlinepaper/sultan.htm>
- Esch, E. (1997). Learner training for autonomous language learning, (pp. 164-175). In P. Benson & P. Voller (eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning*. Essex: Longman.
- Gieve, S., & Clark, R. (2005). The Chinese approach to learning: Cultural trait or situated response? The case of a self-directed learning programme. *System*, 33(2), 261-276.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English Language Teaching* (4th ed.). Cambridge: Longman.
- Hastie, M., Hung, I.C., & Chen, N.S. (2010). A blended synchronous learning model for educational international collaboration. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 47(1), 9-24.
- Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Holliday, A. (2003). Social autonomy: Addressing the dangers of culturism in TESOL. In D. Palfreyman, & R. C. Smith (Eds.), *Learner autonomy across cultures*. (pp. 110-26.) New York: Palgrave.
- Karabiyik, A. (2008). *The relationship between culture of learning and Turkish university preparatory students' readiness for learner autonomy*. Unpublished master's thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey.
- Lanham, E., & Zhou, W. (2003). Cultural issues in online learning — Is blended learning a possible solution?. *International Journal of Computer Processing of Oriental Languages*, 16(4), 275-292.

- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C., (2002). *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (2nd ed.), Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, p. 195.
- Little, D. (1999). *Learner autonomy 1: Definitions, issues and problems*. Dublin: Authentik.
- Little, D. (2002). The European Language Portfolio: Structure, origins, implimentation and challenges. *Language Teaching*, 35(3), 182-189.
- Littlewood, W. (1999). Defining and developing autonomy in East Asian contexts. *Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 71-94.
- Mei, Z. (2009). Focus on fashionable approaches of language teaching or on local needs of language learners — Language teachers' dilemma. *English*, 7(3), 46-51.
- Munn, P., & Drever, E. (1999). *Using questionnaires in small-scale research: A teachers' guide*. Scottish Council for Research in Education, Edinburgh.
- Naizhao, G., & Yanling, Z. (2002). An empirical investigation of learner autonomy in some EFL classes in China. *English*, 1-17.
- Orhan, F. (2008). Redesigning a course for blended learning. *TOJDE*, 9, 54-66.
- Palfreyman, D. (2003). Expanding the discourse on learner development: A reply to Anita Wenden. *Applied Linguistics*, 24(2), 243-248.
- Parks, S., & Raymond, P. (2004). Strategy use by nonnative-English-speaking students in an MBA Program: Not business as usual. *The Modern Language Journal*, 88 (04), 374-389.
- Reinders, H. (2010). Towards a classroom pedagogy for learner autonomy: A framework of independent language learning skills. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 35, 40-55.
- Sagarra, N., & Zapata, G. C. (2008). Blending classroom instruction with online homework: A study of student perceptions of computer-assisted L2 learning. *ReCALL*, 20(02), 208-224.
- Samsa, S. (2009). Critical thinking skills of preservice teachers in the blended learning environment. *Education*, 6(2), 538-551.
- Sanprasert, N. (2010). The application of a course management system to enhance autonomy in learning English as a foreign language. *System*, 38(1), 109-123.
- Sert, N. (2006). EFL student teachers' learning autonomy. *The Asian EFL Journal*, 8(2), 180-201.

- Shana, Z. (2009). Learning with technology: Using discussion forums to augment a traditional-style class. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12, 214-228.
- Smith, R. (2007). Learner autonomy. *ELT Journal*, 62(4), 395-397.
- Schwienhorst, K. (2010). Environments for ageing, assistive technology and self-determination: Ethical perspectives. *Informatics for Health & Social Care*, 35(3-4), 200-10.
- Usuki, M. (2002). 3. Learner autonomy: Learning from the student's voice. *CLCS Occasional Paper*. Retrieved December 14, 2010 from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/22/60/9e.pdf
- Wong, L., & Tatnall, A. (2009). The need to balance the blend: Online versus face-to-face teaching in an introductory accounting subject. *Informing Science*, 6, 309-322.
- Yang, N. D. (1998). Exploring a new role for teachers: Promoting learner autonomy. *System*, 26(1), 127-135.
- Yildirim, Z. (2005). *Effect of technology competencies and online readiness on preservice teachers' use of online learning management system*. Retrieved May 15, 2007, from <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol>.
- Ying, F. (2002). Promoting learner autonomy through CALL projects in China's EFL context. *Teaching English with Technology*, 2(5).
- Yumuk, A. (2002). Letting go of control to the learners: The role of the Internet in promoting a more autonomous view of learning in an academic translation course. *Educational Research*, 44(2), 141-156.

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRES IN ENGLISH AND TURKISH

Student Questionnaire

Please indicate how often you did the below listed actions in each context by circling one number.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

How often were you able to	Last Term	BL Context
1. Determine your own objectives according to your needs?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. Ask questions to the teacher while working on the MeLab program?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. Receive instant feedback to your questions while studying online?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. Select materials to accomplish your learning goals?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. Define the place of your learning?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. Define the pace of your learning?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. Use the language outside of the classroom?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. Evaluate your own learning process?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. Conduct the learning plan alone?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. Apply learning strategies alone?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11. Decide what to learn for the next lesson?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12. Identify your weaknesses in language learning performance charts in the MeLab program?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13. Understand the progress you made using the personalized grade book in the MeLab program?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
14. Use the communication tools in the MeLab program?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
15. Do individual tasks in a personalized learning environment?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
16. Take control of your own language learning?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
17. Relate the content in the MeLab program to in-class learning?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
18. Use the feedback tool in the MeLab program?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Öğrenci Anketi

Aşağıda sıralanmış olan durumları iki ayrı öğrenme ortamında da ne kadar sıklıkla yaptığınızı numaraları yuvarlak içine alarak işaretleyiniz.

Hiçbir zaman Nadiren Bazen Sıklıkla Her zaman
1 2 3 4 5

Ne kadar sıklıkla	Geçen Dönem	Harmanlanmış Öğrenme Ortamı
1. ihtiyaçlarınıza göre öğrenme amaçları belirlediniz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. öğretmene MeLab programında çalışırken soru sordunuz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. çevrimiçi çalışırken sorularınıza anında cevap aldınız?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. öğrenme hedeflerinizi başarmak için kendi ders alıştırmalarınızı seçtiniz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. çalışmak istediğiniz yeri kendiniz belirlediniz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. çalışmak istediğiniz zamanı kendiniz belirlediniz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. ingilizceyi sınıf dışında kullandınız?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. kendi öğrenme sürecinizi değerlendirdiniz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. kendi öğrenme planınızı yürüttünüz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. öğrenme stratejilerini kendiniz uyguladınız?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11. gelecek derste neler öğreneceğinize Karar verdiniz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12. MeLab programındaki performans çizelgelerinden ingilizcedeki eksikliklerinizi tespit edebildiniz ?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13. MeLab programındaki notlar tablosundan gelişiminizi anlayabildiniz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
14. MeLab programındaki iletişim araçlarını kullandınız?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
15. kişiselleştirilmiş öğrenme ortamında çalışabildiniz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
16. kendi dil öğreniminizi kontrol edebildiniz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
17. MeLab Programındaki ders içeriklerini sınıf içi aktivitelerle bağdaştırabildiniz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
18. MeLab Programındaki açıklama araçlarını kullanabildiniz?	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX B: STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Were you able to control your own language learning in the BL context? Can you explain in detail?
2. What did/did not you like about the BL environment?
3. How do you see your role as a language learner and your teacher's role in the BL context?
4. Can you mention about some of the activities you did to achieve your goals in your learning plan?
5. How did you find the MeLab program in terms of studying individually? Which components of the program helped you?

Öğrenci Anket Soruları

1. Harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamında kendi dil öğrenimine hakim olabildin mi? Detaylı olarak açıklar mısın?
2. Harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamında neler sevdin ya da neler sevmedin?
3. Harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamında bir öğrenci olarak kendi rolünü ve öğretmenin rolünü nasıl görüyorsun?
4. Öğrenme planındaki hedeflerini başarmak için ne gibi aktiviteler yaptın?
5. MeLab programını bağımsız çalışma açısından nasıl buldun? Programın hangi yönleri sana yardımcı oldu?

APPENDIX C: TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you think that the BL context can help students practice their autonomous abilities?
2. In what ways were face-to-face sessions useful or not useful for the students?
3. Was there a change in teacher's role in the BL environment?
4. What can be the problematic parts for the teachers and the students if a BL context is decided to be implemented in the Turkish EFL context?
5. What kind of feedback did you get from the students?

Öğretmen Anket Soruları

1. Sizce harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamı öğrencilere özerk fiilleri pratik etme açısından yardımcı olabilir mi?
2. Yüzyüze öğrenme zamanları öğrencilere ne gibi açılardan faydalıydı ya da faydalı değildi?
3. Harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamında öğretmenin sınıf içi rolünde bir değişiklik oldu mu?
4. Eğer harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamı Türk yabancı dil öğrenme ortamında uygulanırsa öğretmenler ve öğrenciler için ne gibi sorunlar olabilir?
5. Harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamı hakkında öğrencilerden ne gibi geribildirimler aldınız?

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

This sample student interview presents the first group interview that was conducted with four students. Since this took 40 minutes, only the first five minutes of the interview is presented.

R: were you able to control your own language learning in the blended learning environment during this past five weeks?

S1: yes... I think I was to some extent... for example... I was able to identify my own weaknesses

R: can you explain it more? In what other ways you think that you were able to control it?

S1: sure... hmm... I think that it is important to know my weaknesses in language learning... because I can do my weekly plan according to them and... I can choose the activities that I determined from the online program. I can show my weekly plan, for instance

R: sure... but first let's listen to your other friends as well... do you agree with your friend? What did you do in the blended learning environment?

S2: I agree with my friend, yes... but I also wanted my teacher to control how was I progressing... since I was not used to study like this... in order to be sure... I needed to ask questions

R: all right... so... what are the things that you liked or disliked in this learning context?

S4: hmm... I liked that I continued studying when I arrived home... because normally it is hard to do this for me... because I did not have a specific study plan... I can revise the topics even after the class...

S2: yes... I was able to continue studying when I arrived home because I found activities related to our lesson subjects and class notes

S3: hmm... I agree with my friends... besides I liked to be able to ask questions to the teacher even at the weekends... so when I did not understand something about the lesson, I did not give up studying

R: did you see any changes about your and your teacher's role in this learning environment?

S4, S3: yes...

R: what kind of changes?

S4: for example... I found myself more active while learning English... because instead of doing the activities that the teacher gave for everyone... I was able to choose my own materials... according to my own needs... and interests...

S3: yes, I think so... I was able to took more responsibility... because the teacher did not decide everything on my behalf

Örnek Öğrenci Görüşmesi

Bu örnek öğrenci görüşmesi ilk dört öğrenci ile grup olarak yapılan görüşmeden alınmıştır. Bu görüşme 40 dakika sürdüğü için ilk beş dakikası örnek olmak üzere verilmektedir.

A: harmanlanmış öğrenme yöntemi ile bu beş hafta içinde kendi dil öğrenimini kontrol edebildin mi?

Ö1: evet... ben ettiğimi düşünüyorum belli bir açıdan... mesela... kendi eksikliklerimi belirledim

A: bunu biraz daha açar mısın? Başka hangi açılardan böyle düşünüyorsun?

Ö1: tabi... Hmm... bence eksikliklerimi bilmek önemli... çünkü ona göre haftalık plan yapabiliyorum ve neye ihtiyacım varsa... programdan ona göre kendi belirlediğim aktiviteleri seçebiliyorum. Haftalık planımı gösterebilirim mesela

A: tabi... olur ama önce diğer arkadaşlarına da soralım... Sen de aynı fikirde misin? Sen neler yaptın?

Ö2: arkadaşşıma katılıyorum, evet... ama ben öğretmenin de benim yaptıklarımı arada bir kontrol etmesini istedim... çünkü bunları derste yapmaya alışkın olmadığım için... emin olmak için mm... sormaya ihtiyaç duydum

A: peki...bu yöntemde beğendiğiniz ya da beğenmediğiniz neler var?

Ö4: hmm... ben dersten sonra eve gidince de çalışabilmeyi sevdim... çünkü normalde bunu yapmam zor oluyor... belli bir programım olmadığı için... o gün derste gördüklerimizi tekrar edebiliyordum...

Ö2: evet... ben de derste gördüklerimize uyumlu aktiviteler ve notlar bulabildiğim için evde de çalışmaya devam ettim

Ö3: hmm... arkadaşlarıma katılıyorum... ayrıca öğretmene hafta sonu da soru sorabilmek işime yarıyordu... böylece anlamadığım bir konuya takılınca dersi bırakmıyordum

A: öğretmen ve sizin rolleriniz hakkında bu yöntemle her hangi bir değişim gördünüz mü?

Ö4, Ö3: evet...

A: ne gibi değişiklikler?

Ö4: mesela... ben kendimi İngilizce öğrenirken daha aktif gördüm... Çünkü... öğretmenin herkes için verdiği alıştırmaları yapmak yerine... ne eksikim varsa... ve de ne tarzda çalışmayı seviyorsam... ona göre kendi alıştırmalarımı seçebiliyorum...
Ö3: evet bence de... öğretmenin her şeyi benim adıma yapmaması... bana daha çok sorumluluk verdi

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE TEACHER INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

This interview is taken from the first interview conducted with the teacher individually. The interview took 30 minutes, so approximately the first five minutes is presented here.

R: good afternoon

T1: hi

R: I would like to ask you some questions about the blended learning environment

T1: sure... I would like to help

R: thanks... do you think that the blended learning environment helped students to practice their autonomous abilities?

T1: I think that... this learning context encouraged students to control... their own language learning

R: can you explain this in detail? In what ways did it encouraged?

T1: hmm... having an individual studying environment... and... taking responsibility... for their own language learning... these helped them to see their own weaknesses and needs

R: yes...

T1: for example... in the MeLab program there are many different options for activities and topics... this helped them to choose their own materials... for their learning plans...

R: all right... do you think that everyone benefited from this learning environment?

T1: hmm... I think... everyone benefited but to some extent... sure... not everyone was able to benefit it in the same amount... the students who were used and have much confidence about... studying on their own... were more comfortable... and they were more sure about what they were doing... they were able to find more opportunities to apply their own strategies

Örnek Öğretmen Görüşmesi

Bu görüşme, ilk öğretmen görüşmesinden alınmıştır. Görüşme, 30 dakika sürdüğünden, burada yaklaşık ilk beş dakikası verilmiştir.

A: iyi günler

Ö1: merhabalar

A: geçtiğimiz beş haftada uygulamış olduğumuz harmanlanmış öğrenme hakkında size birkaç sorum olacaktı

Ö1: Tabii ki... yardımcı olurum

A: teşekkürler... sizce harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamı öğrencilere iç güdümlü öğrenmelerini pratik etmede yardımcı oldu mu?

Ö1: bence bu ortam öğrencilere dil öğrenimlerini kendilerinin kontrol etmesi adına... onları... teşvik etti

A: bunu biraz açar mısınız? Ne yönlerden teşvik etti?

Ö1: hmm... kendi kendilerine bir çalışma ortamlarının olması... ve... dil öğrenirken... belli bir seviye de sorumluluk almaları... onları kendilerinin eksiklerini ve ihtiyaçlarını görmelerini sağladı

A: evet...

Ö1: mesela... MeLab programında bir çok konu seçeneğinin olması... bir çok değişik aktivitenin olması... onları planlarını yaparken... materyallerini seçerken yardımcı oluyor

A: peki... sizce herkes bu ortamdan faydalana bildi mi?

Ö1: hmm... bence... herkes bir ölçüde faydalandı ama... tabi... herkesin faydalanma oranı aynı değildi... kendi kendine çalışma güveni olanlar... bu ortamda daha rahatlardı... ve ne yaptıklarından daha eminlerdi... daha çok kendi yöntemlerini uygulama imkanı buldular

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE LEARNER LOGS

Student 3: I like doing activities on the MeLab but sometimes I need the teacher to explain me the things I don't understand. I can e-mail my quest'ons but I prefer asking her in person while we are in class because it is quicker to ask in class than waiting for her to respond my question via mail. Although I can get feedback from the program too, I understand the teacher's feedback more easily than the program's.

Student 10: In the writing lessons I can choose the topic I want to write about from the writing section of the MeLab and I can write about as many topics as I can. I don't want the teacher to give me a topic which I don't like and waste the whole lesson writing about only one topic.

Örnek Öğrenci Günlüğü

Öğrenci 3: MeLab programında alıştırmalar yapmayı seviyorum ama bazen öğretmenin bana anlamadığım yerleri açıklamasına ihtiyaç duyuyorum. Ona sorularımı mail atabilirim ama yüzyüzeyken sormayı tercih ediyorum çünkü sınıfta sormak maile cevap beklemekten daha çabuk. Programın açıklamalarını da anlıyorum ama yine de öğretmenininkini tercih ederim.

Öğrenci 10: Yazma derslerinde MeLab programından istediğim konuyu seçebiliyorum ve istediğim kadar çok konuda yazabiliyorum. Öğretmenin bana tek bir konu verip onun hakkında yazmaktan hoşlanmıyorum ve bütün dersi tek knou hakkında yazmak tam bir zaman kaybı.

APPENDIX G: GUIDELINE FOR WRITING LEARNER LOGS

Consider below mentioned topics while writing to your learner log. No specific format for writing is required. You can write in a listing or in a paragraph style.

- Think about your process of language learning in the blended learning context. What are the different things that you do after you started to studying with the MeLab program in your lessons? Do you see any progress in the way you learn the language or do you prefer the traditional classroom environment? Why or why not?
- Think about your weekly learning plan in terms of your process of learning. How does it help you in terms of identifying your weaknesses, organizing and evaluating your learning process?
- What are the activities that you do when you study on your own? How do you decide them?
- What are the autonomous actions that you practice in the blended learning context? Think about knowing your needs, determining goals, selecting materials according to your needs and goals, applying strategies, getting feedback, and evaluating your language learning.
- What are your suggestions for the blended learning environment? What can be done to better benefit from this kind of learning in terms of studying online and practicing autonomous actions? Think about your face-to-face sessions, the guidance of your teacher.
- What are your complaints about the blended learning environment? What are the problems that you encounter while studying online in the classroom? Do you think that you benefit from this learning model?

Öğrenci Günlüğü Yazma Önerileri

Öğrenci günlüğünüzü yazarken aşağıda belirtilen önerileri gözden geçirin. Günlüğünüze yazarken her hangi bir yazı tipi istenmemektedir; liste ya da paragraf şeklinde yazabilirsiniz.

- Harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamındaki dil öğrenme sürecinizi düşünün. MeLab programıyla çalışmaya başladığınızdan beri dil öğreniminizde ne gibi değişiklikler yaptınız? Dil öğrenme yönteminizde her hangi bir gelişme görüyor musunuz? Yoksa, geleneksel sınıf ortamında öğrenmeyi mi tercih edersiniz? Neden ya da neden değil?
- Haftalık öğrenme planınızı dil öğrenme sürecinizi göz önünde bulundurarak düşünün. Bu plan, eksikliklerinizi fark etme, öğrenme sürecinizi düzenleme ve değerlendirme açısından nasıl yardımcı oluyor?
- Kendi kendinize çalıştığınız zaman yaptığınız çalışma aktiviteleri neler? Bu aktivitelere nasıl karar veriyor sunuz?
- Harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamında ne gibi özerk fiiller Pratik ediyor sunuz? İhtiyaçlarınızı bilme, amaçlarınıza karar verme, ihtiyaç ve amaçlarınıza göre material seçme, öğrenme teknikleri uygulama, geribirdirim alma ve dil öğreniminizi değerlendirme hakkında düşünebilirsiniz.
- Harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamı için neler önerir siniz? Program destekli çalışma ve özerk fiiller uygulama açısından bu öğrenme ortamından daha iyi faydalanmak için neler yapılabilir? Yüzyüze öğrenme zamanlarınızı ve öğretmenin yönlendirmelerini düşünebilirsiniz.
- Harmanlanmış öğrenme ortamı için ne gibi şikayetleriniz var? Sınıfta bilgisayar programıyla çalışırken ne gibi sorunlarla karşılaşılıyor sunuz? Bu öğrenme modelinden faydalandığınızı düşünüyor musunuz?

APPENDIX H: GUIDELINE FOR OBSERVING THE CLASSROOM

- What are the students doing in terms of practicing autonomous actions? Do they apply strategies? Do they understand the feedback they get? Do they determine their own goals? Do they know their needs? Do they select their own materials? How?
- Which components of the MeLab program are used by the students? How do they use them? Do they have any problems? What kind of questions do they ask to the teacher? How does the teacher guide students? How do they interact with their classmates and their teacher in face-to-face sessions?

Student 1	
Student 2	
Student 3	

Sınıf Gözlemlene Önerleri

- Öğrenciler özerk filler Pratik etme açısından neler yapıyorlar? Öğrenme yöntemleri uyguluyorlar mı? Geribildirimlerini anlıyorlar mı? Öğrenme amaçlarına karar verebiliyorlar mı? Öğrenme ihtiyaçlarını biliyorlar mı? Kendi materyallerini seçebiliyorlar mı? Nasıl?
- Öğrenciler, MeLab programının hangi özelliklerini kullanıyorlar? Nasıl kullanıyorlar? Her hangi bir sorun yaşıyorlar mı? Yüzyüze öğrenme zamanlarında sınıf arkadaşları ve öğretmenleriyle nasıl bir iletişim içindeler?

Öğrenci 1	
Öğrenci 2	
Öğrenci 3	

APPENDIX J: SAMPLE SCREEN-SHOTS OF THE ONLINE COURSE

Performance charts (Teacher's view)

Today's View **Course Content** **Gradebook** **Communicate** **Preferences** **Go to Student View**

Notifications

Welcome Message

Announcements (0)

To Do

Instructor Grading (0)

Unread Discussion (0)

Unread Messages (0)

Alerts

New Grades (0)

Idle Students (0)

Customize

Edit available Performance options in the Customize button above.

What's being calculated?

Last Updated: 7/11/2011 2:00:00 AM

Course Performance

Course Content	Grade	Content Completed
Overall	--	--

Teacher Resources

Unit 1 - Psychology: First Impressions and Attraction

--

July 2011 **Assign Content**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Items Due **Note**

Home Page (Student's view)

Today's View
 Course Content
 Grades
 Communicate

Student View
 Return to Instructor View

July 2011
 Course Content

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Items Due
 Completed
 Items Past
 Note
 Due
 Submitted

Notifications
 Welcome Message
 Announcements (0)
 To Do
 Unread Discussion (0)
 Unread Messages (0)
 Alerts
 New Grades (0)
 Performance
 My Progress

[This Introduction to MyAcademicConnectionsLab](#)
 will help students and teachers get started.

Progress chart and the grade book (Student's view)

Today's View

Course Content

Grades

Communicate

A A

Student View

Return to Instructor View

Notifications

Welcome Message

Announcements (0)

To Do

Unread Discussion (0)

Unread Messages (0)

Alerts

New Grades (0)

Performance

My Progress

Information displayed may not yet be current.

What's being calculated?

Last Updated: 7/11/2011 2:00:00 AM

Course Content

Grade

Content

Completed

_Student_Student

--

--

Teacher Resources

--

--

Unit 1 - Psychology: First Impressions and Attraction

--

--

Unit 2 - Ecology: The Web of Life

--

--

July 2011

Course Content

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Items Due

Items Past Due

Submitted

Completed

Note

