The Relationship between Learner Autonomy and Motivation

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ABSTRACT
This study attempts to find out the relationship between learner autonomy and motivation in a state university prep school in Turkey in a non-native context. The findings indicate a moderate positive correlation between motivational beliefs (task value, perceived self-confidence, learning and performance goal-orientation) except performance goal-orientation and sections of autonomy (readiness, ability, responsibility, use of English). Thus, this study also suggests and supports that "intrinsic motivation makes learners 'more willing to take responsibility for the outcome' and that giving students more autonomy yields intrinsic motivation" (Scharle and Szabó, 2000: 7).

INTRODUCTION

Motivation is a highly complex and multifaceted issue in learning. The issue becomes even more complex when the target of learning is the mastery of a second language (Dörnyei, 2001b). The value learners place on tasks, their perceptions of self-efficacy, and the goals they set during their learning processes may contribute to the level of their motivation. Brophy (1999) and Wigfield and Eccles (1994) emphasize the value of the actual process of learning in their research: the more learners value the task, the more motivated they are. Deci and his colleagues (1991) state that when the learner chooses the tasks himself, this choice will provide fully self-determined behavior. The task will be important and valuable to the learner since he chose it himself. Williams and Burden (1997) state that decisions that determine action, the amount of effort to be spent, and the degree of perseverance are the key factors in motivation. Dörnyei (1994) defines motivation as a multi-level construct and classified L2 motivation into three levels: the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level. The language level is composed of various items such as culture, community, pragmatic values, etc. This level is an answer to the question why and for what intention a learner chooses a given language. The learner level includes two items; need for achievement and self-confidence. Dörnyei (2001) clarifies this level as the individual characteristics that the learner brings to the learning process. The learning situation level constitutes three components: course-specific motivational components (interest, expectancy, satisfaction etc.), teacher-specific motivational components (affiliative motive, authority type, task presentation, feedback etc.), and group-specific motivational components (goal-orientedness, reward system, group cohesiveness). The model Dörnyei developed contains motivational components aspect of classroom language learning in foreign and second language learning situations.

According to Dickinson (1995), success in learning and enhanced motivation will occur when a learner has more control of his/her own learning process. Related research indicates that enhanced motivation is dependent on learners taking charge of their own learning (Lamb 2001; da Silva 2002; Sakui 2002; Takagi 2003; Ushioda 2003, 2006). As Benson states, "Learner control of the cognitive processes involved in language learning is a crucial factor in what is learned." Since as Nunan (1996) states, "learners tend to follow their own agendas rather than those of their teachers" (195b: 135). Dakin (1973: 16) supports this statement with his following argument, "though the teacher may control the experiences the learner is exposed to, it is the learner who selects what is learnt from them". Dickinson (1995) 'Success in learning appears to lead to greater motivation only for those students who accept responsibility for their own learning success' (p. 171).

Holec (1981: 3) defines learner autonomy as follows: "to take charge of one's own learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning the objectives, the contents and progressions, methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the procedure of acquisition, and its evaluation. Benson (2001) states that autonomy requires that the learner self directs his/ her metacognitive and cognitive processes which also requires taking decisions on the content to be learned.

Although there are controversial views on whether motivation is the result of autonomy or it fosters it, or it is the opposite, the related research have indicated that motivation is enhanced when learners take more control over their learning, and autonomy is strongly associated with metacognitive strategies which engross thinking about the learning process, preparation for learning, monitoring the learning task, and self-evaluating (Lamb 2001; da Silva 2002; Sakui 2002; Takagi 2003; Ushioda 2003, 2006). Dornyei and Csizer (1998) record learner autonomy as one

of 'ten commandments' for motivating learners. Various studies on learner autonomy have also given enough proof that motivation is enhanced when learners take more control over their learning (Lamb, 2001; Sakui, 2002, Ushioda, 2003, 2007). Roth et al. (2007) empirical study shows that teachers who were more autonomously motivated for teaching had students who perceived them to be more autonomy supportive. In contrast, teachers who felt intruded in their classrooms were more dominating by students. Further, students add that agentic engagement is a constructive aspect of learner engagement that allows educators to value how students really connect themselves in learning tasks, as they not only try to learn and develop skill, but they also try to create a more motivationally supportive learning situation for themselves. Several studies have shown that autonomy leads to motivation (e.g., Dörnyei and Csiz´er, 1998; Noels, Cle´ment, and Pelletier, 1999; Noels et al, 2000; Noels, 2001; and Wu, 2003), and others (e.g., Ushioda, 1996 and 2003; Garcia and Pintrich, 1991) have revealed that autonomy fosters motivation. Although there are controversial views on whether motivation is the result of autonomy or it fosters it, or it is the opposite, various studies on learner autonomy have indicated that motivation is enhanced when learners take more control over their learning (Lamb, 2002; Sakui, 2002; Ushioda, 2003, 2007). Thus, as Ushioda (2007) defines, we might identify autonomous learners also as motivated learners. This study attempts to find out the relationship between learner autonomy and motivation.

THE STUDY

This study was conducted to find out the relationship between motivational beliefs (task value, perceived self-confidence, and learning and performance goal-orientation) and sections of autonomy (readiness, ability, responsibility, use of English). The participants were randomly chosen 100 A1 level students in a state university prep school in Turkey in a non-native context. The motivational beliefs questionnaire was adapted from the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) (Midgley, et al., 1996), a widely used in research related to motivation. The Learner Autonomy questionnaire items were adapted from a questionnaire developed by Chan et al. (2002) and were evaluated by experts in terms of content validity and face validity; Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the questionnaire used was .888 for the whole questionnaire. The questionnaires were piloted with 30 A1 level students randomly chosen, then, necessary changes were made, and they were conducted to the participants at the beginning of the first semester in 2017-2018 education year. The data gathered was analyzed using SPSS, frequency tests and correlation tests.

FINDINGS

A. Students' Motivational Beliefs

Frequency tests were run to determine the strength of the students' motivational beliefs. Frequency test results associated with the concept of task value (items 3, 7, 11, 15), that is, the value students attach to classroom tasks and activities, indicate that students value classroom tasks and activities, and believe that the activities and tasks are beneficial for improving their language skills. Moreover, they find activities and tasks interesting or enjoyable. The majority of participants (90 %) stated that the questionnaire item "I think classroom activities are important because they will improve my language skills" was either true or very true. The majority of participants (84%) stated that the item "I believe classroom activities are useful for me" was either true or very true of them. The majority of participants (86%) stated that the item "I believe doing the activities is beneficial to me" was either true or very true of them. A certain group of the participants (66%) stated that the item "I enjoy doing activities very much because they are very interesting and fun" was either partially true or not true at all for them. Results can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency Percentages of Task Value Items

No	Task Value Items	Very True/ True	Undecided	Partially True/ Not True at All
		1/2	3	4/5
3	I think classroom activities are important because they will improve my language skills.	90	9	1
7	I believe classroom activities are useful for me.	84	10	6
11	I believe doing the activities is beneficial to me.	86	8	6
15	I enjoy doing the activities very much because they are very interesting and fun.	66	23	11

Note: Percentages are rounded off.

Frequency results of questionnaire items related to perceived self-efficacy (items 1, 5, 9, 13) indicate that students are self-efficacious; that is, they aim to learn a lot of skills and they are certain that they can accomplish their goals. They are certain that they can master all the skills taught, and they believe that they can complete all class work. To illustrate, 78% of the participants stated that the item "I am certain that I can gain the skills taught in English class this year" was either true or very true for them. Almost all participants (96%) stated that it was important to

learn a lot of skills. In terms of even the most difficult class work, a certain number of the participants (42%) stated the item was either true or very true for them while similar number of participants (40%) was undecided. Most of the participants (88%) stated that the item "I am certain that I can accomplish my goals" characterized their attitudes toward their perceptions of self-efficacy. See Table 2 for a summary of percentages.

Table 2: Frequency Percentages of Perceived Self-Efficacy Items

No	Perceived Self-Efficacy Items	Very True/ True	Undecided	Partially True/ Not True at All
	Percentages	1/2	3	4/5
1	I am certain that I can gain the skills taught in English class this year.	78	5	13
5	It is important to me that I learn a lot of skills this year.	96	2	2
9	I am certain I can do even the most difficult class work.	42	40	18
13	I am certain that I can accomplish my goals.	88	12	0

Note: Percentages are rounded off.

Frequency test results of questionnaire items related to learning goal orientation (items 2, 6, 10, 14) suggest that the students are generally learning-goal oriented, that is, they aim to learn as much as they can, acquire new skills, improve their skills, and focus on thorough comprehension. The details of these results are provided to explain the learning goal orientation concept. Almost all participants (97%) stated that one of their goals in English class is to learn as much as they can. The majority of the participants (94%) also stated that one of their goals is to acquire a lot of new skills and improve their skills. The great majority of participants (92%) stated that it is important to understand their class work thoroughly. Although not as large, 74% of the participants stated that they can learn the work even if the work is hard. Frequency percentages are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequency Percentages of Learning Goal-Orientation Items

No	Learning Goal-Orientation Items	Very True/ True	Undecided	Partially True/ Not True at All
	Percentages	1/2	3	4/5
2	One of my goals in class is to learn as much as I can.	97	3	0
6	One of my goals is to master a lot of skills this year.	94	4	2
10	It is important to me that I thoroughly understand my class work.	92	4	4
14	Even if the work is hard, I can learn it.	74	22	4

Note: Percentages are rounded off.

Frequency test results of questionnaire items related to performance goal orientation (items 4, 8, 12, 16), as opposed to learning goal-orientation, reveal contradictions among students; generally, students want to receive good grades and show that they are good learners to others. However, they do not study solely to earn good grades; this result suggests that students are interested in improving their skills and acquiring new skills, as indicated earlier in discussions of items related to learning goal orientation. Less than half of the participants (40%) stated that one of their goals is to show others that they were good at their class work. Only half of participants (52%) stated, in positive terms, that they choose class work that they know they can do, rather than work that they have not done before. A large group of participants (66%) stated that receiving good grades is their main goal in their English class. Forty one percent of the participants stated that they do their work just because their work is graded. See Table 4 for a summary of frequency percentages.

Table 4: Frequency Percentages of Performance Goal-Orientation Items

No	Performance Goal-Orientation Items	Very True/ True	Undecided	Partially True/ Not True at All
	Percentages	1/2	3	4/5
4	One of my goals is to show others that I am good at my class work.	40	24	36
8	If given choice, I would choose class work I knew I could do, rather than work I have not done before.	52	26	22
12	In our class, getting good grades is my main goal.	66	23	11

16	The main reason I do my work is because we get grades for our work.	41	27	32

Note: Percentages are rounded off.

B. Learner Autonomy

In the first section of the autonomy questionnaire, the participants were asked 13 questions, and they rated the answers on a five-point Likert scale ranging from „1" representing *only authority* to „5" representing *facilitator*. The results in Table 5 show that the mean score falls within the range of a score of „3" on the Likert scale. That is, the control groups considered their teachers to be neither the only authority nor the facilitator in the class but falling somewhere in between.

Table 5: Frequency Percentages of the Role of the Teacher

	Sole authority				Facilitator		
Answer	1	2	3	4	5	X	SD
N	6.7	11.1	25.2	29.6	27.4	3.60	1.192

The results in Table 5 show that the mean score falls within the range of a score of „3" on the Likert scale. That is, the students considered their teachers to be the facilitator in the class rather than the only authority.

Table 6: Frequency Percentages of Learner Autonomy

	Dependent on the teacher				Autonomous		
Answer	1	2	3	4	5	X	SD
N	5.9	7.4	30.4	37.0	19.3	3.56	1.069

The results in Table 6 show that the mean score falls within the range of a score of „3" on the Likert scale. They consider themselves autonomous rather than teacher- dependent.

B. 1. Readiness for Autonomy

Table 7: Frequency percentages of About High School Education

Throughout your high school education, …	Never/ Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently/ Always
	1/2	3	4/5
9. How often were you asked to participate in group/pair work activities?	22	28	50
10. How often were you asked to evaluate your own work?	36	30	34
11. How often were you asked to evaluate your peers" work?	45	32	23
12. How often were you asked to choose your partner to work with?	20	24	56
13. How often were you asked to participate in a project work?	28	32	40
14. How often did your teachers ask you to choose what activities to use in your lessons?	26	31	43
15. How often did your teachers ask you to choose what materials to use in your lessons?	30	28	42
16. How often were you asked to set your own learning goals?	14	18	58
17. How often were you asked to evaluate your course?	33	28	39
18. How often were you asked to decide what you should learn next?	38	28	34
19. How often were you asked to prepare portfolios?	51	18	31

The overall results show that the students had mid-level of readiness for learner autonomy. As shown by the data, in this section, there were no items which were clustered in the „frequently" category of the scale. The items that attained the highest percentages were "*participating in group/pair work activities*" (item 9), "*choosing partners to work with*" (item 12), "*setting learning goals*" (item 16) and "*preparing portfolios*" (item 19) which were „sometimes" carried out by the participants in their high schools with percentages 50, 56, 58, and 51 respectively. The items that had the lowest mean scores were, and "evaluate your peers' work" (item 12) with percentage 21. Frequency counts show that more than half of the respondents were „rarely" asked to engage in these activities.

B. 2. Responsibilities

In the next part, participants were asked to indicate their perceptions of their teachers' and their own responsibilities while learning English. There were 13 items related to perceptions of responsibility, and the respondents ranked their answers on a three-point Likert scale that ranged from *completely the teacher's* to *completely mine.* Table 8 shows the percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviations of each item. As shown by the data, for items 21 and 31, the participants gave more responsibility to themselves. These items include the responsibilities for "*making sure they make progress outside class*" (item 20) and "*evaluating their course*" (item 31) with mean scores 2.73 and 2.49. In these items, the majority of the participants chose "completely mine" option. In particular, the results of items 20 and 31 show that more than 70% of the participants tended to take more control for the responsibilities taken outside the class.

Table 8: Frequency Percentages of Responsibilities

Frequency Percentages (%)					
Items	Completely the teachers	Half mine, half the teacher's	Completely mine	X	SD
	1	2	3		
20.Make sure you make progress during lesson	12.6	74.8	12.6	2.00	.504
21.Make sure you make progress outside class	4.41	17.8	77.8	2.73	.535
22.Stimulate your interest in learning English	37	39.3	23.7	1.87	.771
23.Identify your weaknesses in English	20.7	60	19.3	1.99	.635
24.Make you work harder	13.3	44.4	42.2	2.29	.690
25.Decide the objectives of the English course	14.1	42.2	43.7	2.30	.703
26.Decide what you should learn next	50.4	37	12.6	1.62	.700
27.Choose what activities to use in your English lessons	49.6	43.7	6.7	1.57	.617
28.Decide how long to spend on each activity	59.3	28.9	11.1	1.53	.721
29.Choose what materials to use in your English lessons	58.5	35.6	5.9	1.47	.609
30.Evaluate your learning	45.9	45.2	8.9	1.63	.643
31.Evaluate your course	8.9	34.8	55.6	2.49	.690
32.Decide what you learn outside the class	27.4	54.1	17.8	1.92	.692

The participants gave the responsibility in the items 28 and 29 to the teacher including "*deciding how long to spend on each activity*" and "*choosing the materials to be used in the class*" with mean scores of 1.53 and 1.47. The participants stated that they shared the responsibility for the items "making sure you make progress during lesson" (item 20), "identifying your weaknesses in English" (item 23) and "*deciding what you learn outside the class*" (item 32) with the teacher with mean scores 2.00, 1.99 and 1.92. For the items "making you work harder" (item24) and "*deciding on the objectives of the English course*" (item 25), while nearly half of the students shared the responsibility with the teacher, the other half took the responsibility themselves. For the items "*choosing the activities to be used in the class*" (item 27), "*evaluating the course*" (item 31), while nearly half of the students agreed to share the responsibility with the teacher, the other half gave the responsibility to the teacher.

B. 3. Abilities

In the next part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked 6 questions about their perceptions of their decision-making abilities in a range of activities/ responsibilities included in the first part. In other words, they were asked to indicate how successful they would be if they were given the opportunity to make decisions about their own learning. They ranked their answers on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *very poor* to *very good*.

Table 9: Frequency Percentages of Abilities

If you have the opportunity, how good do you think you would be at:	Very poor/ Poor	OK	Good/ Very good
	1/2	3	4/5
33. choosing learning activities in class?	5	39	56
34. choosing learning activities outside class?	10	27	64
35. choosing learning objectives in the class?	6	32	62
36. choosing learning objectives outside the class?	10	27	63

37. choosing learning materials in the class?	20	34	46
38. choosing learning materials outside the class?	14	36	50

Table 9 shows the percentages of the responses of the participants given to the individual items. As shown by the data, most of the responses are clustered under the „*OK*" category of the scale. The activities that the participants rated themselves as "*good/ very good*" at managing were mostly in-class activities: "*choosing learning activities in the class*" (item 33), "*choosing learning activities outside class*" (item 34), "*choosing learning objectives in the class*" (item 35) and "*choosing learning objectives outside the class*" (item 36). The data also shows that the percentages of the participants who chose „*poor/very poor*" categories were generally quite low as compared to the percentages in the other categories.

B. 4. Use of English

Table 10 presents the frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of each activity engaged in outside the class. The activities that attained the highest percentage in the "always" and „often" categories were "*trying to learn new words*" (item 41) and "*watched English TV programs and films* (item 43). Additionally, less than half of the participants said that they "always" or "often"" listened to English songs" (item 46).

Table 10: Frequency Percentages of Use of English

In the last academic term, without having been assigned to do so, how often did you …	Always/ Often	Sometimes	Rarely/ Never
	5/4	3	2/1
39.do grammar activities on your own	21	39	40
40.do optional homework	23	36	40
41.try to learn new words	66	22	12
42.use English on the internet (chat, search, etc.)	22	29	29
43.watch English programs or films	59	22	19
44.read materials written in English	8	34	38
45.speak English with native speakers	18	27	33
46.listen to English songs	**42**	19	10

C. The results of the Correlation Tests

Table 11: The Relationship between Motivational Beliefs

	Self-Efficacy	Learning Goal-Orientation	Performance Goal-Orientation
	n= 135	n= 135	n= 135
	r p	r p	r p
Task Value	.494**.000	.584** .000	.180* .036
Self-Efficacy	----------	.659**.000	.214* .013
Learning Goal-Orientation	----------	----------	.188* .029

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results of Pearson product-moment correlations among motivational beliefs indicate a moderate positive correlation of .494 between task value and perceived self-efficacy. Results suggest also a slightly stronger moderate positive correlation of .584 between task value and learning goal-orientation, indicating that students who regard classroom tasks and activities as beneficial and useful reported having goals to learn as much as they can, acquire new skills, improve their skills, and emphasize comprehension. Perceived self-efficacy and learning goal-orientation is strongly correlated (.659) indicating that students who were certain of their abilities and capabilities to learn all the skills taught in English class were more likely to report setting learning-oriented goals for themselves. Such students aim to acquire new skills and improve their skills. They emphasize thorough comprehension and like challenging and hard work.

Table 12. The Relationship between Motivational Beliefs and Autonomy

	Readiness	Responsibility	Ability	Use of English
	n= 135	n= 135	n= 135	n= 135
	r p	r p	r p	r p
Task Value	.275** .001	.048 .579	.344** .000	.268** .002
Learning Goal-Orientation	.258** .003	.095 .272	.350** .000	.401 .000
Self-Efficacy	----------	-.101 .243	.331* .000	.152 .078
Performance Goal-Orientation	----------	----------	.132 .126	.026 .766

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results of Pearson product-moment correlations between motivational beliefs and sections of autonomy indicate a moderate positive correlation of .344 between task value and ability; thus, we may conclude that students who value classroom tasks and activities, and believe that the activities and tasks are beneficial for improving their language skills are good/ very good" at managing in-class activities such as "choosing learning activities in the class", "choosing learning activities outside class", "choosing learning objectives in the class" and "choosing learning objectives outside the class". Moreover, task value is correlated with readiness with .275 indicating that students who value classroom tasks and activities and believe that the activities and tasks are beneficial for improving their language skills have mid-level of readiness for learner autonomy. There is a moderate correlation of .268 between task value and use of English. Thus, students for whom the tasks and activities in the classroom are important and useful to develop their language proficiency try to new words, watch TV programs and listen to English songs.

There is a moderate correlation of .401 between learning goal-orientation and use of English, .258 between readiness and .350 between ability. We may conclude that students who are more likely to report setting learning-oriented goals for themselves activity have mid-level of readiness for learner autonomy, can choose learning activities and objectives in and outside the class and engage in trying to learn new words, watching English TV programs and films and listening to English songs outside the class.

The results indicate a moderate positive correlation of .331 between self-efficacy and ability; that's, students who are certain that they can master all the skills taught and complete all class work are able to select learning activities and objectives in and outside the class.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking into consideration the findings of the questionnaire on motivational beliefs covered in the study, the students taking part in the study might be considered motivated as they value classroom tasks and activities and believe that the activities and tasks are beneficial for improving their language skills. Moreover, they find activities and tasks interesting or enjoyable. They tend to aim learning for the sake of learning as much as they can and gain a lot of skills focusing on thorough comprehension. They have self-confidence as they reported certainty in mastering all the skills taught showing strong beliefs in themselves in accomplishing their goals.

The fact that autonomy is a continuum, not an exact steady level, teachers, students themselves and their readiness to take control over their learning are effective in developing or hindering autonomy. These students considered their teachers to be the facilitator in the class rather than the only authority. We might suggest that teachers' behavior is significant in learners' applying autonomous behaviors allowing students freedom and flexibility as they decide to be facilitators rather than authorities. They consider themselves autonomous rather than teacher-dependent; although, this result must be confirmed at least with teacher observations, it seems that they are able to control their own learning process. Finally, they had mid-level of readiness for learner autonomy which is a prerequisite to develop their autonomy level. Most of the participants tended to take more control for the responsibilities taken outside the class. They rated themselves as good in choosing learning activities and objectives in and outside the class. The students tried to learn new words and watched English TV programs and films.

As the findings suggest, there is moderate positive correlation motivational beliefs and sections of autonomy. To begin with, students who value classroom tasks and activities, and believe that the activities and tasks are beneficial for improving their language skills are good/ very good" at managing in-class activities such as "choosing learning activities in the class", "choosing learning activities outside class", "choosing learning objectives in the class" and

"choosing learning objectives outside the class". Moreover, students who value classroom tasks and activities, and believe that the activities and tasks are beneficial for improving their language skills have mid-level of readiness for learner autonomy. The students emphasizing the tasks and activities in the classroom to develop their language proficiency try to new words, watch TV programs, and listen to English songs.

The students who are more likely to report setting learning-oriented goals for themselves have mid-level of readiness for learner autonomy, can choose learning activities and objectives in and outside the class and engage in trying to learn new words, watching English TV programs and films, and listening to English songs outside the class. Moreover, students who are certain that they can master all the skills taught and complete all class work are able to select learning activities and objectives in and outside the class. The students who were more likely to report setting learning-oriented goals for themselves activity engaged in trying to learn new words, watching English TV programs and films and listening to English songs outside the class.

As the overall findings suggest motivational beliefs except performance goal-orientation are correlated with learner autonomy as Garcia and Pintrich (1991) also put forward. The students who regard classroom tasks and activities valuable and useful for improving their language skills have mid-level of readiness for learner autonomy. This result supports the fact that "motivation is a key factor that influences the extent to which learners are ready to learn autonomously, as Spratt et al (2002) have shown.The fact that students who are more likely to report setting learning-oriented goals for themselves can choose learning activities and objectives in and outside the class supports the idea that intrinsically motivated learners are more efficient learners because the locus of control is internalized as Dörnyei (1998) put forward. The findings indicate a moderate positive correlation between motivational beliefs and sections of autonomy. This study also suggests and supports that "intrinsic motivation makes learners 'more willing to take responsibility for the outcome' and that giving students more autonomy yields intrinsic motivation" (Scharle and Szabó, 2000: 7).

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