



Received: 30.07.2018
Received in revised form: 12.03.2019
Accepted: 27.03.2019

Okumuş-Ceylan, N., (2019). Thoughts on learner autonomy in a computer assisted language learning program. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 6(2), 339-354.

<http://iojet.org/index.php/IOJET/article/view/490>

THOUGHTS ON LEARNER AUTONOMY IN A CALL SYSTEM TOGETHER WITH STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

Research Article

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Abstract

In our institution, Quartet (computer software program) was a part of the curriculum which provides the students with the opportunity to work on their own in order to develop their language skills. To what extent the learners benefit from the materials and the time provided for them mainly depends on students since as Dakin suggests (1973) “though the teacher may control the experiences the learner is exposed to, it is the learner who selects what is learnt from them” (p. 16). According to the observations of teachers, some, but not all students worked effectively in lab lessons. This paper aims to identify the students’ perceptions about themselves, the teacher, their peers and language learning to have an idea of their autonomy and their thoughts on computer assisted language learning. Data were gathered through a 46-item questionnaire. Frequency tests were used to determine the frequencies and percentages of each item to find out the perceptions of participants on learner autonomy and the usefulness of computer lab lessons. Though the students shoulder the responsibility of learning, most students need guidance of their teachers to set goals for their learning process.

Keywords: learner autonomy, computer assisted language learning

1. Introduction

Language learning has become interesting, easy and enjoyable with many multimedia materials and internet sites. Schools are now providing their students with these materials to enable them to practice their language skills. In our institution, Quartet (computer software program) is a part of the curriculum. Students have two-hour lab lessons each day where they study on their own with this program, observed by the teacher during the education year. According to the observations of teachers, some, but not all students worked effectively in lab lessons. These “some” students can be called autonomous learners since they attended regularly, worked hard, asked questions frequently, identified their weaknesses and strengths, and determined their own pace in lab lessons. The main goal of this paper is to identify their perceptions about themselves, the teacher, their peers and language learning to have an idea of their autonomy.

“Language is the main channel through which the patterns of living are transmitted to the child, through which the child learns to act as a member of society and, ...to adopt its culture, modes of thought, ... its belief and values” (Halliday, 1978, p.9). For the learner, then language is both a subject of study and a means of receiving a meaningful world from others and is at the same time a means of re-interpreting the world to his own ends” (Barnes, 1979).

Since knowledge of language cannot be defined or even understood without taking into account of the goals and purposes of person who is attempting to gain this knowledge successful language teaching must therefore start from the learner rather than the language and the language learners must be made aware of the fact that they are the most important

element in the learning process. In this way, they learn how to learn for the purposes they design for themselves.

The act of learning is, of course, personal and individual. Learners have the final responsibility of knowing whether or not they know, whatever type of “knowing” that might be, when in real-life situations which are, to paraphrase Halliday, “actively symbolized” by language (Halliday, 1978, p.3). But in order to reach this level of being able to use language to “create meanings of a social kind” and to “participate in verbal contest and verbal display” (Halliday, 1987) the learner has to learn the process of learning and to be able to manage the complex learning network of learning goals, materials, sequencing of the materials, deciding how materials shall be used, deciding on tasks to be done, keeping records and making evaluations. This organization of learning material and mapping pathways through it has been traditionally the responsibility of the teacher. Our definition of what is a good learner has been modified to include those who are “good thinkers and problem solvers whose cognitive strategies enable them to exercise control over their own learning” (Gange, 1980). This metacognitive awareness means that the learner can no longer be regarded as a container into which information is crammed by an autocratic disseminator of knowledge. The learner must be a “participant in the learning process” as Harri-Augstein (1978) puts it where “meaning is a product of social interaction”.

2. Learner autonomy

Learners must be enticed to accept responsibility not just for their learning but for the process involved in it. They must be ready to make decisions about how to manage all the complexities involved. As Benson (2001) 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, p. 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”.

Since there are many options today for language learners outside the classroom context, providing students with essential research strategies has become much more important than making them learn limited amount of knowledge merely in the classroom from the language teacher. In such a learning environment, the role of the teacher is changing from the status of a “genius” who knows all to a “guide” who shows where and how to access knowledge and how to adapt or adopt it. We cannot expect learners to make the leap from total domination in the school classroom to full autonomy in the university. Therefore, emphasis should be focused on providing them with skills and raising an awareness for language learning strategies to teach how to learn languages. Learning how to apply language learning strategies and how to improve their skills may be beneficial to them when they must cope with a vast amount of information for specific tasks in their professional lives.

We wanted to provide our students with materials and an opportunity to develop their language skills through self-study. With this goal in our mind, we based our curriculum on Quartet, which is a computer assisted language learning system that includes a series of course books and multi-media materials for students at beginner to advance levels. According to the examinations of laboratory lesson teachers, some students attended regularly, worked hard, asked questions frequently, identified their weaknesses and strengths, and determined their own pace. Based on their qualifications observed by the teachers, such students can be called autonomous learners as characteristics of an autonomous learner is listed as follows in the literature (Po-ying, 2007; Scharle & Szabo, 2000; St Louis, 2007).

- willing and have the capacity to control or supervise learning
- knowing their own learning style and strategies
- motivated to learn - good guessers
- choosing materials, methods and tasks
- exercising choice and purpose in organizing and carrying out the chosen task
- selecting the criteria for evaluation
- taking an active approach to the task
- making and rejecting hypotheses
- paying attention to both form and content
- willing to take risks

3. Quartet (CALL) system

Littlewood (1996) classifies autonomy as proactive and reactive autonomy. In proactive autonomy, the learner determines objectives, selects methods and evaluates what he has learned. In reactive autonomy, the learner organizes resources autonomously to reach his goal in an initiated direction. Benson (2001) explains proactive autonomy as control over content and reactive autonomy as control over method. This study focuses on learner autonomy in a school context where the students proceed through already defined content; therefore, what we refer to as autonomy should better be regarded as reactive autonomy. In our institution, students have two-hour laboratory lessons every day during which they use the multi-media materials on computer and study the worksheets individually. During these self-study lab lessons, the teacher is present to guide and assist the students when they feel the need and ask for help.

Quartet CALL system offers the following:

- Pronunciation activities provide realistic native speaker models of English and incorporate voice recordings and playback to let students compare their recordings with the models provided.
- Grammar activities include explanations of forms and drills to practice the usage of them.
- Reading texts are provided together with pre-, while-, and post-reading activities in which true-false statements, comprehension questions, information sequence and chart completion tasks are used. New vocabulary is practiced in reading activities through guessing the meaning from the context, matching, and completing the paragraph.
- The program offers short creative writing tasks which oblige students to use their writing and computer skills. These tasks also provide students with an opportunity to read others' writings, giving students the chance to view writing from both reader and writer perspectives.

The students are provided with immediate feedback for the exercises on the computer. When they are unable to comprehend the feedback given, the teacher is there to explain. Also, each level has an achievement test which may raise students' awareness of their own language learning process. By means of the achievement tests, students can recognize their strengths and weaknesses.

4. Review of studies on CALL

The related literature suggests that CALL presents opportunities which help learners to develop autonomy by working individually and directing their own learning without the guidance of a teacher (Beatty, 2003). St Louis (2007) indicated that students started to take control of their learning by participating in decision-making with regard to materials, activities and evaluation and practicing different kinds of exercises that the Internet provides. Thus, he suggested that technology can help students to develop learner autonomy and raise their awareness of learning styles and strategies. Mitra and Steffensmeier (2000) put forward a positive correlation between a computer-enriched environment and students' attitudes towards computers in general, their role in teaching and learning, and their ability to facilitate communication. Beatty (2003) also claims that most educational games prompt peripheral learning, which means that students are unaware of the objectives of the lesson, they only concentrate on the game and accordingly they learn unconsciously. As Kenning and Kenning (1983) state, with visual effects, it is easy to attract learners' attention and maintain their motivation. Movement of words, syllables or characters around the screen, and simple graphic illustrations of some key lexical items are only some examples of how computers can affect learners' motivation in a positive way.

Blin (2004) states that from the beginning, CALL applications give learners control over some aspects of language learning to some extent by promoting independent learning. We, as teachers, expect them to get the utmost advantage of the multimedia materials on the computer for their self-development. However, in order to use the materials effectively while they are studying on their own, they have to be ready and willing to plan their learning, set goals, evaluate their learning process and do their best. That is, they should be autonomous. Individual examinations of teachers during computer laboratory lessons voiced at weekly meetings indicated that some, but not all students attended regularly, worked hard, asked questions frequently, identified their weaknesses and strengths, and determined their own pace.

Depending on these observations and taking into consideration the features of autonomous learners suggested in the literature (Po-ying, 2007; Scharle & Szabo, 2000; St Louis, 2007), we might derive a conclusion and identify these as autonomous learners and the others as less autonomous. Thus, this is an action research study to confirm or disconfirm the implications derived from the individual observations of the teachers. The focus of this paper is finding out their students' perceptions about themselves, the teacher, their peers and language learning to have an idea of their autonomy and confirm our and to identify the effectiveness of the program for the students' self-development.

5. The study

The aim of this research is to find out what students believe about language learning and where they place themselves, teachers, opportunities, feedback, and their classmates in the language learning process. Therefore, the study addresses the following questions:

- Are the students autonomous?
- What is the role of the opportunities to use language in language learning?
- What is the role of the practice in language learning?
- What is the role of the language teacher in language learning?
- What is the role of the students' own effort in language learning?

The questionnaire also includes items related to computer software program; therefore, it addresses the following questions as well:

- Can computer program contribute to language learning?
- Did the students like using the program?

The study was conducted at Zonguldak Karaelmas University Obligatory Preparatory School. The participants were 100 prep school students. They were chosen randomly. In this study, the instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from “What is important to you in language learning? (www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/research/Docs/QUIZSYS99.pdf)”, a published questionnaire that is widely used in research related to learner autonomy in language learning. The questionnaire was conducted in Turkish, students’ mother tongue. Responses to questionnaire items represent the data for this study. First, the questionnaires were numbered, and then items were coded. Codes were entered into Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS 10.0), and SPSS was used to analyze the data. Frequency tests were used to determine the frequencies and percentages of each item to find out the perceptions of participants on learner autonomy and the usefulness of computer lab lessons.

6. The findings

Table 6.1. *The role of the teacher*

No	Items	Totally Agree- Agree	Disagree - Totally Disagree
		Percentages	
1	I believe that the role of the teacher is to tell me what to do.	51	49
3	I believe that the role of the teacher is to help me learn effectively.	93	7
7	I believe that the role of the teacher is to tell me what progress I am making.	61	39
13	I believe that the role of the teacher is to tell me what my difficulties are.	59	41
19	I believe that the role of the teacher is to create opportunities for me to practice.	71	39
21	I believe that the role of the teacher is to decide how long I spend on activities.	36	64
25	I believe that the role of the teacher is to tell me why we are doing an activity.	78	22
28	I believe that the role of the teacher is to set my learning goals.	65	35
29	I believe that the role of the teacher is to give me regular tests.	53	47
31	I believe that the role of the teacher is to offer help to me.	58	42

According to the results of Table 6.1., while the students are not sure about whether the teacher should tell them what to do or not, they believe that the teacher should help them learn effectively and create opportunities for learning. Half of the students state that the role of the teacher is to tell them what their difficulties are, and more than half of the students believe that it is the teacher is to tell them what progress they are making. They also believe that the teacher should tell them what to do and why they do an activity; similarly, s/he should also set learning goals for students and tell them what their difficulties are. Also, the teacher should give them regular tests and offer help to them.

According to the results of Table 6.2., almost all students believe that all people learn languages in different ways. Thus, we might think that they are aware of individual differences among language learners.

Table 6.2. *Language learning*

No	Items	Totally Agree- Agree	Disagree- Totally Disagree
		Percentages	
5	I believe that all people learn languages in the same way.	3	97
24	I believe that different people learn languages in different ways.	90	10

The results of Table 6.3 indicate that most of the students believe that they need to know language learning rules before they can communicate in English. As the language teaching in state primary, elementary or high school is mainly based on the structure of the language, they might believe that they need to produce grammatically correct sentences.

Table 6.3. *Communication in English*

No	Items	Totally Agree- Agree	Disagree- Totally Disagr
		Percentages	
4	I believe that I can communicate in English without knowing the rules.	31	69
22	I believe that I need to know language learning rules before I can communicate in English.	66	34

According to results reported in Table 6.4., the students believe and the literature on error analysis also suggests that making mistakes is a natural part of language learning.

Table 6.4. *Mistakes*

No	Items	Totally Agree-Agree	Disagree-Totally Disagree
Percentages			
12	I believe that making mistakes is harmful to language learning.	5	95
26	I believe that making mistakes is a natural part of language learning.	96	4

The results shown in Table 6.5 suggest that students believe that they are not above average at language learning. They consider their level of English as average or below average. In order to practice autonomous behaviors, they should be able to identify their level of English.

Table 6.5. *Level at language learning*

No	Items	Totally Agree-Agree	Disagree-Totally Disagree
Percentages			
9	I believe that I am average in language learning.	54	46
23	I believe that I am above average at language learning.	26	74

Table 6.6. *Learner Autonomy*

No	Items	Totally Agree-Agree	Disagree-Totally Disagree
Percentages			
2a	I believe I know how to find my own ways of practicing.	52	33
2b	I am confident about finding my own ways of practicing.	63	37
2c	I am willing to find my own ways of practicing.	76	24
2d	I accept responsibility for finding my own ways of practicing.	72	28
6a	I know how to check my work for mistakes.	70	30
6b	I am confident about checking my work for mistakes.	65	35
6c	I am willing to check my work for mistakes.	83	17
6d	I accept responsibility for checking my work for mistakes.	74	26
8a	I believe I know how to explain what I need English for.	81	19
8b	I am confident about explaining what I need English for.	80	20
8c	I am willing to explain what I need English for.	55	45
8d	I accept responsibility for explaining what I need English for.	70	30
11a	I believe I know how to identify my strengths and weaknesses.	76	24

11b	I am confident about identifying my strengths and weaknesses.	74	25
11c	I am willing to identify my strengths and weaknesses.	74	26
11d	I accept the responsibility to identify my strengths and weaknesses.	84	32
14a	I believe I know how to ask for help when I need it.	73	27
14b	I am confident about asking for help when I need it.	75	25
14c	I am willing to ask for help when I need it.	68	16
14d	I accept responsibility for asking for help when I need it.	78	22
16a	I believe I know to how to set my own learning goals.	69	31
16b	I am confident about setting my own learning goals.	68	32
16c	I am willing to set my own learning goals.	69	31
16d	I accept the responsibility to set my own learning goals.	78	22
17a	I believe I know how to plan my learning.	57	43
17b	I am confident about planning my learning.	57	43
17c	I am willing to plan my learning.	77	23
17d	I accept the responsibility to plan my learning.	72	28
32a	I believe that I know how to measure my language learning progress.	46	54
32b	I am confident about measuring my language learning progress.	53	47
32c	I am willing to measure my language learning progress.	80	20
32d	I accept the responsibility to measure my language learning progress.	70	30

Items in Table 6.6. include statements starting with “I believe/ I’m confident/ I’m willing/ I accept”. These statements indicate different levels of autonomy where “I believe” indicates a high level of autonomy, “I accept” indicates a low level. Taking this explanation into consideration, the fact that most of the students are willing to find their own ways of practicing and accept this responsibility are indicators for lower level autonomy since they are not confident enough to do it on their own. Most of them define themselves as willing to check their work for mistakes and accept its responsibility.

Since they are in the process of learning and mistakes might be defined as trials leading to the correctness, it is quite understandable that they may not notice their mistakes or know how to correct them. Thus, they do not define themselves as confident to do so. Similarly, most of them just accept the responsibility to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to measure their language learning progress. Although they do not try to strengthen their weak points in general, most of them are eager to ask for help when they need. The fact that they accept the responsibility to plan their own learning and set their learning goals accordingly is an indicator of a high level of autonomy.

As indicated in Table 6.7., the students believe that feedback on their language learning from other people is the most important one. Their own feedback is important one and the feedback on their language learning from their teacher is the least important. As most of them just accept the responsibility to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to measure their language learning progress, their own feedback on their language learning process should be important.

Table 6.7. *Feedback*

No	Items	The least important	Important	The most important
		Percentages		
33a	I believe feedback on my language learning that I give myself helps me most.	60	34	6
33b	I believe feedback on my language	34	55	11

	learning from the teacher helps me most.			
33c	I believe feedback on my language learning from other people helps me most.	6	17	83

The results displayed in Table 6.8. indicate that the students believe that their classmates are the most important in providing opportunities to use the language. They themselves are important in providing opportunities to use the language and their teacher is the least important. To exercise autonomous behaviors, they should find opportunities to use the language themselves; however, the fact that they emphasize the ones provided by their peers indicates their low level of autonomy.

Table 6.8. *Opportunities to use language*

No	Items	The least important	Important	The most important
		Percentages		
34a	I believe that opportunities to use the language should be provided by my classmates.	12	16	72
34b	I believe that I should find my own opportunities to use the language.	59	34	7
34c	I believe that opportunities to use the language should be provided by my teacher.	29	50	21

According to the results shown in Table 6.9., the students believe that their classmates are the most important in finding the best ways to learn a language. They themselves are important in finding the best ways to learn a language. Their teacher is the least important in finding the best ways to learn a language. Similar to the results in Table 8, if they were more autonomous learners, they themselves would be the most important to find the best ways for themselves.

Table 6.9. *The ways to learn a language*

No	Items	The least important	Important	The most important
		Percentages		
35a	I believe I can find for myself the best ways to learn a language.	45	50	5
35b	I believe that my classmates can show me the best ways to learn a language.	6	15	79
35c	I believe the teacher can teach me the best ways to learn a language.	49	35	16

Table 6.10. shows that the students believe that the teacher's being an expert at learning languages is the most important. Since they emphasize teacher's expertise at learning languages, they probably would like to regard the teacher as a role model. His being an expert at teaching languages is important. His being an expert at showing them how to learn is the least important.

Table 6.10. *The teacher*

No	Items	The least important	Important	The most important
		Percentages		
36a	I believe the teacher should be an expert at teaching language.	30	59	11
36b	I believe the teacher should be an expert at learning language.	6	23	71
36c	I believe the teacher should be an expert at showing students how to learn.	64	18	18

As seen in Table 6.11., the students believe that what their classmates do in the classroom is the most important in their language learning success. What they do in the classroom or what the teacher does in the classroom is less important. What they do outside the classroom is the least important. Similar to the results in Table 3.8. and 3.9., to exercise autonomous behaviors, they should put themselves at the center of their language learning process in and outside the classroom; however, the fact that they emphasize their peers and their teacher indicates their low level of autonomy.

Table 6.11. *Language learning success*

No	Items	The least important	Less important	Important	The most important
		Percentages			
37a	I believe my language learning success depends on what I do outside the classroom.	45	14	16	25
37b	I believe my language learning success depends on what I do in the classroom.	28	37	29	6
37c	I believe my language learning success depends on what my classmates do in the classroom.	1	14	38	47
37d	I believe my language learning success depends on what the teacher does in the classroom.	26	35	17	22

The results in Table 6.12. indicate that students believe their own effort is the least important in successful language learning. The language teacher is more important than their own effort. Practice is important in successful language learning. Opportunities to use the language are more important than practice. Feedback is the most important in successful language learning. To exercise autonomous behaviors, they should be able to give themselves feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, they should find opportunities to practice

language use themselves, and the most important one is that they should believe that their own effort is the most important one; thus, they should spend effort continuously.

Table 6.12. *Language learning*

No	Items	Percentages				
		The least important	Less important	Important	More important	The most important
38a	Feedback plays an important role in successful language learning.	8	8	13	14	57
38b	Opportunities to use the language play an important role in successful language learning.	21	13	22	33	11
38c	Practice plays an important role in successful language learning.	7	11	33	30	19
38d	The language teacher plays an important role in successful language learning.	21	32	23	18	6
38e	My own effort plays an important role in successful language learning.	43	36	9	5	7

According to results shown in Table 6.13., more than half of the students are mostly learners who like to learn with others. 57% of the students like to decide for themselves how and what they learn. According to the definition of autonomy, a learner should have the responsibility to define the contents and progressions. The fact that they identified themselves as learners who like to decide how and what they learn for themselves might be considered as they are ready to foster their autonomy.

Table 6.13. *Learners*

No	Items	Describes me		
		Well	Better	Best
39a	Learners who like to learn with other people.	8	28	68
39b	Learners who like to learn with a teacher.	35	45	20
39c	Learners who like to decide for themselves how and what they learn.	57	27	16

Most of the students did not use computer to learn English before, and they do not prefer to learn English with a computer.

Table 6.14. *Computer use*

No	Item	Yes	No
		Percentages	
40	Did you use computer before to learn English?	15	85
41	I prefer to learn English without using computer.	24	76

The results shown in Table 6.15. indicate that most of the students believe that computer program cannot contribute to language learning, and it does not make language learning enjoyable. They believe that using Quartet software program is not useful activity for them, and they did not enjoy it.

Table 6.15. *Quartet program*

No	Items	Totally Agree-Agree	Disagree-Totally Disagree
		Percentages	
42	Computer program can contribute to language learning.	94	6
43	Quartet software program can make language learning enjoyable.	25	75
44	Using Quartet software program is a useful activity for me.	24	76
45	I enjoyed learning English using computer program.	16	84

As shown in Table 6.16., the students believe that mostly reading, listening and vocabulary can be developed using computer program. They believe that grammar and writing skills cannot be developed. To develop their writing competence, they might need feedback from their teacher.

Table 6.16. *Language Skills*

No	Items	No	Yes
		Percentages	
46a	Reading	28	72
46b	Writing	82	18
46c	Listening	22	78

46d	Vocabulary	27	73
46e	Grammar	64	36

7. Conclusion

Although the students accept the responsibility for planning their learning and set their own learning goals, they believe that the teacher should set learning goals for them. The fact that students do not take the responsibility for setting goals for their own learning and planning it leaving all the responsibility to the teacher indicates lower autonomy. It may partly explain why some students are not able to work effectively during lab lessons. As Oxford (1990) states that “self-direction is particularly important for language learners, because they will not always have the teacher around to guide them” (p.10).

Though the students believe that their own feedback and feedback provided by the teacher is important, feedback from their peers is the most important. Emphasizing feedback from others rather than their own feedback is another sign of a decrease in autonomy. The students believe that the ways to learn a language and opportunities to use the language should be provided by their classmates. They also believe that their language learning success depends on what their classmates do in the classroom. The emphasis they put on their classmates is also a sign of low autonomy.

The students believe that the teacher should firstly be an expert at learning languages, then at showing students how to learn and lastly at teaching language. Taking Turkish education system into consideration, we may regard this as a natural consequence of the education they have gotten since the early years of their school life where the teacher is in the center of the curriculum as the source of the information. Another reason might be the fact that their non-native English teachers are also English language learners in similar contexts. The fact that they want to be guided by their teacher is another sign of low autonomy.

Since the students did not enjoy learning English with Quartet program and did not find it useful, they did not like to learn with this program. Their negative attitudes toward Quartet program can partly explain why some students do not work effectively in lab lessons. The students prefer to learn with using computer; moreover, they believe reading, listening and vocabulary can be developed with using computer program. Therefore, we way state that using a computer language learning program that appeals to students’ interests can be useful in language learning. Moreover, for students who are used to a traditional way of language learning making use of these materials can be very difficult and demanding even though CALL applications and materials are considered to be very effective for successful language learning (Chang, 2007; Felix, 2008; Kenning & Kenning, 1983; Pennington, 1989, 1996).

The aim of this research is to find out what students believe about language learning and where they place themselves, teachers, opportunities, feedback, and their classmates in the language learning process. Though they shoulder the responsibility of learning, what we found with this study is that most students need guidance of their teachers to set goals for their learning process. Although lab lessons are considered as self-study time, we might work together with students to set learning goals for them; individually or as a group. Moreover, we might focus on peer feedback to integrate it into evaluation process. This might help them to notice the mistakes easily and find ways to correct them. A further study can be done to find out the level of students’ autonomy. The level of each student may be compared with the achievement test results to find out whether they study effectively or not.

7. Pedagogical implications

The fact that students do not take the responsibility for setting goals for their own learning and planning it leaving all the responsibility to the teacher may partly explain why some students are not able to work effectively during lab lessons. When we included self-study in the curriculum, we wanted to provide them with an opportunity to study on their own since Oxford (1990) emphasizes “self-direction is particularly important for language learners, because they will not always have the teacher around to guide them” (p.10). However, as Logan and Moore (2004, p. 1) state we cannot assume that learners know how to learn since as individual observations of students while they are studying on their own indicated that there is a certain number of students who cannot use the time and the materials provided. Tudor (1996, p. 34) supports this stating, “The knowledge and personal qualities that learner involvement requires cannot be taken for granted and need to be developed over time.” The findings in this study indicate that most of the students need teachers to set goals for their own learning and to help them learn effectively.

To provide students with life-long learning skills, it is better to train language learners on how to learn languages through language learning strategies rather than providing them teachers whenever they study. Holec (1985, p.3) explains the aim of the training as “preparing learners to direct their own learning so that they may gradually move from a state of dependence on a teacher to the greatest degree of independence or autonomy possible in a particular set of circumstances”. Benson (2001, p.146) states that “there is good evidence that learner development programs can be effective in improving language learning performance. As Holec (1979, p. 27) points out, “few adults are capable of assuming responsibility for their learning... for the simplest reason that they have never had the occasion to use this ability”. Many researchers have explicitly stressed the importance of learner training for learner autonomy (e.g. Cotterall, 1995; Dam 1995; Dickinson, 1995; Holec, 1981; Huttunen, 1986; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991).

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