



Learner autonomy among students of French as a foreign language in a tertiary context

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Abstract

Learner autonomy has attracted numerous researchers in language teaching for the last four decades. However, there exists still a need to investigate to what extent learners of foreign languages, in particular languages other than English, are autonomous. This study aims to investigate learner autonomy in learning French at a university in Turkey by exploring students' perceptions relevant to learner autonomy (i.e., responsibilities, abilities, and metacognitive strategies), motivation, and autonomous language learning activities. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach and the data were collected through a questionnaire ($N = 57$) and learning diaries ($n = 14$). The results revealed that the students seemed to hold teachers more responsible than themselves for learning French and in general they reported a moderate level of decision-making abilities and use of metacognitive strategies. Moreover, a considerable number of the students slightly motivated or did not feel motivated. The qualitative data on motivation analyzed based on the L2 Motivational Self System showed that the participants' ideal L2 selves were shaped by professional aspirations and/or integrative motives. However, most of them appeared to have difficulties in maintaining their motivation and only a few students seemed to have intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, the majority of the students engaged in limited autonomous language learning activities. Thus, most of the students did not appear to be autonomous learners in learning French. The implications of the study were provided in light of the findings.

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Keywords: French as a foreign language; learner autonomy; the L2 Motivational Self System; motivation; second language learning

1. Introduction

Learner autonomy, defined as “the capacity to take charge of one's own learning” (Holec, 1979, p. 3), has gained considerable attention in language education since the 1980s. This concept, “mostly associated with adult education and self-access learning systems” (Little, 2007, p. 14) in the early 1980s, was acknowledged as a key

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educational goal in the following decades, partly due to the influence of learner-centered approaches in language teaching (Little, 2007). Furthermore, it accords well with life-long learning and the goal of helping language learners become independent from teachers in their learning and language use (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Littlewood, 1996). Learner autonomy entails interdependence, which “implies working together with teachers and other learners towards shared goals” (Benson, 2013, p. 15). Hence, autonomy has now been acknowledged as a desirable attribute of language learners and a significant consideration in the practice of language teaching (Benson, 2016).

The recognition of learner autonomy as an educational goal raises important questions, including the following: To what extent are students autonomous? How can teachers help students become more autonomous? What are the conditions and constraints that influence the promotion of learner autonomy? There is evidence that students are generally used to playing a passive role as schools traditionally set learning objectives, select learning materials and activities, and evaluate learning outcomes (Little, 2007). As behavior patterns and institutional cultures can influence learner beliefs and behaviors (Godwin-Jones, 2019), students who are used to teacher-centered education may have attitudes and behaviors hindering the promotion of learner autonomy. Furthermore, learner autonomy is not a constant and stable characteristic (Little, 1991). It is a complex construct influenced by a number of factors including beliefs, motivation, the learner’s sense of self, and metacognitive knowledge (Godwin-Jones, 2019). Consequently, it may appear in many different forms depending on the person, the setting, and contextual factors (Benson, 2011). Therefore, it is important to conduct studies in diverse contexts to gain further insight into learner autonomy.

This study aims to investigate to what extent students are autonomous through their perceptions relevant to learner autonomy (i.e., responsibilities, decision-making abilities, the use of metacognitive strategies), motivation, and autonomous learning activities in learning French as a foreign language at a university in Turkey, which is a relatively unexplored context in terms of learner autonomy.

2. Review of relevant literature

2.1. Learner autonomy

Several studies have been conducted to investigate learner autonomy through a number of factors. For instance, Cotterall (1995, 1999) developed a questionnaire to investigate beliefs relevant to readiness for autonomy among learners of English as a second language who intended to study at a university in New Zealand. The results of the previous research (Cotterall, 1995) suggested that learners’ views of the teacher’s role were central to diagnostic readiness for autonomy. In the subsequent study, Cotterall (1999) modified the questionnaire designed in her earlier study. By using the modified form of the questionnaire including six variables (e.g., the role of the

teacher, the learner's sense of self-efficacy, and important strategies), she found that the students were willing to share responsibilities with their teachers and accepted responsibilities for employing a range of key strategies (e.g., monitoring and evaluating strategies). However, the students lacked knowledge of these strategies. Breeze (2002), who investigated learner autonomy among learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) at a Spanish university center through a questionnaire, found that the students felt that the teacher should be responsible for deciding the content and setting the objectives, and that external assessment was not the main motivating factor. Chan, Spratt, and Humphreys (2002) examined students' attitudes and behaviors related to learner autonomy in learning English at a university in Hong Kong by means of a questionnaire and focus-up interviews. They found that the students viewed the teacher as a dominant figure and seemed to be less willing to make autonomous decisions. Furthermore, the students' learning activities demonstrated little autonomy even though they reported to be fairly motivated for language learning. More recently in a survey study conducted among prospective English language teachers in Ukraine, Khalhman and Shevchenko (2017) showed that the respondents' capacity and self-confidence to learn autonomously were moderate, which implied that the students were still dependent on their teachers. The questionnaire designed by Chan et al. (2002), which included four dimensions (i.e., responsibilities, decision-making abilities, motivation, and autonomous language learning activities), was adapted to diverse contexts such as Taiwanese university EFL students (Liu, 2012), Iranian EFL students at a professional training institute (Farahani, 2014), and Turkish university EFL students (Üstünoğlu, 2009). Farahani's (2014) study, through a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and non-participant observations showed that the participants perceived to be motivated but this did not seem to translate into their decision-making abilities or autonomous activities. However, Üstünoğlu (2009), using a questionnaire and interviews, found that the students did not take responsibility for their learning even if they perceived that they had the ability.

Researchers have also investigated the relationship between learner autonomy and key factors relevant to autonomy. For instance, in a quantitative study conducted among Taiwanese EFL students, Liu (2015a) investigated relationships between motivation and three components of learner autonomy: sense of responsibility, engagement in learning activities, and perceived ability. The results showed a high level of positive correlation between motivation and autonomy. The strongest association was found between motivation and engagement in learning activities, followed by perceived ability and responsibility. Gamble et al.'s (2018) study, conducted with a group of Japanese university EFL students with the help of a questionnaire, and Okay and Balçıkanlı's (2017) study, based on quantitative and qualitative data elicited by an open-ended questionnaire among Turkish university EFL students, suggested a strong positive relationship between motivation and the perception of ability. However, motivation was not significantly related to the perception of responsibility. They found that the participants, regardless of their

motivation level, seemed to leave responsibilities for the majority of tasks to teachers. Another study by Liu (2015b) indicated a high level of correlation between learner autonomy and strategy use (the strongest correlations with cognitive and metacognitive categories) among Taiwanese university EFL students. Furthermore, strategy use had the highest correlation with the degree of engagement in learning activities. Gao and Zhang (2011) propose that metacognitive strategies, defined as “general skills through which learners manage, direct, regulate, guide their learning, i.e. planning, monitoring, and evaluating” (Wenden, 1998, p. 519), and agency are prerequisites for learners’ autonomous learning because both contribute to the understanding of the processes underlying their autonomous learning.

A large majority of studies on learner autonomy conducted at the tertiary level in Turkey were also in EFL contexts and their findings generally indicated that students perceived teachers as mainly responsible for their learning (e.g., Bekleyen & Selimoğlu, 2016; Karabıyık, 2008; Koçak, 2003; Üstünoğlu, 2009). However, Yıldırım (2008) suggested that EFL students at a university were ready for learner autonomy as they were willing to share responsibilities in some areas of learning (e.g., deciding the objectives of the course, identifying weakness, and evaluating their learning), and they had positive perceptions of abilities to behave autonomously. As for languages other than English, there are few published studies on learner autonomy (e.g., Deregözü & Hatipoğlu, 2018; Özçelik, 2015; Toruç, 2013). These studies generally involve learners of German and French. Besides German, French has traditionally been taught in schools since the beginning of the 20th century in Turkey. As English has now been dominantly taught in schools, French has been studied, in general, as a second foreign language. Therefore, undergraduate programs in French still attract students who would like to study a new foreign language, culture or literature. However, to the author's knowledge, there is only one published empirical study (Özçelik, 2015) on autonomy concerning learners of French in Turkey. Özçelik investigated pre-service French teachers’ views regarding learner autonomy through a questionnaire. She found that the students were autonomous in readiness for self-direction, the independent study in language learning, the teacher’s role, language learning activities, objectives/self-evaluation and other cultures whereas they felt neutral in terms of the importance of the class/the teacher, the choice of content, and assessment/motivation. However, as Özçelik’s study was conducted with French teacher candidates, it is difficult to generalize its results to learners of French whose proficiency may be lower than that of prospective teachers, and who may have different motivational orientations to learn French.

As seen from the literature review in this section, researchers have explored diverse learner characteristics such as the view of responsibilities, decision-making abilities, the use of metacognitive strategies, autonomous language learning activities, and motivation to investigate learner autonomy. The literature review also showed that research on learner autonomy has concentrated on learners of English. However, their characteristics (e.g., proficiency, ability, or motivation) related to learner autonomy may be different than those of learners of other languages. Thus, there exists a need

to conduct further studies on learner autonomy in diverse contexts, in particular concerning languages other than English, to get a better grasp of learner autonomy. Furthermore, in the aforementioned studies, researchers generally investigated language learning activities and motivation by using a questionnaire and the quantitative approach. For instance, several researchers used the questionnaire adapted by Chan et al. (2002). However, few items addressing language learning activities in this questionnaire may not reflect the habits of 21st generation (e.g., sending letters to pen pals) any more, and the widespread use of the Internet has probably yielded new learning activities, which are not found in this questionnaire. Thus, in the present study, it was deemed important to gain further insight into autonomous language learning activities. Regarding motivation, the questionnaire (Chan et al., 2002) provided the information only on self-rated motivation. However, being a multifaceted concept, motivation needs to be studied in-depth to gain further understanding of this concept in relation to learner autonomy.

2.2. *Motivation and the L2 Motivational Self System*

A number of theories have been developed to conceptualize L2 motivation, which involves affective, cognitive and behavioral components and implies effort, desire, focus, attitudes, expectations, interests, needs, pleasure, and so on (Gardner, 2012; Paiva, 2011). One of them is Gardner's social-educational model which has been highly influential in L2 motivation. Based on Gardner and Lambert's (1972) works as cited in Paiva (2011), motivation has been traditionally categorized as either an integrative or instrumental orientation. While "[a]n integrative orientation reflects an interest in learning the language in order to interact with members of that language group, an instrumental orientation describes an interest in learning the language for more utilitarian reasons such as to get a good job" (Gardner & Smythe, 1975, p. 18). Ryan and Deci (2000) also distinguished between different types of motivation in self-determination theory: "The most basic distinction is between *intrinsic motivation*, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and *extrinsic motivation*, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome" (p. 55).

In recent years, motivation has been re-theorized in relation to concepts of self and identity in language education (Dörnyei, 2009; Ushioda, 2011). Dörnyei (2009), who pioneered this re-theorizing of language learning motivation, conceptualized the L2 Motivational Self System (LMSS) as having three components: the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience. The ideal L2 self is a "future self-guide" concerning what the learner would like to become. According to Dörnyei (2009) "if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the 'ideal L2 self' is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves" (p. 29). Dörnyei (2009) suggests that traditional integrative (e.g., attitudes toward the community where the language is spoken) and internalized instrumental motives (e.g., professional advancement) belong to this component. The ought-to L2 self involves "the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet

expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes” (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). Thus, this component corresponds to more extrinsic or less internalized types of instrumental motives (e.g., to learn languages in order not to fail in school or to meet the expectations of one’s parents). Finally, the component of L2 learning experience is related to the immediate learning environment and experiences (e.g., the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the experience of success) and is defined as “perceived quality of the learners’ engagement with various aspects of the learning process” (Dörnyei, 2019, p. 20).

Consequently, the LMSS offers a comprehensive framework within which motivation can be understood. By re-conceptualizing L2 motivation in relation to self and identity, the LMSS also highlights the relationship between motivation and learner autonomy as in the literature on autonomy the learner is considered having a social identity in a particular context, and the promotion of autonomous learning in language classroom involves helping students to develop their own identities through the target language (Ushioda, 2011).

Although the LMSS has been used in several quantitative studies on motivation, only a limited number of qualitative studies have been conducted to understand motivation in foreign language contexts by using the LMSS (e.g., de Burgh-Hirabe, 2019). Thus, there exists a need to conduct qualitative studies which could provide more insights into individual learners’ motivation and autonomous learning. These studies could contribute to answering the question of how teachers can motivate learners and help them become more autonomous. It is hoped that the current study, in which students’ motivation was analyzed based on the LMSS, could contribute to the literature by providing additional insight into the relationship between motivation and learner autonomy.

2.3. Research questions

This article aims to explore learner autonomy among learners of French studying at a Turkish university. The study addresses the following research questions derived from the literature review:

1. What are students’ dispositions toward the components of learner autonomy in learning French?
2. To what extent are students motivated to learn French?
3. To what extent do students engage in autonomous language learning activities to learn French?

3. Method

This small-scale study adopted a mixed-methods approach, including an available, valid and reliable questionnaire addressing the research questions as well as qualitative data providing a more in-depth insight into two dimensions of the questionnaire (i.e., motivation and autonomous language learning activities).

Qualitative data were obtained after the administration of the questionnaire through learning diaries during a period of five weeks to ensure that the participants reflect on and write freely about their motivation and learning activities to learn French in different points in time during a period.

3.1. Context

The study was conducted in a public university situated in a city in west-central Turkey, with a population of around 850,000. The university has around 30,000 students studying in 12 faculties, two schools, five vocational schools, four institutes and 32 research and application centers. The study was carried out in the Department of Foreign Languages, which offers one-year intensive language programs (mostly in English) to about 1000 students who do not meet the language proficiency requirements of certain undergraduate programs. Thus, the students' levels in these intensive language programs vary from elementary to advanced-intermediate.

The French preparatory program aims at the B1 proficiency level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and is designed for students who must be at the intermediate level in order to start their studies in the Department of Comparative Literature, which requires the students to have a good knowledge of two foreign languages. The students admitted to this program generally have a sound knowledge of English because most of them have passed an English language test as part of the national entrance exam to be admitted to the university. Thus, they study French to meet the initial requirement of proficiency in a second foreign language in order to take their undergraduate courses. Most of the students start this preparatory program at the elementary level.

The French program lasts one academic year and comprises two semesters (24 hours a week and approximately 660 hours in total). During the academic year of 2015/16, when the data were collected, the students' success was based on their overall grade calculated at the end of the academic year. The students whose grades were above 60 on a 100-point scale and whose attendance was 85% or higher in the courses were deemed proficient at the B1 level and passed the preparatory class according to the department's regulations. At the time of the data collection, there were five instructors of French (one of them was a native speaker of French) who alternated instruction for the preparatory classes and were following a program based on integrated-skill instruction. The author was one of the instructors teaching French in all three classes at the time of data collection.

3.2. Participants

Fifty-seven students (41 women and 16 men), who attended French classes regularly during the spring semester, participated in the quantitative data collection. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 22 ($M = 19.5$; $SD = 1.07$). All participants were native speakers of Turkish and reported having a good knowledge of English. Their overall grade at the end of the academic year ranged from 19 to 93 on a 100-

point scale ($M = 58.0$; $SD = 15.0$). Thirty-eight of the 57 participants passed the class as their grade was above 60 on a 100-point scale, which meant that they succeeded the B1 level according to the CEFR.

The profiles of 14 students (13 women and one man) who volunteered to participate in the qualitative data collection are provided in Table 1, in which the participants' names are pseudonyms. Their age also ranged from 18 to 22 ($M = 19.79$; $SD = 1.12$) and their grades ranged from 26 to 93 on a 100-point scale ($M = 60$; $SD = 16.8$). At the end of the academic year, nine students among them passed the class. Other five students had the opportunity to repeat the program and/or pass proficiency exams organized by the department.

Table 1. Profiles of the students who participated in the qualitative data collection

Participants*	Gender	Age	Overall grade	Self-rated competence in French (out of 10)	Self-rated competence in English (out of 10)
Aylin	Woman	18	93	4	10
Berfu	Woman	19	85	4	6
Cansu	Woman	22	69	2	6
Defne	Woman	20	67	4	6
Serpil	Woman	18	63	5	8
Figen	Woman	20	61	4	7
Canan	Woman	20	61	5	8
Funda	Woman	19	60	5	8
Berna	Woman	20	60	5	8
Emre	Man	20	53	3	8
Deniz	Woman	20	53	3	7
Filiz	Woman	19	50	4	7
Handan	Woman	21	39	2	6
Melis	Woman	21	26	Not responded	5

* The participants' names are pseudonyms.

3.3. Data collection instruments

3.3.1. Student questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the current study comprised two parts: background information and readiness for learner autonomy. The first part included seven questions to gather the participants' demographic information such as age, gender, and foreign languages known.

The second part consisted of a slightly modified version[†] of Learner Autonomy Readiness Questionnaire (LARQ) which was adapted and translated into Turkish by

[†] Slight modifications in the questionnaire administrated in the present study involved replacing the word English (İngilizce in Turkish) with the word French (Fransızca in Turkish) and rephrasing the instructions in the section of responsibilities. In the present study, the students were asked to answer each item twice, first by considering their teachers' responsibilities and then their own responsibilities. Furthermore, one item (i.e., practice using English with friends) in the section of activities was omitted as during the semester the students had been asked to complete a

Karabıyık (2008) from a questionnaire developed by Chan et al. (2002) and Oxford's (1990) Language Learning Strategy Inventory. The Turkish version of the LARQ administrated in the present study comprised five sections: responsibilities, abilities, strategies, motivation, activities. In the section of responsibilities, the students were asked to answer to what extent their teachers and themselves are responsible for French lessons, for 13 items involving a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*completely*). In the section of abilities, the students were asked to answer the question "If you are asked to do, how good do you think you would be at..." for 11 items on a Likert scale of 1 (*very poor*) to 5 (*very good*). In the section of strategies, there were eight items on a Likert scale of 1 (*never or almost never*) to 5 (*always or almost always*) for certain metacognitive strategies considered most relevant to learner autonomy (e.g., "I try to find as many ways as I can use my French"). In the section of motivation, the students were asked to what extent they felt motivated to learn French on a Likert-type item having a scale of 1 (*not at all motivated*) to 5 (*highly motivated*). In the section of activities, the students were asked to answer how often they do different activities inside and outside the class for 19 items on a Likert scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*frequently*).

As seen in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha values for the scales of the LARQ administrated in the present study ranged from .75 to .85, which indicated a satisfactory or high internal consistency.

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha values for the scales of the LARQ

Scales	Item number	Cronbach's alpha ($N = 57$)
Teachers' responsibilities	13	.75
Students' responsibilities	13	.75
Decision-making abilities	11	.83
The use of metacognitive strategies	8	.85
Autonomous language learning activities	19	.82

3.3.2. Learning diaries

The students who agreed to participate in the qualitative stage of the study were asked to write about their French learning process on a weekly basis. To ensure that the students used a certain framework, a sheet with five guiding questions (in French and in Turkish) was delivered to the students each week. Its digital form was sent to the students by email. In these learning diary sheets, with guiding questions (e.g., My activities: What do I to achieve my objectives? What were positive and negative aspects during my work?), they were asked to outline their goals and objectives for learning French, the actions taken for achieving these goals, and the positive and negative aspects of learning process.

3.4. Procedures

video project which required them to practice French with their classmates. There was a concern that their responses might not reflect the students' actual habits.

The researcher obtained institutional research permission and followed the ethical principles set by The Inter-University Council for Higher Education in Turkey throughout the research. As the researcher was also the teacher in French classes, further caution was taken to ensure that her teacher role would not cause the students to worry or force them to participate in the research. Before the data collection, the researcher announced the study's purpose and explained the benefits of the study and the data collection process in the French classes by emphasizing that participation was voluntary, that the participants could withdraw from the research at any stage, and that their participation or their responses would not influence their grades. In addition, the students who volunteered to participate in the qualitative data collection process were asked to sign a consent form. The researcher also informed the other instructors of French in the department about the research and the data collection procedures.

The questionnaire was implemented in the 6th week of the 2nd semester of the academic year in all classes at the same time during a lesson under the supervision of an instructor of French. During the administration of the paper-and-pencil questionnaire which took around 35 minutes, the researcher visited all classes to give explanations if needed or to answer possible questions.

The qualitative data were collected during a 5-week period from the 7th week to the 12th week of the 2nd semester, while the students were studying at the B1, *independent user* level (Council of Europe, 2005). As learners at the B1 level are expected to become more autonomous than those at the A1 and A2 levels, the data collection was organized when the students were at this level. Learning diaries were planned to be collected once a week for five weeks. However, the students submitted their diaries to the researcher twice on average (ranging from one to four) during this period. One student handed over her diaries in digital form by email and the others presented them in paper form. To motivate the students to write diaries, they were given the chance to write in Turkish or French. There might be a question whether the students were able to express themselves well in French. However, the diaries in French, written only by two students, showed that they were clear and had richer content than several diaries written in Turkish.

3.5. Data analysis

3.5.1. Quantitative data analysis

The data obtained through the LARQ were analyzed quantitatively through SPSS 22 by using descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were used as a measure of central tendency and variability for the data of the Likert scales. Regarding motivation, which yielded the ordinal data through one particular 5-point Likert-type item, the responses' frequencies and percentages were calculated.

As inferential statistics, a paired t-test was conducted to compare the means on the students' perceptions of teachers' and students' responsibilities. The significance level was set at $p < .05$. One-way ANOVA tests were used to compare the means of each

scale according to the motivation level by verifying the data met the assumption of homogeneity of variances through Levene's test. As five one-way ANOVA tests were conducted, the Bonferroni adjustment formula was applied by dividing the p value of .05 by the number of tests. Pearson's product-moment correlations between the scores of the scales were also computed. Before running parametric tests, the data were assessed for normality. The results of a one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated the normal distribution for each variable. Furthermore, it was assessed that normality has not been violated by observing box plot outputs as well as histograms.

3.5.2. Qualitative data analysis

The data obtained from the diaries were analyzed through a qualitative data analysis software, HyperResearch 4.0.2. Diary entries (31 entries) were read and all deemed appropriate for the analysis, except a couple of sentences in a diary in which a student excused for have written briefly. They were transferred to the HyperResearch software. As the data of each student were coded, a code list was created and revised during coding process. The codes emerging from the data were assigned to categories and subcategories according to the second and third research questions (i.e., motivation and autonomous language learning activities) and to the LMSS proposed by Dörnyei (2009). For example, while the codes concerning learning activities were assigned as activities, the codes related to the students' future self-images were assigned to motivation.

To ensure the reliability of the coding, six months later the researcher recoded 44.7% of the data (the data of four students who have different profiles in terms of motivation). Intrarater reliability (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Philp, 2003, as cited in de Burgh-Hirabe, 2019) was calculated as 87.9%. In general, the discrepancies originated from comments which could be assigned to two different codes of the same subcategory. For instance, in the second coding, the researcher assigned the codes *to communicate with French people and to become fluent in an L2* to the following sentence "I would like to talk with French people like a native speaker" [Aylin] instead of the initial coding which was only *to become fluent in an L2*. These codes belong to the same subcategory (the ideal L2 self) but the second coding was more detailed about the participant's ideal L2 self. Thus, this discrepancy was resolved by the accepting the second code. The researcher also revisited all the data and coding to ensure that the final coding would be more informative, accurate and coherent. However, the resolution of the discrepancies made only minor changes concerning the same subcategory.

4. Results

4.1. The results of the quantitative data analysis

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the overall scores and the scores according to the motivation level for each scale of the LARQ: teachers' responsibilities,

students' responsibilities, decision-making abilities, the use of metacognitive strategies, and their autonomous language learning activities.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the LARQ scales according to the motivation levels

Scales	Item number	Motivation levels*						Overall	
		Low $n = 35$		Medium $n = 10$		High $n = 12$		N = 57	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teachers' responsibilities	13	3.43	0.55	3.80	0.37	3.53	0.46	3.52	0.51
Students' responsibilities	13	3.16	0.54	3.27	0.50	3.31	0.48	3.21	0.52
Decision-making abilities	11	3.21	0.52	3.45	0.80	3.62	0.59	3.34	0.60
Metacognitive strategies	8	3.02	0.73	3.45	0.60	3.92	0.45	3.29	0.75
Autonomous language learning activities	19	2.01	0.38	2.32	0.46	2.28	0.48	2.12	0.43

*To compare the means of the scales according to the motivation level, because of small numbers of the participants at the extreme points, the number of responses given for motivation was reduced to three categories by combining the responses for 1 (*not at all motivated*) and 2 (*slightly motivated*) as well as the answers for 4 (*well-motivated*) and 5 (*highly motivated*). The answers given for 3 (*motivated*) were kept as they were.

As presented in Table 3, the overall mean of teachers' responsibilities ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.51$) was the highest mean among overall average scores. Furthermore, it was found that the overall mean of teachers' responsibilities was significantly higher than the overall mean of the students' responsibilities ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.52$), $t(56) = 3.4$, $p = .001$. However, the differences among the means of the groups with different motivation levels, which fell in the range of 3.16 to 3.80 on the 5-point scale, were not statistically significant as determined by one-way ANOVA either for the responsibilities of teachers ($F(2,54) = 2.09$, $p = .134$) or students ($F(2,54) = 0.441$, $p = .646$). Thus, the results suggest that regardless of the motivation level the students seemed to give some or main responsibilities both to teachers and themselves, but they appeared to perceive teachers as more responsible for their language learning. The majority of students perceived teachers to be mainly or completely responsible in deciding what they learn next ($f = 48$, 84.2%), choosing the material ($f = 46$, 80.7%) or the activities ($f = 44$, 77.2%) for French lessons, and evaluating learning ($f = 42$, 73.7%).

Regarding the students' perceptions of abilities, the respondents tended to rate their decision-making abilities ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.60$) at the moderate level on the 5-point scale. The differences among the means of the groups having different motivation levels were not statistically significant as determined one-way ANOVA ($F(2,54) = 2.41$, $p = .099$). The areas in which more than half of the students ($f = 31$, 54.4%) reported to be "good" or "very good" were choosing learning activities outside the classroom and identifying their weaknesses. However, about one third of the students indicated that they perceived to be "poor" or "very poor" in choosing learning materials outside ($f = 16$, 28.1%) or inside the classroom ($f = 15$, 26.3%).

As for the use of metacognitive strategies, the students' overall mean was ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.75$) at the medium level, according to the criterion established by Oxford (1990) for evaluating the use of strategies: high (3.5 to 5), medium (2.5 to 3.4), low (2.4 or lower). However, the mean of the group with the high level of motivation ($M = 3.92$,

$SD = 0.45$) indicated a high use of metacognitive strategies. The difference among the means of the groups with different motivation levels was also found statistically significant by using one-way ANOVA test ($F(2, 54) = 8.539, p = .001$). Post hoc tests indicated that the use of metacognitive strategies of the participants with the high level of motivation was significantly more frequent than those with the low level of motivation ($t(45) = -3.972, p = .000$). The most common strategies reported to use generally or always were related to monitoring and paying attention such as paying attention when someone is speaking French ($f = 45, 78.9\%$), thinking about their progress in learning French ($f = 34, 59.6\%$). However, around half of the students responded that they never or generally not create opportunities to read in French ($f = 31, 54.4\%$) or plan their schedule to study French ($f = 26, 45.6\%$).

As displayed in Table 3, one of the most striking results is the low level of motivation reported by a considerable number of the participants ($f = 35, 61.4\%$) on a 5-point Likert-type item. To put it more clearly, the group with the low level was comprised of the students who choose the answers not motivated at all ($f = 8, 14.0\%$) or slightly motivated ($f = 27, 47.4\%$). On the other hand, 10 students (17.5%) responded motivated and were considered to be at the medium level of motivation. Finally, only 12 students, who formed the group with the high level of motivation, categorized themselves as well-motivated ($f = 8, 14.0\%$) or highly motivated ($f = 4, 7.0\%$). It should be noted that among 14 students, who volunteered to write diaries, four felt highly motivated or well-motivated, seven considered themselves to be motivated, and three perceived themselves as not motivated or slightly motivated.

Concerning the component of autonomous language learning activities, which was a 4-point Likert scale, the overall mean score ($M = 2.2, SD = 0.43$) indicated that in general the students' engagement in the activities was not frequent. The comparison of the means of the groups according to three motivation levels by using one-way ANOVA test did not reveal a statistically significant difference ($F(2, 56) = 3.180, p = .049$) at the significance level set by using the Bonferroni adjustment formula ($.05/5 = .01$). The most common activities practiced sometimes or frequently by a majority of the students were listening to songs ($f = 57, 100\%$), noting down new words ($f = 46, 80.7\%$), watching movies ($f = 44, 72.2\%$), and asking the questions to the teacher ($f = 43, 75.4\%$).

Finally, the results of Pearson product-moment correlations of the scores obtained from each scale are also presented in Table 4 to observe whether and to what extent the scores of the scales are correlated.

Table 4. Pearson r correlations among the scales of the LARQ

Scales	A	B	C	D	E
Teachers' responsibilities (A)	1.00				
Students responsibilities (B)	.138	1.00			
Decision-making abilities (C)	-.154	.304*	1.00		
Metacognitive strategies (D)	.125	.168	.434**	1.00	
Autonomous language learning activities (E)	.073	-.182	.471**	.596**	1.00

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

As presented in Table 4, decision-making abilities, metacognitive strategies and language learning activities were significantly correlated with each other. The r values in the range of .434 to .596 indicate moderate positive relationships between these variables. Thus, it can be stated in general that the participants who felt more capable of abilities used metacognitive strategies and engaged in the activities more frequently. However, regarding the responsibilities, there was only a weak positive correlation between the perceptions of students' responsibilities and decision-making abilities, $r(57) = 0.30$, $p = .05$. The absence of any other significant correlation between responsibilities and other scales supports that the participants perceived teachers as more responsible in their language learning regardless of their decision-making abilities, use of metacognitive strategies, and autonomous language learning activities.

4.2. The results of the qualitative data analysis

4.2.1. Students' motivation

The results come from the qualitative data are presented below under the three main categories: the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience.

The ideal L2 self. Regarding the ideal L2 self, the majority of the students (9) imagined themselves working in a language-related profession in the future. It seems that for many students, knowledge of French, in addition to skills in other foreign languages, was important and would be advantageous when looking for a job. For example, Figen wrote "I would like to perfect my French because I would like to become a touristic guide after I graduate. When I graduate, I will be knowing four languages. I can find a good job". Another student who did not clearly articulate a goal for learning French also wished to use the language in her profession by commenting "The language learnt should be used. For me, after I graduate and start to work, the language known will be a plus. That's why I think [my goal] is to use the language in my work [Handan]".

The findings also revealed that some students imagined themselves becoming fluent in French (6), traveling, studying or working in a francophone country (5), communicating with foreign or French people in French (3), reading French books in the original language (3), using French in daily life (3), watching French movies in the original language and without subtitles (2), and improving their French skills abroad

(1). To illustrate, Berfu stated “I would like to live and work in a place where French is spoken” and added “I would like to communicate with people, read and understand in this language”. Another student (who seemed to develop a strong ideal L2 self) expressed her goals in the following quote:

I want to meet a new culture by learning French. I would like to talk with French people like a native speaker. I would like to walk around without any problem in France. I do not want to need anyone who will correct my mistakes. I want to watch French movies without subtitles. I want to read the books of my favorite authors... in French, not in Turkish [Aylin].

The ought-to L2 self. About one third of the students (5) had the ought-to L2 self as they stated that one of their main motives to study French was to pass the class. In general, their ideal L2 self was also related to their professional aspirations as four of them stated that they wanted to work in a language-related area. For example, Serpil thought “I choose this department to learn languages rather than to study the literature. I would like to learn the language as much as I can and I want to become translator/interpreter...For now, my goal is to pass the class.” Berna wrote “My first goal is to pass the preparatory class. Except that, as my professional dreams are always related to languages, learning French is really important for me”.

The L2 learning experience. The codes assigned to this category were subcategorized into the following subthemes: self-perceptions, comments about learning activities or materials, intrinsic motivation, and setting a learning objective.

The qualitative data provided information about the self-perceptions of all students through the following codes: having difficulties in studying regularly or efficiently (7), having difficulties in achieving one’s objectives (7), having a sense of accomplishment (7), having difficulties in a language skill (6), not demonstrating effort to engage in activities or to study (6), need to work harder (4), having low motivation (2), and displaying self-efficacy (2).

The findings concerning self-perceptions suggest that several students had problems in maintaining their motivation as many of them stated that they could not study regularly or efficiently, and found it very difficult to achieve their goals (e.g., “I need to study harder but I cannot concentrate. Sometimes when I study my lesson, I get bored too much” [Deniz], or “I try to improve my French through the school, television series and movies. I cannot study regularly” [Cansu]). The students explained the reason for their limited engagement in activities as follows: “I think the reason of this is the lack of motivation [Filiz]”; “I think I do not take my responsibilities sufficiently [Handan]”. The students also mentioned difficulties related to a specific language skill. The problems were related to vocabulary (3), grammar (3), listening (2), speaking (2), reading (1), and pronunciation (1).

The concepts which may influence students’ motivation positively, such as *sense of accomplishment* and *self-efficacy* also emerged from the data. However, one of them (coded as a sense of accomplishment) was actually illustrating the students’ limited engagement in learning French as Serpil commented: “I am not very good but I think

I am better in French than many students in the class... The difference between these students is that they really study. If I studied, I would be better but I can't study".

Another subtheme was *comments about activities and materials* through the following codes: finding enjoyable or satisfying activities (9), not finding enjoyable or satisfying activities (5), comments about the difficulty of activities or materials (3). Concerning enjoyable or satisfying activities, Deniz mentioned note taking, while Funda referred to listening to songs: "I listened to songs and translated them. I was amused and I have learned new words". However, regarding activities which were not found satisfying, the same student wrote "I just work on books. It would be better if I could rather work on activities. To be exposed to French may develop my French... I wish I spoke better. But I only work on grammar".

Concerning intrinsic motivation, four students seemed to have this quality. For example, Aylin wrote "First of all, I love learning languages". She also had intrinsic motivation for accomplishment as she explained the reason why she took a multiple-choice test: "I wanted to see different and more difficult questions". Canan also seemed to have intrinsic motivation as she stated: "I love learning languages, but I have not thought yet about what I would like to do".

Finally, the data revealed specific learning objectives set during the period of data collection. These objectives concerned specific actions the students intended to take and showed to what extent the students maintain their motivation to achieve their goals. Thus, the objectives can be related to the component of L2 learning experience of the LMSS. The findings showed that during the period the students kept diaries, only four of them set learning objectives to learn new words (2), keep a diary in French (1), take a multiple choice French test (1), read short stories (1) and complete a short film project (1).

4.2.2. *Students' autonomous learning activities*

From the analysis of the qualitative data, 18 learning activities emerged; however, the activities practiced by most of the students were not numerous. *Reviewing or studying French through their notebooks, the course books and the course materials* was an activity carried out by the majority of the students (11). Taking notes (8) and working on vocabulary (8) were also common activities among many students.

Taking a multiple-choice test (6), working on grammar (6), listening to songs (4) and watching television series or movies (3) were other activities cited by several students. To illustrate, Canan stated: "I watch movies, I work on vocabulary and I take multiple choice tests", and Defne said: "I memorize words and work on grammar". Moreover, these activities were expressed also by the students who mentioned a limited number of activities. For example, Canan had previously wrote in her diary: "I do not many things. I only watch movies". Likewise, Emre wrote "To achieve my goal, besides the courses, I listen to music".

The data revealed other activities concerning specific skills such as reading in French (2), practicing speaking (2), doing listening tasks (1), and doing writing tasks

(1). The findings also revealed activities not listed in the questionnaire, such as listening to audio books (1), teaching someone French (1), watching interviews (1), and watching instructive videos (1). However, these activities were only mentioned by two students who engaged in more diverse activities than the others.

5. Discussion

As for the students' perceptions relevant to learner autonomy, one of the major findings is that the participants perceived teachers as more responsible for their language learning, in particular in areas related to course planning, course management, and evaluation, in line with several studies (e.g., Chan et al., 2002; Daflizar, 2017; Farahani, 2014; Koçak, 2003; Nasöz, 2015; Üstünoğlu, 2009). Furthermore, the findings suggesting that their perceptions of responsibility were not related to their motivation level are consistent with those of Gamble et al.'s (2018) and Okay and Balçıkanlı's (2017) studies. However, in contrast to the findings of several studies concerning EFL university students in Turkey (e.g., Koçak, 2003; Nasöz, 2015; Üstünoğlu, 2009) the results indicate low motivation experienced by many participants. Özçelik (2015) pointed out that many students in French programs in Turkey choose to study French because they had not been admitted to English departments (which offer more employment opportunities to graduates) in the university entrance exam. This might also be true for some participants of the present research. Busse's (2017) study, conducted in four European countries to compare attitudes toward English and languages other than English, suggested that young learners (14-18 ages) had more favorable attitudes toward English, which has become a global language. Thus, the students in the present study also may attribute considerable importance to English, which also seems important for their ideal L2 selves as most of the students would like to work in language-related jobs.

The qualitative data showed that, in general, many students considered French a plus and believed that a good knowledge of French, besides English (of which the students appeared to have a good knowledge), would help them to find a desirable job (e.g., tourist guide, translator/interpreter). This means that they had the internalized instrumental motive which is considered part of the ideal L2 selves (Dörnyei, 2009). Furthermore, a considerable number of participants expressed the desire to become fluent in French and to travel, study or work in a francophone country. Hence, it can be stated that integrative motives were also important for some students. This echoes the findings of Bektaş-Çetinkaya and Oruç (2010) who found that both instrumental and integrative motives were part of ideal selves of Turkish learners who study English at university. Thus, most of the students seemed to be initially motivated to learn French due to primarily professional aspirations and partly integrative motives. However, many students appeared to have difficulties maintaining their motivation during the learning process. Although this problem may also be due to other contextual factors which are not investigated in this study, it may be also partly associated with a lack of intrinsic motivation observed among many participants. Indeed, intrinsic motivation, which could be influenced by the context as well, was

found to be the strongest determinant of learners' confidence and motivation in a study carried out with a sample of EFL learners (Pae, 2008), and it is also closely related to learner autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The study by de Burgh-Hirabe (2019) showed that the learners of Japanese as a foreign language who had intrinsic motivation and integrativeness also engaged in out-class-of activities and they exhibited characteristics of autonomous learners. In the present study, four of 10 codings under the subcategory of intrinsic motivation were in the data gathered from Aylin who had the highest overall grade, a high perceived level of motivation, and diverse autonomous language learning activities. It should also be noted that she was the only participant who seemed to have three major kinds of intrinsic motivation (i.e., knowledge, accomplishment, stimulation) defined by Noels, Pelletier, Clément, and Vallerand (2000). Thus, the findings of the present study also highlight the important role of intrinsic motivation in autonomous behaviors.

The findings indicating the extensive use of metacognitive strategies among highly motivated students also revealed a considerable variation among the participants. Furthermore, although most of the students' engagement in learning activities was limited, highly motivated students appeared to engage in various autonomous activities (e.g., teaching the language to someone else, listening to audio books, watching interviews and instructive videos, using websites to practice with native speakers). This result is supported by studies suggesting a relationship between motivation and autonomous learning behaviors (Bekleyen & Selimoğlu, 2016; Oxford, 2003). Another result is that many students seemed to prefer receptive activities (e.g., listening to songs/audiobooks and watching movies/interviews, reviewing the course book, their notebooks, course materials), similarly to a study by Dalifzar (2017). Receptive activities might be preferable to productive ones because they may be considered less challenging but more useful or accessible in the context of foreign language learning, where learners do not have diverse opportunities to practice languages outside the classroom. In addition, among receptive activities, it seems that the students preferred more entertaining activities such as listening to songs and watching movies over listening to the radio or reading newspapers in French, as Dede (2017) found similar results with Turkish learners of English.

To summarize, the results indicate a lack of learner autonomy among many participants according to the definition of autonomy by Holec (1979) that focused on the learner's ability to control of his/her own learning (see Illés, 2012 for the discussion about the suitability of this definition, in particular in English as a lingua franca contexts). This could be partly due to previous learning experiences in high school. Karabıyık's (2008) study revealed that the extent of exposure to autonomous activities in the high schools in which learners of EFL had studied in Turkey influenced their subsequent perceptions and behaviors related to learner autonomy. This might also be partly attributed to a lack of teacher autonomy felt among language instructors, as found in some recent studies conducted at Turkish universities. For instance, the studies of Dede (2017) and Üstünoğlu (2009) highlighted that EFL instructors felt a lack of freedom in preparatory language

programs. In a study by Doğan and Mirici (2017), 96 EFL instructors from nine public universities attributed their failure to promote learner autonomy mainly to curriculum and time constraints. Although there is no empirical study on the autonomy of the instructors of French in Turkey to the knowledge of the author, it is possible that they also feel the lack of freedom and the constraints in promoting learner autonomy due to the importance attributed to formal assessments and exams in particular in the preparatory language programs offered by the departments or schools of foreign languages at Turkish universities. Since the formal evaluations and exams may be perceived as very important by both the students and the instructors, the instructors feel constrained to apply the same fixed syllabus to all classes to make sure all students have equal opportunities to succeed in the program. Thus, these conditions may cause the instructors to maintain their traditional roles in teaching and also contribute to the decrease of intrinsic motivation among the students. This was also showed in the study conducted by Noels (2001) who noted that “the more controlling the teacher was perceived to be, the less the students felt they were autonomous agents in the learning process, and the lower was students’ intrinsic motivation” (p. 107).

6. Pedagogical implications

Based on the results, some pedagogical implications can be drawn. To foster learner autonomy, in particular in the contexts where the students seem to be dependent on their teachers, it is important to gradually decrease students’ dependence by giving them more responsibilities, perhaps by starting from areas in which they feel more competent (e.g., identifying weaknesses, choosing activities). It is also essential to guide the students in areas where they appeared to have most difficulties such as choosing materials. As in general the participants had a moderate use of metacognitive strategies and some of them appeared to have difficulties in time-management or not seek opportunities for using the target language which are also necessary for autonomous behavior (Kormos & Csizér, 2014), learner training on time management, self-regulated strategies and learning opportunities can also be recommended in similar contexts.

The findings related to motivation can also be relevant to other foreign language contexts. It is critical to stimulate interest and increase motivation among students to promote autonomous learner behaviors and effective language learning. The widespread use of the Internet offers rich opportunities for language learning and teaching, and enables students and teachers to use learning approaches, such as technology-enhanced project-based learning, which permit students to have freedom of choice and to work collaboratively in authentic situations. Computer-assisted language learning projects are suggested also because they create conditions for the development of autonomy in terms of both learning and language use (Illés, 2012). There is evidence that students completing projects and sharing them over the Internet (e.g., the creation of a web page, a blog, or a digital video) had positive effects on learner autonomy and motivation (e.g., Bhattacharya & Chauhan, 2010; Hafner &

Miller, 2011; Olivier, 2007). Since students think that their work will be viewed by a wide Internet audience, they probably put more effort into their work.

7. Conclusions

The present study aimed to investigate the extent to which learners of French at a university in Turkey were autonomous by exploring their perceptions relevant to learner autonomy, motivation, and autonomous language learning activities. The study revealed that the students perceived teachers as more responsible than themselves for their learning French. Furthermore, in general the participants' decision-making abilities and use of metacognitive strategies were moderate level and they engaged in limited autonomous language learning activities. Moreover, most of the students were not sufficiently motivated and had difficulties in maintaining their motivation during learning progress. Thus, the results suggest that the majority of the learners of French studying at a university in Turkey did not appear to be highly autonomous learners.

The validity of the findings was enhanced by using both qualitative data which was collected in different points in time and a valid and reliable questionnaire covering students' perceptions, motivation, activities related to learner autonomy. However, the results of the study should be interpreted with caution due to its inherent limitations. First, it is a small-scale study in which contextual factors would limit its generalizability. Furthermore, the qualitative data were limited to a 5-week period and to the perceptions that the participants were willing to express or found important to write about in their learning diaries. Thus, the quality and quantity of the data varied greatly due to learner characteristics. Moreover, it was not possible to include an approximately equal number of participants in terms of gender as the majority of the students in the French preparatory classes were women and only one man volunteered to participate in the qualitative data collection.

Future research may need to examine learner autonomy among learners of French as a foreign language with larger samples in different settings. Researchers may investigate cultural and contextual factors influencing students' perceptions of responsibilities. Further studies may involve all stakeholders in order to promote both learner and teacher autonomy. Motivation among learners of French needs to be examined further detail by comparing their motivation with that of learners of other foreign languages and by employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches to establish whether low motivation concerns learners of French in other contexts as well. The current study also supports the potential use of learning diaries which could permit students to reflect on their learning and teachers and researchers to gain insight into students' motivation, learning progress and autonomous learning activities. In the present study, Dörnyei's LMSS (2009) seems to offer a comprehensive and useful framework for analyzing learner diaries to investigate L2 motivation. However, more studies are needed to confirm its usefulness in other contexts. Research focusing on motivation in relation to learner autonomy among

foreign language learners and intervention studies could contribute to curriculum development and the promotion of learner autonomy in Turkey and beyond.

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