Abstract

Language teaching is a widespread issue for the countries to sort out in the challenging world. The aim of the study is to explore the priorities, preferences, habits, life styles, choices, etc. of Generation Y (Millennial students), who currently study in language preparatory schools. The paper also aims to take into consideration learner priorities in curriculum designing process. The questionnaire was administered to 401 voluntarily participated respondents in this study and the results were analysed through SPSS 20 program. This study revealed the strategies, methods, and goals of preparatory students in foreign language learning. Outcomes can be useful to administration, teacher, and curriculum designers, be useful in establishing the link between learner priorities-centred and university-centred curriculum. As a consequence, it is important to use learner priorities in curriculum design process to empower students to learn and use the language in practice, maintain high level of motivation, and accelerate learning process.

Keywords: Generation Y, Learner autonomy, language preparatory schools

Introduction

Teaching English as a second or foreign language has become an important specialized field of study at universities and colleges in the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and many other countries. In the USA alone, there are more than 210 institutions of higher education, which offer BA, MA, PhD, and certificate programs in this field. Turkey or the countries like Turkey have difficulties teaching a foreign language in primary and secondary schools. Students are learning a language 2-3 hours per week. They are studying around 750 hours in language preparatory schools but still having problems to pass the proficiency exam.

In this study, I am approaching to this problem from different perspectives to enhance some solutions from student perspectives. A lot of researches have been done in language learning but many of them related to nursery, primary, and secondary. I focus on university language learners who are also called Generation Y, which is also known as Generation 2000 (Donnison, 2009).

They are characterized as having an inclination towards digital media and to establish associations. Core values include optimism and civic duty, confidence and achievement. Donnison (2009) suggests that employers should regulate their expectations and work procedures to take account of the millennial tendency to want immediate outcomes, have lack of attention and have a predisposition towards boredom. I aim at this study to canalize and empower students' core values into language learning process. In language schools, there different type of students, who studied prep course or language before university language school, can give us some implications on teaching system, learning strategies, methods, and learning styles. This study will give some productive outcomes from students' perspective about adult language education. These findings can accelerate language-learning process in language learning schools.

Literature Review

Since the 1990s when the word "autonomy" entered the vocabulary of language research, it has taken on a growing importance. The concept implies the autonomy of students closely linked to the development of information and communications technology (ICT) and the role of technology in education: distance learning, e-learning, language centres and their multimedia tools. Many books have been written about learners' autonomy and about the role of the teacher who helps the learner to become more autonomous and to be more responsible for his or her language learning.

First among these is self-knowledge--knowing what one needs to learn and why. This knowledge provides the basis for the exercise of the following skills, considered key to self-directed or autonomous learning (Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1981, 1989):

1. Choosing instructional materials;
2. Setting learning objectives and prioritizing them;
3. Determining when and how long to work on each objective;
4. Assessing progress and achievements;
5. Evaluating the learning programme.

The extent to which a learner will acquire the above skills and knowledge depends on a host of factors. One of these is the learner's and the teacher's views of and actions in regard to their relationship and roles.

Follow the learning-to-learn approach, scholars such as Dickinson (1987), Ellis and Sinclair (1989), Little (1990),
Wenden (1991), Broady and Kenning (1996) have enriched our understanding of the concept of learner autonomy. We learn from these and other scholars that promoting learner autonomy is a matter of helping learners to:

- develop a capacity for critical thinking, decision making, and independent action;
- discover their learning potential, in addition to merely gathering knowledge about the learning process;
- take responsibility for learning and for using appropriate strategies to achieve their general and specific objectives;
- face heavy psychological demands that require learners to confront their weaknesses and failures;
- develop self-control and self-discipline, which lead to self-esteem and self-confidence;
- give up total dependence on the teacher and the educational system, and move beyond a mere response to instruction; and
- understand that autonomy is a complex process of interacting with one's self, the teacher, the task, and the educational environment.

While these scholars tell us what learner autonomy actually is, they also tell us what it is not:

- Autonomy is not independence, that is, learners have to learn to work cooperatively with their teachers, peers, and the educational system;
- Autonomy is not context-free, that is, the extent to which it can be practiced depends on factors such as learners' personality and motivation, their language learning needs and wants, and the educational environment within which learning takes place; and
- Autonomy is not a steady state achieved by learners, that is, autonomous learners are likely to be autonomous in one situation, but not necessarily in another, and they may very well choose to abdicate their own autonomy and look for teacher direction at certain stages in their learning.

According to Ellis and Sinclair (1989, p. 10), teachers can play an instrumental role in learner training by:

- negotiating with learners about course content and methodology, if appropriate;
- sharing with learners, in a way that is accessible to them, the kind of information about language and language learning that teachers have but that is not always passed on to learners;
- encouraging discussion in the classroom about language and language learning;
- helping learners become aware of the wide range of alternative strategies available to them for language learning;
- creating a learning environment where learners feel they can experiment with their language learning;
- allowing learners to form their own views about language learning, and respecting their points of view;
- counseling and giving guidance to individual learners when possible.

Discussions of learner autonomy often begin with the definition of autonomous learners by Holec and Council of Europe (1981) with its emphasis on participation, control and evaluation. According to this definition an autonomous learner holds responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of the learning including:

- determining the objectives;
- defining the contents and the progressions;
- selecting methods and techniques to be used;
- monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.); and
- evaluating what has been acquired (Holec and Council of Europe, 1981).

This definition may represent a goal towards which teachers and learners can work, but it provides very little help in relation to the kinds of processes that achieve these goals. There is, as Little (2005) points out, an important distinction to be made between learner autonomy and self-directed instruction. Learner autonomy touches on notions of the "self" and the development of dispositions and as such cannot really be reduced to a catalogue of learnable skills. This is one reason why the assumption that the proliferation of technology will lead automatically to the development of autonomous learners is erroneous.

The clear message that emerges from several contemporary researchers emphasizes the importance of having autonomous teachers leading the learner-centred processes that develop autonomy in students. It is therefore much more useful to think not of autonomy per se, but rather the process of autonomisation and the role that technology can play in this. Benson (2007), Nunan (1997) and Reinders (2010) place emphasis on autonomy as a process and conceptualize a number of distinct phases that begin with awareness rising.

**Objectives:**

1. To find out the perspectives of students who studied English or know more than one language on language learning
2. To reveal the students, who indicate that language is important for their career, opinions about language learning process
**Hypothesis:**

1. Is there a relationship between the students who studied prep course and know more than one language?

2. Is there a relationship between two groups on language learning goals, strategies, and methods?

**Methodology**

**Sample**

The research sample consisted of 401 first year students enrolled in a yearlong mandatory English language preparatory school in Turkey. Students were selected at random among voluntary students and their ages range from 18 to 22.

**Procedure**

The questionnaire was originally developed for this study in order to accelerate learning process of language in university preparatory schools. This study was applied in Turkish language in order for students to understand the questions easily and get proper responds from them. I used SPSS packet program to analyse the data to find reliability, correlation, significant relationship, and etc.

**Results**

Reliability Statistics of this study was found as (Chronbach's α = .901). One-way Anova tests was used and significant relationship was found with [F(3,501)=137.217; p<0.001] between students who study English and knew more one language before coming to the language school. (Chi Square = 4.470; p=0.001) and Spearman's r=0.16; p<0.001 showed that there was a significant correlation between the students who studied prep course and knew more than one language. In terms of nonparametric tests, significant results were found, Kruskall Wallis tests (p<0.001) on learning English such as students want to learn language studying on themes they have chosen, and reading newspaper every day to improve their vocabulary. The students who know more than one language use the methods, Kruskal Wallis Tests (p<0.001), such as working with classmate more than alone, and also found, Kruskall Wallis test (P<0.001) that they like using library and library environment to work with friends.

**Conclusion**

In the light of findings, the following conclusions can be drawn that adults are giving us some strategies to use in teaching and curriculum design process. I believe that if findings are used in this way language-learning process can be accelerated for the benefit of students, teachers, administration, and schools.

**Educational Implications:**

The findings indicate that outcomes go along with the theory of Generation Y characteristics. As I mentioned above, adults like selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.) and determining the objectives (Holec and Council of Europe, 1981), so, in terms of findings, students use library, spend time with classmate, working on the themes they like and library.

Stress free environment should be provided to students such as library with listening rooms and divers studying materials as hardcover or online to improve their knowledge and language competence. I also found that the students, who see the language crucially important, want to improve speaking skill and pronounce the words properly. And then, they want to get rid of anxiety.

This finding is compatible with Steven Chrashen's (1983) natural approach theory; if you get rid of anxiety, you increase self-esteem and produce utterances. However, they want to improve grammar knowledge and writing skill. And to do so, I am using my second language to learn a new language and compare the structure of another language. Depending on the conditions, I search foreign friends to communicate on target language.

**References**


