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The role of motivation in EFL students' perceptions of teacher/learner responsibilities and learner abilities

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Abstract

It is the aim of this study to investigate EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' perceptions of teacher/learner responsibilities and learner decision-making abilities at tertiary level - questioning whether motivation has a role in these perceptions. To this end, 144 students who studied in the preparatory school of a state university took part in this study. In a mixed-methods research design, two questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data on students' perceptions and motivation, whereas an open-ended questionnaire was used to gather qualitative data to gain a deeper insight about the perceptions of the students. To analyze the quantitative and qualitative data, statistical analyses via SPSS Version 18 and latent level analyses were performed, respectively. The results suggested that high-motivated students do rate themselves good/very good in their decision-making abilities than their low-motivated peers. However, motivation or ability was not found to be related to students' perceptions of teacher/learner responsibilities. Since high-motivated students were good/very good at their decision-making abilities, but not more willing to share responsibilities with their teachers, it could be argued that motivation or ability alone does not ensure learner autonomy.

Keywords: Learner autonomy, Motivation, Perception, Responsibility

Introduction

The contemporary view of education today takes students as '*agents*' of their own educational destiny (van Lier, 2008, p. 47); and teachers, in accordance, have begun to change their roles from teaching to facilitating, helping, coordinating, counselling, consulting, advising, knowing, resourcing and so on. One of the main reasons for this shift is the advent of the term 'autonomy' into the area of language teaching and learning. Although learner autonomy is commonly defined as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (Holec, 1981, p. 3), there have been many other definitions of learner autonomy since then. Little (1991), for instance, uses 'capacity' instead of 'ability' and states that "autonomy is essentially a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (p. 4). The famous 'Bergen definition', as Dam (1995) explains, associates autonomy with "readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes – which entails a capacity and

willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a socially responsible person” (p.1).

In addition to these definitions, there are also different types and versions of autonomy. For example, Benson (1997) is among the first to come up with different dimensions of autonomy, i.e. technical, political and psychological. Smith (2003), on the other hand, proposes strong and weak versions of autonomy – the former regarding autonomy as an innate concept, whereas the latter suggests that autonomy is learnable. Littlewood’s (1999) distinction of proactive and reactive autonomy indicates that the former helps learners make their own learning decisions, whereas the latter only enables learners to be flexible within the limitations already set by external agencies. According to Littlewood (1999), an autonomous person is the one who has independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions and this capacity depends on two main components: ability and willingness. Littlewood (1999) explains that willingness depends on having both the motivation and the confidence to take responsibility for the choices required (p. 428), whereas ability is more related to possessing both knowledge about the alternatives from which choices have to be made and the necessary skills for carrying out whatever choices seem most appropriate. Here it can be understood that motivation plays a crucial role explaining autonomy.

Regarding the question whether motivation plays a role in autonomy or autonomy plays a role in motivation, the first view suggests that autonomy is a prerequisite for motivation. Dickinson (1995) explains this view stating that “a measure of individual involvement in decision making in one’s own learning enhances motivation to learn” (p. 165). Defining autonomy as both an attitude towards learning and a capacity for independent learning, Dickinson (1995) proposes two theories of cognitive motivation: “attribution theory” and “self-determination theory”. Deci and Ryan’s (1985) *self-determination theory* differentiates between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by putting them on a continuum where learners choose to learn at their own will “in the absence of a reward contingency or control” (p. 34); or where they perform an activity simply for an external reward or to avoid punishment. According to Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier and Ryan (1991), autonomy, thus, is an essential component in intrinsic motivation. The second theory, *the attribution theory*, is concerned with learners’ perceptions of the reasons for success and failure in learning (as cited in Benson, 2001). These perceptions are important because, as Dickinson (1995) explains, they will influence their future performance because learners should also have control over learning success and failure in order to take responsibility for their own learning.

Autonomy is also present in Dörnyei and Csizér’s (1998) ‘ten commandments’ for motivating language learners:

1. Set a personal example with your own behavior.
2. Develop a good relationship with the learners.
3. Increase the learners’ linguistic self-confidence.
4. Make the language classes interesting.
5. Promote learner autonomy.
6. Personalise the learning process.
7. Increase the learners’ goal-orientedness.
8. Familiarize learners with the target culture.

9. Create a pleasant relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.
10. Present the tasks properly.

The fact that autonomy is regarded as a commandment of motivation also supports the assumption that autonomy comes before motivation. There are also a number of studies supporting this view. Garcia and Pintrich (1996), for instance, argue that intrinsic motivation is greater among children whose parents' and teachers' styles of interaction are autonomy-supportive. Their research also indicates that the college students who perceived their instructors to be supportive of autonomy reported greater levels of motivation at the end of the semester, even after the effects of pretest motivation were partialled out. Bao and Lam (2008) report in their study that children with freedom of choice reported higher motivation than their peers who had to follow the choices purportedly made by their mothers or teachers. They also came up with the result that "socio-emotional relatedness" was consistently a significant moderator of the effect of choice on children's motivation. That is to say, when the children had good relationships with the people who made the choices for them, their motivation was as strong as if they had made their own choices. In other words, freedom of choice does not matter when relatedness is high but it does matter when relatedness is low.

On the other hand, there are strong supporters of the opposite view – that is, motivation precedes autonomy. In their study conducted with Chinese students, Chan, Spratt and Humphreys (2002) found that higher motivation led to higher frequency of engagement in the autonomous practices outside the classroom. In other words, the motivated students seemed to do more than their peers who claimed that they were less motivated. However, the authors found it surprising that in the interviews, those motivated or 'well-motivated' students (even the language majors) admitted that they had little inclination to pursue their learning beyond the classroom. The researchers interpreted these results suggesting that students' attitudes are not always apparent in actual autonomous behavior. In another study, Fazey and Fazey (2001) also concluded that the students who had internalized motivation possessed attributes that would enable them to be self-determined in their studies. Üstünlüoğlu (2009) came up with similar results regarding Turkish students. She found that although most of the students in her study perceive themselves motivated, they neither seek challenges nor are willing to engage in activities out of the classroom. She also concluded in her study that motivated and high motivated students perceived themselves being more capable of activities which require autonomy than their unmotivated or low-motivated peers.

The hypothesis of this present study is that motivation is a prerequisite for autonomy, for "motivation may lead to autonomy or be a precondition for it [*and*] absence of motivation seemed to inhibit practice of learner autonomy" (Spratt, Humphreys & Chan, 2002, p.262). Fazey and Fazey (2001) also state that "the lack of motivation is clearly detrimental to autonomous behavior" (p. 347). Autonomy, thus, is accepted to grow out of the individual's acceptance of his or her own responsibility for learning (Chan, Spratt & Humphreys, 2002). Therefore, in this study, it is hypothesized that low-motivated students will be less eager to take responsibilities of their own learning and accordingly the research questions are as follows:

1. What are the EFL students' perceptions of their/their teachers' responsibilities?

2. What are the EFL students' perceptions of their abilities?
3. What is the relationship between EFL students' perceptions of their English teachers' responsibilities and their own and their decision-making abilities?
4. What is the relationship between EFL students' motivation levels and their perceptions of their/their teachers' responsibilities and their abilities?

Methods

Participants

The present study took place at a preparatory school of a state university in Turkey. The participants were chosen by convenient sampling procedure. A total number of 144 students (61 males, 83 females) took part in the quantitative data collection process of the study. Thirty-eight of them also took part in the qualitative data collection process. At the time of data collection, they had all been studying English for 26 weeks and they were all at CEFR B1+ and B2 levels.

Data collection tools

In this study, two quantitative data collection tools were used. The first one was the questionnaire devised by Chan, Spratt and Humphreys (2002), which consisted of 52 questions, divided into four main sections. It required the subjects to report on:

- (a) their perceptions of the English teacher's responsibilities and their own;
- (b) their perceptions of their decision-making abilities;
- (c) their motivation to study English; and
- (d) how often they carried out different autonomous activities in and outside class.

Section (a) asked students to rate both their and their teachers' responsibilities in the Likert-type options ranging from "not at all" to "completely". In her study, Üstünlüoğlu (2009) adapted this first section by removing the Likert-type options and only asking student to decide whose responsibility a certain action is: theirs, their teachers', or both. In the present study, this adapted version of Section (a) was administered in the data collection process. The questions in Section (b) were Likert-type and asked students how able they think they are about their decision-making abilities. These abilities were related to the in-and-out-of-class responsibilities asked in the Section (a) of the questionnaire to gather more information. Sections (c) and (d) were not used for data collection because Section (c) measured the motivation level of students only by asking them "*how motivated they think they are*". However, depending merely on students' own evaluations of their own motivation levels might not have been reasonable. Therefore, their motivation levels were measured separately by another data collection tool. The reason why Section (d) was also decided to be excluded from the data collection procedure was that it asked students "*how often they did inside and outside class activities*" in an academic year. Chan, Spratt, and Humphreys (2002) explain that these activities could be thought of as "manifestations of autonomous language learning behavior" (p. 5). However, it may be argued that when a teacher assigns students to '*read a grammar book*' (Item 26 in the original questionnaire) or '*do grammar exercises*' (Item 40 in the original questionnaire), these activities may become compulsory and

they would, thus, might no longer be real representations of autonomous behavior. Therefore, in this study, only the Section (a) – adapted by Üstünlüoğlu (2009) – and Section (b) of the original questionnaire by Chan, Spratt, and Humphreys (2002) were used to measure students' perceptions of: (a) the English teacher's responsibilities and their own; and (b) their decision-making abilities.

Secondly, to measure their motivation levels separately, a translated and an adapted version of Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery was used. Doğan (2009, İngilizce hazırlık okuyan öğrencilerin motivasyon düzeyleri, Unpublished MA Thesis) adapted and translated this battery into Turkish. The battery test was given to a group of students to validate the instrument. The statistical analysis indicated that the instrument proved to be used in Turkish context (Cronbach alpha: 0,87). This adapted and translated version consisted of four components:

1. *Motivational Intensity*. This measure consists of ten multiple choice items which are designed to measure the intensity of a student's motivation to learn English in terms of work done for classroom assignments, future plans to make use of and study the language, etc. A high score represents a student's self-report of a high degree of effort being spent in acquiring the language.
2. *Desire to Learn English*. Ten multiple choice items are included in this scale with a high score expressing a strong desire to learn English.
3. *Attitudes toward Learning English*. This is a ten item scale, higher score from which indicates a positive attitude toward learning English.
4. *Instrumental Orientation*. Students are presented with four items which stress the pragmatic or utilitarian value of learning English. A high score indicates that the student endorses instrumental reasons for learning English.

In addition to these two quantitative data collection tools, an open-ended questionnaire as a qualitative data collection tool was also administered to gain a deeper insight into the results of the aforementioned questionnaire. This open-ended questionnaire was devised by the researchers. To this aim, all the 13 items in the Section (a) of the questionnaire were turned into trinary choice statements asking them to state whose responsibility a certain task is (i.e. their, their teacher's, or both) and these statements ended with "because..." so that the participants could state the reasons why they believed so.

Data collection procedures

Two quantitative questionnaires were administered to 144 students on the same day in the same class hours, and it took about 15 min to complete both questionnaires. The qualitative data, on the other hand, were collected from 38 students two weeks after the collection of the quantitative data, and it took about 30 min to complete the open-ended questionnaire.

Data analysis procedures

This study has a mixed research design. Among other functions of mixed methods research, the 'complementarity' function was favored in this study. As Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) explain, complementarity function "seeks elaboration, enhancement, illustration, clarification of the results from one method with the results from the other method" (p.

259). To this end, after the quantitative data were collected through two questionnaires, the qualitative data were gathered via an open-ended questionnaire to gain a deeper insight about the constructs being investigated and thereby to ensure research validity.

Quantitative data were analyzed statistically by SPSS version 18. The test for normality examining standardized skewness and the Shapiro-Wilks test indicated the data were normally distributed. In order to answer the first two research questions, [(1) What are the students’ perceptions of their responsibilities? (2) What are the students’ perceptions of their abilities?], frequency analyses were performed. For the third and fourth research questions [(3) Is there a relationship between students’ perceptions of their English teachers’ responsibilities and their own and their decision-making abilities? (4) Is there a relationship between motivation levels and perceptions of students in terms of their responsibilities and abilities?], Pearson correlation and One-way ANOVA analyses were carried out.

Qualitative data, on the other hand, were subjected to latent level analysis, which Dörnyei (2007) describes as ‘a second-level, interpretive analysis of the underlying deeper meaning of the data’ (p. 246). This type of analysis includes coding, looking for patterns, making interpretations and building theories from the data.

Results

Perceptions of responsibilities

Table 1 below summarizes the results of students’ perceptions of their and their English teacher’s responsibilities. Out of 13 responsibilities, students give the responsibility only to their teachers in 4 tasks, and only to themselves in 2 tasks, while the rest are stated as the responsibilities shared by both themselves and their teachers.

Table 1 Students’ perceptions of their own and their teachers’ responsibilities in percentages

Item	Yours	Your Teacher’s	Both	
Learning Objectives				
6	Deciding the objectives of the English course	18.8	38.9	42.4
7	Deciding what you should learn next in your English lessons	11.1	61.8	27.1
Learning process (in class)				
10	Choose what materials to use to learn English in your English lessons	0.7	59.7	39.6
8	Choose what activities to use to learn English in your English lessons	1.4	52.8	45.8
9	Decide how long to spend on each activity	5.6	62.5	31.9
3	Stimulate your interest in learning English	11.1	29.9	59.0
1	Make sure you make progress during lessons	15.3	12.5	72.2
5	Make you work harder	31.9	20.1	47.9
Learning process (outside class)				
13	Decide what you learn outside class	74.3	4.2	21.5
4	Identify your weaknesses in English	44.4	6.9	48.6
2	Make sure you make progress outside class	79.9	4.2	16.0
Outcome				
11	Evaluate your learning	12.5	26.4	61.1
12	Evaluate your course	16.0	16.7	67.4

Bold figures = categories with highest score

It is clear that students believe that they should decide the objectives of the lesson together with their teachers, but the materials, the activities, and the time allocated to these practices should be decided by their teachers. When it comes to making progress outside the class, most students take the responsibility on themselves, leaving almost none to their teachers. Students also tend to share their teachers' responsibilities in terms of evaluating their learning and the course. Most of them state that they should evaluate the course and their learning together with their teachers.

The open-ended questionnaire, which asks the students "why" they believe so, also supports these results:

Learning Objectives. The students believe that they should decide the objectives of the English course *together* with their teacher. They mostly acknowledge that the teacher has knowledge and experience; but the students add that since they are the ones who want to learn English, they should learn what *they* need and thus they should decide the objectives together with the teacher in accordance with their own educational aims. Additionally, the students state that their teachers should decide what they should learn next in their English lessons. Again they mostly explain that it is the teacher who is expert, knowledgeable, and experienced, and thus it is the teacher's responsibility to 'plan' and it's their responsibility to 'stick to' the plan. A few students even put forward that students might 'abuse' this or there might be 'chaos' if they were given the chance to do so. A few students question with sarcasm what their teachers would do if they took this responsibility on themselves as well.

Learning Process in Class. The students' general impression is that, after deciding the objectives together with their teachers, their teachers should be the ones to decide the materials, the activities and the time spent on these practices. The students usually mention their teachers' experience, education and knowledge. A few students, however, state that it could be better if the teacher provided them with a set of materials to choose from and then they could decide on the materials which appeal to their interests.

Learning Process outside Class. Nearly all of the students state that it is their own responsibility to decide what they learn outside the class and make sure they progress outside the class. The commonly put forward reason is that when they are outside the classroom, they are alone and since English cannot only be taught by the teacher in the classroom, it should be them who are responsible for learning outside the class. A number of students also mention that because they have a lot of students, it would be impossible for teachers to take interest in or identify weaknesses of each and every student. However, some of the students also indicate that they may not identify their weakness on their own because they might not know how to do so, so they suggest getting some 'help', 'advice', or 'counselling' from their teachers in this regard.

Learning Outcome. The common belief among students is that evaluating the course is a responsibility which should be shared by both parties. They say that a teacher should evaluate his/her own lesson and the students should evaluate the teacher's lesson. The students further state that the course would then be much more beneficial if it were evaluated both by them and by their teachers. In terms of evaluating their own learning, students tend to share the responsibility with their teachers, stating that they should be able to evaluate their own learning by continuously monitoring themselves and watching their progress; however, since they lack knowledge and

experience in doing so, they may be incapable of ‘objectively’ evaluating their own learning, so they state that they need their teachers to ‘control’ and to ‘check’ their learning outcome.

Perceptions of abilities

As Table 2 shows, the second section of the questionnaire asks students to evaluate their own decision-making abilities in a range of activities and processes. These activities and processes are also the ones for which the students are asked about responsibilities in the first part of the questionnaire.

Among 9 activities, the students rate themselves having ‘very good/good’ abilities for 7 of them; and they rate their abilities ‘OK’ for only two of them. They do not regard themselves ‘poor’ in any of these activities. Here it is important to note that the majority of students rate themselves having ‘very good/good’ or ‘OK’ decision-making abilities to perform in-class, outside-class and evaluation tasks. It is also easy to notice that students rate themselves good/very good when it comes to out-of-class activities or evaluation. They only do not seem to trust their abilities about in-class activities such as choosing learning materials or deciding on the time spent on each activity.

Motivation and ability

In order to find out whether motivation had a role in the perceptions of students’ decision-making abilities, Pearson correlation analysis was carried out. There was a meaningful positive correlation between students’ motivation levels and perceptions of their decision-making abilities ($r = .305$ $n = 144$, $p = .00$).

Motivation, ability and responsibilities – Are they related?

One-way ANOVA analyses were performed with students’ perceptions of their/their teachers’ responsibilities and motivation levels in order to assess the role of motivation

Table 2 Students’ perceptions of their decision-making abilities in percentages

Item	Activities	Abilities		
		Good/Very Good	OK	Poor/Very Poor
	In Class			
3	Choose learning objectives in class	46.5	39.6	13.9
4	Choose learning materials in class	36.1	41.7	22.2
1	Choose learning activities in class	46.5	41.7	11.8
9	Decide how long to spend on each activity	40.3	41.7	18.1
	Outside class			
5	Choose learning materials outside class	49.3	34	16.7
2	Choose learning activities outside class	57.7	33.3	9
	Evaluation			
6	Evaluate your learning	54.2	35.4	10.4
7	Evaluate your course	60.4	31.9	7.6
	Others			
8	Identify your weaknesses in English	57.0	34.0	9

Responses for ‘good/very good’ and ‘poor/very poor’ categories are combined
 Bold figures = categories with highest score

in the perceptions of students regarding their/their teachers' responsibilities. Among 13 items, only one meaningful relationship was found. There was a significant relationship between the levels of students' motivation, $F(2, 141) = 5.12, p = .00$ and their perceptions of their/their teachers' responsibility of "evaluating the course". Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the motivation levels of those students who put the responsibility on their teachers in deciding what they should learn next in their English lessons was significantly lower ($M = 115.26, SD = 4.89$) than those who put the responsibility more on themselves ($M = 121.41, SD = 4.89$) or both on themselves and their teachers ($M = 130.70, SD = 3.89$).

Another between-subjects ANOVA analyses were carried out with students' perceptions of their/their teachers' responsibilities and their abilities. Among 13 items, only one meaningful relationship was found. There was a significant positive relationship between students' perceptions of their abilities and their perception regarding their/their teachers' responsibility in "making them work harder" $F(20, 123) = 1.80, p = .02$. Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé post hoc criterion for significance indicated that students who rated themselves good/very good took on more responsibilities ($M = 2.21, SD = 0.84$) than those who rated themselves poor/very poor to make themselves work harder ($M = 1.86, SD = .94$).

Discussion

The data analyses of this study reveal that Turkish students at tertiary level give most in-class responsibilities such as choosing the materials and activities and deciding on how long to spend in these activities during class to their teachers because they think that it is their teachers who are experienced and who have the necessary skills and knowledge to do so. These findings are in line with those found in Chan, Spratt and Humphreys' (2002) research with Chinese students in Hong Kong. On the one hand, this resemblance of perceptions between Chinese and Turkish students supports the cultural aspect of learner autonomy, which suggests that autonomy is a "western construct" (Littlewood, 1999) because eastern countries tend to regard teachers as a "source of knowledge" (Littlewood, 2000). Pennycook (1997) also claims that "autonomy is a western concept which may not be suitable to the eastern world", and he argues that this is especially true when autonomous behaviors require "questioning" (as cited in Humphreys & Wyatt, 2014, p. 52). On the other hand, another finding of the present study contradicts this idea of autonomy being a western concept because Turkish students are actually found to be eager to share responsibilities with their teachers about out-of-class responsibilities such as "deciding what they learn outside class" stating that there is no teacher outside the class and they should be taking their own responsibility for their own learning. In other words, this study reveals that the reason why Turkish students do not show autonomous behaviors is not that they avoid questioning, but that they find themselves lacking the capacity and the skills of carrying out that particular autonomous behavior.

Secondly, although the levels of students' motivation and their rating themselves good/very good are found to be related, the data analyses of this study reveal no meaningful relationship between students' motivation levels and their abilities about their and their teachers' responsibilities. In other words, this study fails to claim that high-motivated students are likely to share more responsibilities with their teachers; or those who rated themselves poor/very poor tend to put more responsibilities on their

teachers. These results do not match those found by Spratt, Humphreys and Chan (2002) who state that “motivation may lead to autonomy or be a precondition for it [*and*] absence of motivation seems to inhibit practice of learner autonomy” (p. 262). In contrast, this study claims that students’ motivation does not ensure students’ taking on responsibilities in-and-out of the classroom, and thus it can be argued that motivation only might not guarantee learner autonomy.

The reason might be that since the participants in this study are the students who were neither introduced to the concept of autonomy nor were given the chance to act so, their motivational characteristics and their perceptions of responsibilities and decision-making abilities might have shown no meaningful relationship with their perceptions of autonomy in this particular study. As Fazey and Fazey (2001) explain, while the potential for autonomy appears to exist at the individual level, students need to be given permission to demonstrate their capacities and develop them (p. 358); and as Chan, Spratt and Humphreys (2002) exert, students’ attitudes may not always be apparent in actual autonomous behavior. From another viewpoint, Deci, et al. (1991) explain that “one can be highly competent and highly motivated, but be regulated externally or by introjects and thus not be autonomous or self-determined” (p. 339). Therefore, although the students in this study were found to be motivated, they might not have shown any indication of autonomous behaviors because they might not have had any chance to ever act so, or their motivation might not be internally driven to lead them to act autonomously.

Conclusions and implications

This study investigated the perceptions of Turkish EFL students regarding their/their teachers’ responsibilities and their decision-making abilities in relation to their motivation levels. To this aim, one quantitative and one qualitative tool were used. One hundred and forty-four students at a prep school were administered the questionnaire, and 38 of them were also asked to elaborate on their answers via a separate open-ended questionnaire on their perceptions regarding their/their teachers’ responsibilities. The questionnaires used to measure the perceptions of responsibilities and abilities were the ones used by Chan Spratt and Humphreys (2002) and Üstünlüoğlu (2009), and a separate scale to gauge the motivation level of students from (Doğan: İngilizce hazırlık okuyan öğrencilerin motivasyon düzeyleri, unpublished) was also used.

The results of this study indicated that most students were not quite willing to take on in-class responsibilities. Rather, they surrendered the responsibilities to their teachers or they preferred that they dealt with them together with their teachers. Students were more likely to take on responsibilities if it were an out-of-class task such as deciding what to learn outside the class. Motivation, interestingly, did not show any effect on these perceptions of students. To be more precise, neither high- nor low-motivated students showed a tendency towards sharing these responsibilities with their teachers. In other words, it was found that motivation only did not ensure students’ taking on responsibilities in-and-out of the classroom, and thus it can be argued that motivation only might not guarantee learner autonomy.

As for their perceptions of decision-making abilities, students were highly positive. In fact, none of them rated themselves poor when evaluating their abilities about in-and-out-of-class decisions. In other words, if the students rated themselves good/very good in their decision-making abilities, they became more motivated. However, the results did not

indicate any relationship between students' rating themselves good/very good in their decision-making abilities and their perceptions on their and their teachers' responsibilities. Thus, this study failed to prove that the students who rated themselves more able to make educational decisions also shared more responsibilities with their teachers, or vice-versa.

Therefore, this study has a number of implications in terms of autonomous learning and teaching. First of all, the results of this study suggest that the cultural diversifications made under the term 'learner autonomy' might not always turn out to be true for all countries. Although eastern cultures are usually thought to be favoring "reactive autonomy" (Littlewood, 1999), this study reveals that Turkish students contrarily demand "proactive" autonomy because they state that rather than following the objectives already decided by the teacher, they would rather decide the objectives together with their teachers, since it is *them* - the students themselves - who know what they need and what they want in terms of learning English.

Second, the most important result of this study is that motivation or ability only does not guarantee learner autonomy. As Chan, Spratt and Humphreys (2002) explain, students might not always have "the knowledge or the skills to make the right choices" (p. 8). Therefore, when it comes to making decisions inside or outside the classroom, it is evident that they need training to become autonomous learners no matter how motivated students might be or no matter how able they think they are. Thus, this study supports Smith's (2003) weak version of autonomy, which implies that autonomy is a capacity which students lack and therefore need training. As Fazey and Fazey (2001) also agree, while the potential for autonomy appears to exist at the individual level, students need to be given permission to demonstrate their capacities and develop them. Thus, students should not only be trained on how to become autonomous learners, but also be given the chance to take decisions together with their teachers.

For students to take decisions together with their teachers requires teachers to be autonomous enough to share this power of decision-making with their students, so it could be argued that "teacher autonomy is a prerequisite for learner autonomy" (McGrath, 2000, p. 109). However, as Little (2000) explains, "it is unreasonable to expect teachers to foster the growth of autonomy in their learners if they themselves do not know what it is to be an autonomous learner" (p. 45). As for the case of Turkey, Erdoğan (2003), for example, found out in her study at a Turkish secondary school that the factors of teacher behavior hinder the development of learner autonomy because the teachers themselves were within the same education system and thus were unable to change their habits (Üstünlüoğlu, 2009).

Whether autonomy precedes motivation or motivation precedes autonomy, this mutual practice of decision-making would doubtlessly have a positive effect on students' motivational and autonomous behaviors. Therefore, the most important implication of this study is that we need to raise autonomous teachers to raise autonomous learners, and the schools or the institutions should allow room for teachers to act autonomously enough to raise autonomous students (Balçıkkanlı, 2010; Çakır & Balçıkkanlı, 2012). Although this is a small scale study and the results are non-generalizable to other contexts, it should be kept in mind that since autonomy is not an all-or-nothing concept, every small step taken towards autonomy would help students to get more and more autonomous.

Authors' contributions

This study was carried out with the mutual work of two authors. AO (first author) designed the study, reviewed the literature, collected the data and wrote the first draft. CB (second author) supervised the work, provided sources, helped with the data analyses, and revised the first draft. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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