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**AN EVALUATION OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING:  
A TURKISH ‘LINGUISTICS FOR TRANSLATORS’  
STUDENTS’ CASE  
(Araştırma Makalesi)**

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**Abstract**

*A learning environment should be designed in such an innovative way that English as a second and foreign language learners can easily improve and enjoy their learning. Considering the essentials of a learning environment, and the importance of teaching linguistics in a convenient and appealing method, this paper discusses project-based learning (PBL) with an empirical study. The study presented in this paper investigated Turkish students’ perceptions of learning linguistics for translators through a PBL method. Fifteen participants who attended a two-semester “Linguistics for Translators” course in the classroom took part in the study. As part of their course, they were assigned to a project assignment in order to improve their understanding of both linguistics concepts and the relationship between linguistics and translation and prepared it based on six phases: Initiation, definition, design, development, implementation and follow-up phases. Data collected from a questionnaire showed that the participants had a positive view on studying a “Linguistics for Translators” course, and PBL played a vital role in enhancing learning. This study shed light on more issues such as collaboration and the design of PBL in order for learners to have more effective learning.*

**Keywords:** *Project-Based Learning, Linguistics, English as a Second Language, Beliefs, Collaboration.*

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## **Proje Tabanlı Öğrenmenin Bir Değerlendirmesi: 'Çevirmenler için Dilbilim' Türk Öğrencilerin Vakası**

### **Öz**

Öğrenme ortamı, İngilizceyi ikinci ve yabancı dil olarak öğrenenlerin öğrenmede rahatlıkla gelişme kaydedebilecekleri ve öğrenmekten zevk alabilecekleri yenilikçi bir şekilde tasarlanmalıdır. Bu makalede, öğrenme ortamı oluşumunun esasları ile hem uygun hem de dikkat çekici bir yöntemle dilbilim öğretmenin önemi göz önünde bulundurularak, proje tabanlı öğrenme (PTÖ) deneysel bir çalışma ile tartışılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, Türk öğrencilerin PTÖ yöntemi ile çevirmenler için dilbilim öğrenme alguları incelenmiştir. Araştırmaya, sınıf içi verilen iki dönemlik “Çevirmenler İçin Dilbilim” dersine katılan on beş öğrenci katılmıştır. Derslerinin bir parçası olarak, hem dilbilim kavramlarını hem de dilbilim ile çeviri arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamalarını geliştirmek için kendilerine bir proje ödevi verilmiş ve bu projeyi başlatma, tanımlama, tasarım, geliştirme, uygulama ve izleme aşamaları olmak üzere altı aşamada hazırlanmışlardır. Yapılan anketten toplanan veriler, katılımcıların bir “Çevirmenler İçin Dilbilim” dersinin uygulanması konusunda olumlu bir görüşe sahip olduklarını ve PTÖ'nün öğrenmeyi geliştirmede önemli bir rol oynadığını göstermiştir. Bu çalışma, öğrencilerin daha etkili öğrenmeyi başarabilmeleri için işbirliğinin ve PTÖ tasarımının önemi gibi konulara da açıklık getirmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Proje Tabanlı Öğrenme, Dilbilim, İkinci Bir Dil Olarak İngilizce, İnançlar, İşbirliği.

### **1. Introduction**

Linguistics is a discipline that deals with the study of language. It is divided into at least two parts (Petray, 2004) such as theoretical linguistics in social and behavioural science and applied linguistics in education. It has been examined in different educational levels to see its impact on learning (Correa, 2014; Curzan, 2013; Loosen, 2014). Studies have found that teaching (theoretical) linguistics has a critical role in helping learners improve the required knowledge in language-related courses and majors. Likewise, studying linguistics is quite important not only for English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) but also for other majors (Correa, 2014). Linguistics is a compulsory course for English Language Teaching (ELT) programmes in order for students to deal with other content courses like “pedagogical content (language pedagogy or methods courses)” (Correa, 2014, p.162). As for other students whose major is not ELT but who are still taking linguistics as a compulsory subject, it is still regarded as relevant and vital “as it supports the language learning process” (Correa, 2014, p.161). This approach intends to show the role of linguistics in facilitating language learning in educational contexts.

The report by Meng (2009) focused on the ways to improve linguistic skills and proficiency, especially in terms of ELT programs because of the interrelation between

linguistics and ELT. Some previous studies have considered applying different methods into teaching EFL/ESL, one of which is Project-Based Learning (PBL) (Almeida-Mendes, 2017; Beckett, 2006; Fragoulis and Tsiplakides, 2009; Rojas and Varon, 2019). However, the existing literature on exploring linguistics in terms of other programs except ELT is limited (Correa, 2014) even though it has a crucial position in language learning. Apart from the scarcity of research in linguistics, more studies are needed to examine PBL (Iakovos, Iosif and Areti, 2011), especially in diverse contexts (Alkhatnai, 2017), as it “is still in the developmental stage” (Bas and Beyhan, 2010). Based on the available research and readings of the literature, there are not any studies exploring teaching linguistics for translators through PBL in a Turkish higher education context. Considering this, the present study aims to examine linguistics in the Turkish context and seeks out to answer the following research questions:

1. How can a designed PBL method enhance students' learning?
2. What are students' perceptions about their learning through a designed PBL method?

This paper first defines PBL within second or foreign language learning followed by relevant studies in the field of linguistics. Then, it presents empirical findings about Turkish students' views on learning linguistics through the PBL method. Finally, it discusses the findings with related studies and identifies implications for teachers and designers to consider for their teaching.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Project-based Learning in Second/Foreign Language Learning**

PBL dates back to the late nineteenth century when John Dewey conducted studies on the theory of “learning by doing” (Dewey, 1938). He was the greatest proponent of student-centred learning. Since then, researchers have focused on PBL in different ways. Blumenfeld et al. (1991) describe it as “a comprehensive approach to classroom learning and teaching that is designed to engage students in investigation of authentic problems” (p. 369). Also, Grant (2002) lists the elements of PBL as:

- a) “an introduction to “set the stage” or anchor the activity”;
  - b) “a task preparation” which guides or drives question;
  - c) “a process or investigation” that results in the creation of one or more sharable artefacts;
  - d) “resources”, such as subject-matter experts, textbooks and hypertext links;
  - e) “scaffolding”, such as teacher conferences to help learners assess their progress, computer-based questioning and project templates;
  - f) “collaborations”, including teams, peer reviews and external content specialists;
- and

g) “opportunities for reflection and transfer”, such as classroom debriefing sessions, journal entries and extension activities (p.83).

Similarly, Krajcik and Blumenfeld (2006) support the idea that PBL enables learners to learn by practicing and implementing thoughts. Bell (2010) identifies PBL as “a student-driven, teacher-facilitated approach to learning” (p. 39). He claims that “Learners pursue knowledge by asking questions that have piqued their natural curiosity” (p.39). In this sense, this paper regards PBL as an approach to promoting learners to apply their own thoughts into a project and achieve their goals by interacting with their teachers or peers.

Arising from the wider field of PBL, Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) has emerged in terms of language learning, as Soleimani, Rahimi and Sadeghi (2015) point out:

PBLL is a means of using language to learn, rather than learning language. However, when learners listen, speak, read, and write the target language in finding information, discussing, consulting experts or reference and presenting findings, they learn language in real-world context (p. 3).

PBLL covers the characteristics of concentrating on real-world questions, designing a student-centred curriculum, fostering cooperation with teachers and peers, providing feedback in the process of the project, regarding teachers as facilitators, and creating a real-world project (CASLS, 2019, parag. 1). This leads to a newer approach to language learning. In this approach, teachers have to bring authentic activities and materials, and they have to humanize course-books or language classrooms (Javadi and Tahmasbi, 2019). Also, teachers have to provide learners with “meaning-based and authentic activities and materials closely related to learners’ actual communicative needs and with some real-world relationship, in which learners have to achieve a genuine outcome”, such as solving a problem (Klapper, 2003, p. 35). With these features, PBLL and PBL are considered useful in both increasing student achievement (Li, 2010; Sadeghi, Biniiaz and Soleimani, 2016; Soleimani et al., 2015; Tuncay and Ekizoglu, 2010) and student interest (Fougler and Jimenez-Silva, 2007; Fragoulis and Tsiplakides, 2009; Levine, 2004; Peterson and Nassaji, 2016), and improving their language proficiency (Fragoulis and Tsiplakides, 2009; Li, 2010). The characteristics of PBLL and the benefits of PBLL and PBL overlap with the goals of ESL and EFL teaching programs. Hence, PBL has been integrated within second or foreign language education for over two decades (Wang, 2020) to promote student-centred learning (Hedge, 1993). In addition to facilitating language learning, PBL is seen to improve students’ motivation, self-efficacy, independent learning, critical thinking, communication skills, and social and personal responsibilities (Essien, 2018; Shin, 2018) as well as fostering comprehensible input and output (Beckett, 2006).

The above-mentioned features of PBL have led to questioning the design of project work that is also crucial for language education. Accordingly, projects should be designed

considering students' preferences, needs and interests in order for students to handle real-world issues and practice tasks with the provision of feedback (Alan and Stoller, 2005; Stoller, 2006). However, there are some challenging points in PBL for both teachers and students. For example, assessing students' projects or PBL may be time consuming or a burden on teachers. To cope with this challenge, Grant (2002) suggests creating portfolios and rubrics to evaluate students. In terms of students' challenges, they may not be able to generate a logical question and manage their time to produce the question. To overcome this challenge, changes of classroom practices are recommended (*ibid.*). Still, teachers and students might face a complicated situation, in which they possibly have difficulties in handling this challenge (Barron et al., 1998; Krajcik, Blumenfeld, Marx and Soloway, 1994). For example, they may not be able to apply or perform their projects. Therefore, a well-designed learning approach should be needed as a solution to the problems arisen.

Overall, PBL has been considered as an effective approach to learning if it is designed and informed by both insights into appropriate pedagogical interventions and considering the challenges. Hence, this study deals with learning linguistics through PBL, and this study uses the term, PBL rather than PBLL to discuss learning through a project work.

## **2.2. Relevant Research on Teaching Linguistics through PBL**

Teaching linguistics has been investigated not only in high school levels (Loosen, 2014) but also in tertiary levels (Correa, 2014; Curzan, 2013). However, little research has considered implementing PBL for teaching linguistics in the tertiary level of education.

Curzan (2013) taught linguistics conducting a variety of activities and assignments into the classroom. Drawing on an investigation of her teaching, she stated that PBL reinforced her students' main skills for both language learning and academic skills such as reflective thinking. In her study, she concluded that PBL is worth integrating into teaching even though it takes time in the classroom, as it promotes skills outside the classroom, such as independent learning or collaborative learning. In line with this study, Loosen (2014) found similar outcomes by looking at high school-level students' perspectives of studying linguistics within an innovative approach. Her approach consisted of interactive activities in the classroom to motivate students and attract their attention. Based on an evaluation of the students' reaction to her teaching, she concluded that "most of my students will not go on to become linguists, but they will go on to communicate with people every day for the rest of their lives" in a "less judgmental, more sensitive, more inquisitive" way (Loosen, 2014, p. e271). On the one hand, the studies by Curzan (2013) and Loosen (2014) are effective and important about designing a linguistics class integrating learning skills into classroom teaching; on the other hand, they lack conceptualizing the theoretical part of teaching linguistics and implementing PBL according to a theoretical framework.

Considering the absence of such conceptualization, this study refers to the research by Correa (2014), which criticized the current pedagogy of the linguistics course and extended the argument on linguistics for language majors and linguistics departments.

Correa (2014) claims that although students in the language majors are taught in the target language, others in the linguistics departments are taught in their first language. Taking into account the long process of second or foreign language learning, students in the former may have hardships in dealing with the concepts taught during the course. In other words, when they have difficulties in creating complex sentences in the target language, of course, they may find the course difficult. For example, they may not be able to distinguish a syntactical ambiguity in a sentence. Correa (2014) indicated that “a traditional linguistics-for-linguists course is not going to be useful or even positive for a language major, and ... the main aim of a linguistics-for-non-linguists course should go far beyond instructing” (p.164) EFL learners in the target language. Accordingly, Correa’s study offered user-friendly approaches to teaching courses which cover increasing students’ motivation, showing its relevance to their first language, improving language learning and teaching skills as well as other skills in the social sciences and humanities, and understanding other cultures. Ultimately, she proposed to combine linguistics with another field. The present research draws from the criticism by Correa (2014) to include linguistics in the discipline of translation and interpreting with a user-friendly approach. However, Correa’s (2014) paper does not specify any approach to be utilized in classroom teaching, but the current study aims to bridge the gap by offering an approach, a designed PBL method.

A study by Wang (2016) explored peer learning for a linguistics course through a Wikibook project in the Hong Kong Institute of Education. Ninety-six students in the language department wrote an academic book on the Wikibook by editing and commenting on each other’s work. Data from questionnaire surveys and follow-up interviews illustrated that the Wikibook project enhances students’ organizational and collaborative skills by integrating the conceptual knowledge into their work. Still, teachers need to concentrate full attention on their students while they are preparing their work. The teachers should monitor, give feedback about, and track their students’ progress. Wang’s study focused on the practice of PBL in writing an academic book for the linguistics course, so it omitted discussing the issue on how to teach the course through PBL. However, the present study has intended to investigate this issue.

Another study by Moreno (2018) investigated the impact of a three-year linguistics project (Wax museum project) on an Andalusian context of a preschool, primary school and secondary school in language and linguistics development. The study divided the project into three stages: In the first stage, pre stage, students were asked to prepare a short writing about one important person by searching the information online or printed books, or collaborating with peers, and then rehearse their show. In the second stage, on stage, visitors were engaged with the waxwork by touching the button on the right shoulder for Spanish and on the left shoulder for English of their writings. Depending on their touch, each student spoke aloud their writing without looking at the text. In the last stage, post stage, both the students and the teacher gave feedback on the performance.

All in all, previous research on teaching linguistics through PBL in the university level context has indicated the importance of linguistics for language learning. However, it is insufficient in discussing linguistics in diverse contexts, especially in a Turkish context, where English plays an important role in furthering the career opportunities and EFL learners have difficulties in nurturing language and linguistics skills.

### **3. Method**

The focus of the study is to contribute to the current argument of PBL for teaching linguistics. It presents empirical findings on two issues that have been emphasized in the previous research: enhancement of student learning through PBL, especially in foreign language learning, and learners' views on learning linguistics through PBL.

#### **3.1. Participants**

Fifteen Turkish students (60% females and 40% males) took part in the study. Their ages varied from 21 to 27. They had been learning English as a second language for over four years and were studying their second year in the Department of Interpretation and Translation in a Turkish state university. Although they were accustomed to the term, "language learning", they first focused on the concept, linguistics, during the study. They took the course "Linguistics for Translators" as an obligatory course and were graded for their projects that they submitted at the end of the academic year, 2018-2019. As their professor, the researcher taught them the course in two core areas (see Table 1): Based on the book "an Introduction to Language (Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2011)", the first part of the teaching covered theoretical linguistics, such as an introduction to the linguistics field, subfields of linguistics (morphology, syntax, semantics, phonology and phonetics), and an introduction to linguistics-related fields, like applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, neurolinguistics and historical linguistics. The second part of the teaching compromised the linguistics for translators drawn from the book "Translation Equivalence: An Essay in Theoretical Linguistics (Uwajeh, 2007)". The participants were taught the relationship between translation and linguistics with the four equivalence types (conceptual, propositional, thematic and contextual equivalence) and translation types such as lexical, literal, free and figurative translation (Uwajeh, 2007). Having completed both parts of the teaching, they were asked to prepare a project about linguistics for translators in the Turkish context, and they were told that their project would be graded for their final exam.

**Table 1.** The Structure of the Course, ‘Linguistics for Translators’

Part of teaching	Subfields of linguistics	Topics covered
1	Theoretical linguistics	-morphology -syntax -semantics -phonology and phonetics
	Other linguistics-related fields	-applied linguistics -computational linguistics -sociolinguistics -neurolinguistics -historical linguistics
2	Translation and theoretical linguistics	-equivalence types (conceptual, propositional, thematic and contextual equivalence) -translation types (i.e. lexical, literal, free and figurative translation)

### 3.2. Six Phases of the Project

The aim of teaching linguistics was to help the participants understand the theoretical concepts of linguistics and its relationship with translation, whereas the aim of applying PBL into the teaching was to enable them to practice what they had learned and experienced. Based on this aim, the project work was designed prior to its implementation. The project lasted five weeks and was made up of the six phases given by Projectmanagement-training.net (2019, parag. 1) (see Table 2 below):

**Table 2.** The Six Phases of the Project

Phases	Week	Goal	Treatment
Initiation	1	To assess students’ readiness for the project	Students’ hands-on practice
Definition	1-1,5	To identify the problem of the project	Professor’s instruction on how to conduct the project
Design	1,5-2	To prepare the project	Professor’s share of the project’s outline
Development	2-3	To ensure students are well-prepared	Professor’s contact with each student in person
Implementation	3-4	To allow students to perform the project	Students’ performance
Follow-up	4-5	To complete the project successfully	Professor’s and peers’ feedback



1. **Initiation Phase:** This phase was the beginning, the first week, of the project and assessed participants' readiness to prepare the project. They had a hands-on practice in the classroom by analysing randomly chosen English and Turkish sentences according to the subfields of linguistics, and translation types.

2. **Definition Phase:** In this phase, the first half of the second week of the project, the requirements were identified for the project, such as finding an EFL learner, interviewing with the learner in English, transcribing and translating the interview into Turkish and analysing the transcript according to the subfields of linguistics, and Uwajeh's four translation types.

3. **Design Phase:** In this phase, the second half of the second week of the project, the professor wrote the outline of the project on a sheet and shared it with the participants. The project outline covered (1) the interviewee's profile and the transcription of the interview, (2) the linguistic analysis of the English transcript, (3) the linguistic analysis of the Turkish translation and (4) the Turkish translation according to Uwajeh's four translation types.

4. **Development Phase:** In this phase, the professor ensured that everything for the implementation of the project was arranged. She contacted each participant in the classroom and asked them if they recruited an EFL speaker to interview and were ready to achieve the requirements.

5. **Implementation Phase:** This phase involved the actual performance of the project. Fifteen participants prepared the project as identified in the third phase, Design Phase.

6. **Follow-up Phase:** In this phase, essentials were ensured to complete the project successfully. Before the participants submitted their project, the researcher and their peers, if applicable (or if they wished to have any feedback), had given individual feedback to each participant. After the feedback, participants handed out their project to the researcher. A virtual class in Google Classroom was created for them to both interact with each other and submit their project.

### **3.3. Data Collection Instrument and Data Analysis**

The study was conducted between April and May in 2019. The participants started doing the project on April 1st, and completed it in five weeks. After the submission of their project on May 3rd, data were collected through a questionnaire that consists of 6 open-ended statements and 16 items rated according to a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Not Applicable (NA), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)). Not Applicable was given as a rate for the participants to choose when the item was not relevant to them (Frary, 2013, p.1). The questionnaire items were adopted from the literature (Correa, 2014; Moreno, 2018; Wang 2016) and were divided into three sections as: (1) demographic information (participants' age, gender, level of English language skills and duration of English language learning), (2) participants' views on learning linguistics for translators through PBL, (3) participants' further comments on open-ended statements

about learning through PBL, the part of the project they did their best work and enjoyed the most and the least, and their struggles and perceptions if any. The participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire online, via a Google Form.

Data obtained from quantitative research were analysed through descriptive statistics, and the percentages and frequencies of the participants' views on each item were calculated in the Google Form. Data collected from open-ended statements in the questionnaire were analysed interpretively.

### 3.4. Ethics of Research

This study was conducted according to ethical considerations. Each participant consented to be part of the research. Also, the authors confirm that the study does not need ethics committee approval according to the research integrity rules in their country.

### 4. Results

Data from the questionnaire show both enhancement of participants' learning and their perceptions about learning linguistics for translators through PBL. All participants submitted their project on time. They expressed their ideas on both the items and open-ended statements in the questionnaire.

Table 3 below presents participants' views on learning linguistics for translators through PBL in frequency and percentage. All of them believed that they took control of their learning while doing the project, planned how to do the project, investigated the concepts related to linguistics and translation, produced a good project, enjoyed doing the project, learned a lot about linguistics and translation, and felt more confident in linguistics and translation after doing the project. They also thought that the project improved their learning.

**Table 3.** Participants' Views on Learning Linguistics for Translators Through PBL

Questionnaire Items	Frequency (F) Percent (%)	SA	A	NA	D	SD
While doing the project, I took control of my learning.	F %	10 66.7	5 33.3	0 0	0 0	0 0
I planned how to do my project.	F %	10 66.7	5 33.3	0 0	0 0	0 0
I investigated the concepts related to linguistics and translation.	F %	10 66.7	5 33.3	0 0	0 0	0 0

I produced a good project.	F	9	6	0	0	0
	%	60	40	0	0	0
I can apply my learning from the project into my future learning.	F	5	8	1	0	1
	%	33.3	53.3	6.7	0	6.7
I enjoyed doing the project.	F	8	7	0	0	0
	%	53.3	46.7	0	0	0
The project improved my learning.	F	12	3	0	0	0
	%	80	20	0	0	0
I can handle my learning on my own thanks to the project.	F	8	6	0	1	0
	%	53.3	40	0	6.7	0
The feedback that was provided by my professor was helpful.	F	12	3	0	0	0
	%	80	20	0	0	0
I asked my peers when I needed help.	F	5	5	1	2	2
	%	33.3	33.3	6.7	13.3	13.3
I would like to do more projects like this one.	F	7	6	2	0	0
	%	46.7	40	13.3	0	0
This project was better than the other assignments/exams in the class.	F	10	4	1	0	0
	%	66.7	26.7	6.7	0	0
I found this project boring.	F	0	0	1	6	8
	%	0	0	6.7	40	53.3
I learned a lot about linguistics and translation from doing this project.	F	10	5	0	0	0
	%	66.7	33.3	0	0	0
I discovered something new about linguistics and translation from this project.	F	10	4	0	1	0
	%	66.7	26.7	0	6.7	0
I feel more confident in linguistics and translation after doing this project.	F	9	6	0	0	0
	%	60	40	0	0	0

Although all of the participants stated that the feedback from their professor was helpful, ten of them (67%) explained that they asked their classmates when they needed help. However, four of them (27%) stated that they did not contact their peers.

Overwhelming majority (93%) agreed that they could handle their learning on their own thanks to the project and discovered something new about linguistics and translation from the project.

Furthermore, thirteen of them (87%) believed that they could apply their learning from the project into their future learning, whereas only one participant (7%) disagreed with this. Similarly, the majority of them (87%) preferred to do more projects like that one, while the rest (13%) thought it not to be applicable for them. Moreover, almost all of them (93%) agreed that the project was better than the other assignments in the class, and also disagreed that the project was boring.

As shown in Table 4 below, in open-ended statements, all students gave further information on the part of the project they did their best work, and what they learned, struggled with, and enjoyed most and least.

**Table 4.** Students' Views on their PBL

<b>Open-ended statements</b>	<b>Students' views</b>
1. The things I learned while doing the project were....	-overall the project -translation -English and Turkish linguistics -language skills
2. The part of the project I did my best work was...	-English linguistics, especially morphology and syntax
3. I struggled with....	-English linguistics, particularly phonetics and syntax -Turkish linguistics
4. The most enjoyable part of this project was...	-English linguistics
5. The least enjoyable part of this project was...	-English and Turkish linguistics

Overall, participants stated that they learned how to do the project very well, and they further indicated that this project helped them improve, especially in translation and English linguistics, whereas only one of them mentioned about her improvement on Turkish linguistics. Two of them indicated that they developed their writing skills thanks to PBL. In addition, one believed that he learned how to search for topics and organize and plan his work.

As for the open-ended statements about the specific part they did best in their project, they expressed different views on their learning. Six of them stated that they carried out translation and English and Turkish linguistics tasks of the project very well, while four of them mentioned only translation task. Furthermore, three of them expressed the morphology task, whereas two of them specified the syntax task and just one student

mentioned the English and Turkish linguistics tasks in the project assignment. The answers to this question coincided with their responses to the question of the most enjoyable part of the project. However, five of them commented on the English phonetic analysis, whilst four of them mentioned about the English syntax, and two of them indicated that the English morphology and the Turkish linguistics tasks were their least enjoyable parts. The rest pointed out that they found no task unenjoyable.

In addition, four of the participants expressed their views on studying linguistics for translators, stating that:

- *PBL enabled them to look at translation from a different angle.* (Student 1)
- *PBL made them learn with fun.* (Student 2)
- *They were looking forward to having this kind of project in the future.* (Student 3)
- *The feedback from the professor helped them understand the topic better and in turn, complete the project.* (Student 4)

## 5. Discussion

A number of studies have looked at teaching linguistics (Correa, 2014; Loosen, 2014; Wang, 2016) or teaching it through PBL (Curzan, 2013; Moreno, 2018) in different contexts. However, there is still need for further research on both PBL and teaching linguistics, especially in the context, where linguistics is not a major course (Correa, 2014; Iakovos et al., 2011). Therefore, this study has aimed to explore teaching linguistics through PBL in the context where translation is the only major subject. It further analysed the empirical findings regarding students' learning of linguistics for translators with the implementation of the PBL method, which was designed in six phases as initiation, definition, design, development, implementation and follow-up phases (Projectmanagement-training.net, 2019, parag. 1).

This study has shown that university-level Turkish students have positive views on learning linguistics for translators through PBL. Confirming the argument of Correa (2014), Curzan (2013) and Loosen (2014), the findings given in this study suggest an innovative approach to teach linguistics to those learners whose major is not language or linguistics. This study argues that PBL should be designed for a target context, namely, for learners of linguistics as taken place in the case of this study. In addition, it discusses that PBL can play an effective role in engaging EFL learners in learning environments by having fun with the linguistics course and enjoying the language learning process.

The study supports the idea that a designed PBL method can enhance students' learning. It corroborates with the study by Loosen (2014) in that learner needs and interests should be the first point to consider when designing a course, as can be interpreted from participants' views, which in turn enables learners to produce creative and innovative project works. In the case of the present study, the designed PBL approach for the linguistics course

worked as an initiator to instigate learner interests in a linguistics for translators course. This argument is also consistent with other studies (Fougler and Jimenez-Silva, 2007; Fragoulis and Tsiplakides, 2009; Levine, 2004; Peterson and Nassaji, 2016) highlighting that PBL increases learner interests in a topic that has been planned to learn.

In line with the studies by Essien (2018) and Shin (2018), the findings of this study imply that PBL can promote independent learning, critical thinking, self-confidence, learning strategies and learning not only in the target topic, English linguistics, but also in related topics such as translation and Turkish linguistics. Although PBL does not always foster collaboration or provide comprehensive feedback for students, this study discusses that learners pay more attention to their professor's feedback, so the professor should consider sparing time in providing feedback for students when designing a PBL course.

The study shows that learners have a variety of learning difficulties and they also have the most and the least favourite parts while setting up and carrying out their project. Based on the participants' statements on these issues, it can be argued that a designed learning environment with a PBL method should consider such an important variety and cover a diverse learning setting. Therefore, the setting should be flexible enough to accommodate learner preferences and learning styles.

## **6. Summary, pedagogical implications and further research**

### **6.1. Answers to Research Questions**

This research has provided empirical findings on learning through a designed PBL method for the linguistics course. The answer to the first research question is that a designed PBL method can enhance students' learning by increasing students' learning experiences and interests in a target topic. The answer to the second question is that students are positively impressed by PBL. Although teaching and learning linguistics can be difficult in non-major ESL learning environments, which was also the case in the current study, PBL can make it joyful and learners can have fun while improving their learning. Moreover, PBL plays an undeniable role in fostering them to learn not only the target topic, but also other relevant learning topics, learning strategies and independent learning.

### **6.2. Implications**

The conclusions given in this study have proved that PBL can enhance students' learning, especially in terms of nurturing the teaching and learning of a linguistics for translators course. It is important for teachers and designers of the course to consider learning differences when designing a learning environment with the PBL method. They can use a designed framework, for example, six phases of the project that were used in the present study. Furthermore, student collaboration can be promoted in order to reduce the need for expert support and feedback. Also, while teaching the linguistics course,

teachers should pay attention to first learner interest and then learning achievement for lifelong learning.

### 6.3. Limitations and Future Research

This study has focused on students' perceptions of PBL. However, there is an apparent need to investigate teachers' perceptions about PBL to evaluate the issue better. Furthermore, the study examined just fifteen students' views and did not observe or interview them for more comprehensive information about their learning. Therefore, a further study should consider utilizing more research instruments such as interview, observation and case studies, and explore teachers' beliefs and student achievement in order to see any relationship between students' beliefs and grades. This study allowed students five weeks to prepare and submit their project. A further study can be more longitudinal and focus on the preparation and implementation of more than one project.

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