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EFL Learners' Language Learning Effort and Autonomy in Online Distance Education in Higher Education

Yükseköğretimde İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğrenenlerin Çevrimiçi Uzaktan Eğitimde Dil Öğrenme Çabası ve Öğrenen Özerkliği

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Öz: Giderek artan çevrimiçi İngilizce öğrenen sayısına rağmen, yükseköğretimde çevrimiçi uzaktan öğrenme bağlamında dil öğrenme çabası ve öğrenci özerkliği arasındaki varsayılan ilişkileri açıklayan çok fazla araştırma yoktur. Bu makale, çevrimiçi uzaktan eğitimde İngilizce öğrenenlerin yabancı dil öğrenme çabası düzeylerini ve özerklik algılarını araştırmayı ve karşılaştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Veriler, Türkiye'de bir devlet üniversitesinde çevrimiçi İngilizce dersi alan ve çeşitli disiplinlerde öğrenim gören 220 birinci sınıf öğrencisinden elde edilmiştir. Dil öğrenme çabası ile çevrimiçi İngilizce öğrenenlerin özerkliği arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmak amacıyla iki anket kullanılmıştır. Katılımcıların yabancı dil öğrenme çaba düzeylerini ölçmek için Yabancı Dil Öğrenme Çaba Ölçeği (Karabıyık & Mirici, 2018) ve özerklik algı düzeylerini belirlemek için Özerklik Algı Ölçeği (Demirtaş, 2010) kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca, katılımcıların bilgilerini belirlemek için ayrı bir form kullanılmıştır. Araştırma nicel araştırma desenlerinden betimsel tarama modeline göre tasarlanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde, betimsel istatistikler (ortalama ve standart sapma) ve Pearson korelasyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları, öğrencilerin yabancı dil öğrenmek için sıklıkla çaba harcadıklarını göstermiştir. Öğrenciler, bazı özerk öğrenme becerilerini yeterli derecede kullanma kapasitesine sahip olmalarına rağmen, dil öğrenirken özerk öğrenme becerilerini kullanma yeteneğine sahip değillerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğrenen özerkliği, dil öğrenme çabası, yükseköğretim, uzaktan öğrenme

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Abstract: Although there were a massive increasing number of online English learners, not much research has clarified the assumed relationships between language learning effort and learner autonomy in the context of online distance learning in higher education. This paper aims to investigate and compare the EFL learners' levels of foreign language learning effort and autonomy perceptions in online distance education. Data was collected from 220 EFL freshmen students taking an online English course and studying in various disciplines at a state university in Turkey. Two questionnaires were used in order to explore the relationship between language learning effort and autonomy of online English learners. The Foreign Language Learning Effort Scale (Karabıyık & Mirici, 2018) was used in order to assess the participants' levels of foreign language learning effort and the Autonomy Perception Scale (Demirtaş, 2010) was administered so as to identify the level of autonomy perceptions of the students towards language learning. Additionally, a background information form was also utilized in order to determine individual information of the participants. The study was designed based on a baseline descriptive survey method. The data were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and Pearson correlation coefficients analysis. The results of the study displayed that the learners often employed effort in learning a foreign language. Moreover, the learners generally were not capable of using autonomous learning skills in learning a language although they had the capacity to employ some autonomous learning skills to a sufficient degree.

Keywords: Learning autonomy, language learning effort, higher education, distance learning

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1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the widespread use of the mobile technology and the internet in distance learning, students had the chance to self-regulate their online language learning (Wang & Zhan, 2020). Consequently, the students had to take more responsibility on their own learning and put more effort into online learning. It was believed that using internet provided help for learners to become autonomous in that they would not depend on their teachers and books (Mohammadi, Ghorbani & Hamidi, 2011). Technology was a powerful instrument to increase autonomy in foreign language learning (Bravo, Intriago, Holguin, Garzon & Arcia, 2016). According to Wang and Zhan (2020), instrumental motivation was "a positive predictor of learners' English learning efforts, which may affect self-regulated learning efficiency and strategy use" (p. 20). However, except from the study mentioned previously, there was not much research on the learning effort of the EFL learners in distance education, which showed that the issue of learning effort in online distance English courses has not been explored yet. Additionally, the relationship between the language learning effort and autonomy perceptions of online distance English learners has not been studied adequately. For this reason, this study aimed to fill the gap in this area.

Concerning the learner autonomy, it was possible to find a lot of definitions of autonomy concerning learning in the domain of education. The commonly known definition was made by Holec (1981). For Holec (1981), "learner autonomy is the ability to take charge of one's own directed learning" (as cited in Üstünlüoğlu, 2009, p. 149). Learners were considered to be complex individuals so that it was not easy to understand what they needed, thought or wanted (Şanal, 2016). When the subdimensions of the learner autonomy were deeply explored, a significant difference was not found in the subscales of autonomy, namely student-student interaction, sensibility to others and ability to manage self-awareness and new situations in terms of gender in distance education (Fotiadou, Angelaki & Mavroidis, 2017). Likewise, there was not a statistically significant relationship between the role of teacher, independent study, language learning activities, choice of content in relation to gender while a significant difference was found in terms of gender as male learners were more ready for self-direction than female learners (Kırmızı & Kıraç, 2018). Bekleyen and Selimoğlu (2016) stated that the students studying in English Language and Literature department generally expected their teachers to take responsibility for selecting learning activities in the classroom and make decisions about what to learn. Furthermore, they did not perceive themselves as totally autonomous learners and they still sought their teacher's guidance and assistance. The researchers thought that the reason behind these findings was based on the traditional role of teachers in Turkey. The study also displayed a close correlation between the learners' motivation and autonomous learning activities. However, Yıldırım (2008) pointed out that Turkish EFL learners were ready to be responsible for their learning and they considered that they had the capacity for autonomous learning and showed autonomous behaviours out of the class like listening to English songs, reading English notices around them, watching English movies and using the internet in English. Similarly, Çakıcı (2017) drew the same conclusion that the participants who were senior students studying in English Language Teaching Department were ready to control and take responsibility for their learning in the areas of autonomy in learning such as involvement in the selection of material, type of classroom activities and decisions related to determining the long-term objectives of a course. However, they did not favour involvement of their future students in the decision making process and teaching and learning activities. Moreover, the study did not indicate a statistically significant difference between the female and male students' opinions about learner autonomy. The link between autonomy and motivation was studied in the context of language learning. A positive and significant correlation was found between the students' autonomy and motivation in blended learning and asynchronous distance learning (Güneş, 2018). Sawan (2016) declared that there was a positive relationship between the English learners' autonomy and their motivation with a low degree of overall correlation but the study displayed the strongest positive correlation between the participants' autonomous behaviour and effort. Motivation and learning success was conditional on students having responsibility for their own learning and having the capacity to make decisions about their learning, which

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showed that there was a significant link between educational theories of motivation and autonomy (Gandhimathi & Devi, 2016). Some studies asserted that autonomy of learners was prominent for distance learning but distance education did not have the capacity to enhance the learner autonomy (Kırmızı & Kıraç, 2018; Ginting, Djiwandono & Woods, 2021). Kırmızı and Kıraç (2018) investigated the autonomy of 100 university students in terms of learning environment as traditional in class and distance education. The findings of the study indicated that traditional in class students gave more importance to objectives/evaluation, selection of content and independent work in language learning, language learning activities while students in distance education valued assessment and motivation, role of teacher and importance of class/teacher. The study indicated that learner autonomy was particularly prominent for distance education programs which could not have the ability to improve autonomy of the learners. Similarly, Ginting, Djiwandono and Woods (2021) conducted a study with 37 Indonesian MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) students. The participants completed the tasks on five MOOC modules like Making Videos for Teaching, Video Use for Autonomous Learning, Mobile Devices, Digital Literacy and Autonomous Learning. After ten weeks implementation, the data were collected from the tasks the students completed in the modules such as multiple-choice questions, peer review, projects, movies and discussions. The study suggested that autonomy in learning was important in online programs. However, only a small number of the participants, 32%, were found to be highly autonomous while 54% of them were categorized as low autonomous and 14% of them were moderately autonomous.

Learning effort was described by Carbonaro (2005) as "the amount of time and energy that students expend in meeting the formal academic requirements established by their teacher and/or school" (as cited in Karabıyık, 2016, p. 12). Karabıyık and Mirici (2018) defined foreign language learning effort "as the number of individual resources students invest in the act of learning a foreign language and characterized by in-class and out-of-class endeavours in which students engage to fulfil the process of learning a foreign language" (p. 374) and added that for Gardner (1985), it was a part of motivation. Actually, when the literature was reviewed, it was seen that the effort the students put into learning a language was usually investigated as an output concerning motivation (Al Shaye, Yeung, & Suliman, 2014; Csizér, & Dörnyei, 2005 as cited in Özer, 2020). Littlewood (1999) considered success could be obtained through hard work and effort along with innate ability. Effort was among the most important factors which affected both language learning and learning in general. Bozick and Dempsey (2010) and Carbonaro (2005) classified types of effort put into learning a language. Specifically, learning effort was categorized as non-compliant, substantive and procedural behaviours (Bozick & Dempsey, 2010). For Bozick and Dempsey (2010), while non-compliance effort referred to restrained effort exertion (come to class late, not to finish homework), substantive kind of effort included learning behaviours (spend extra time to study and prepare for exams) and procedural one covered such effort as adhering to the rules in class or school or completing the assignments. Karabıyık (2016) defined non-compliance effort as "behaviors that hindered effort exertion in the foreign classroom" (p. 77). Focal effort was associated with "attentiveness in the foreign language classroom" (Karabıyık & Mirici, 2018, p. 386). Additionally, task-oriented effort included assignments like homework and seatwork and general achievement behaviours contained joining in-class activities and attendance (Karabıyık & Mirici, 2018). Learning effort was 'a multifaceted construct' in the domain of foreign language learning so that its four factors as focal, substantive, procedural and non-compliance were involved in this study (Özer, 2020). Some research concentrated on the correlation between learning effort and achievement (Guang-hui, 2005; Moskovsky, Assulaimani, Racheva & Harkins, 2016). Specifically, Moskovsky, Assulaimani, Racheva and Harkins (2016) did not find a strong relationship between the students' proficiency scores and intended learning effort. Guang-hui (2005) asserted that achievement in learning a foreign language was directly related to learning effort. Furthermore, test-oriented motivation

negatively affected learning effort so that in teaching a language, it did not need to be encouraged. A recent study in the literature reviewed so far focused on English language learners' learning effort. Özer (2020) explored learning effort levels of 385 students who studied English for Specific Purposes at a university in Turkey. The study concluded that the participants' procedural effort was at "often" level, which indicated that the students often agreed to obey the rules in school and do their homework. Similarly, their focal effort was found to be at "often" level, which showed that the participants often attentively listened to their instructor and concentrated solely on the lesson in their classes. However, the students' non-compliance effort was at "never" level. This finding displayed that the students never plagiarized their homework assignments and cheated on exams according to their responses.

In the light of the literature reviewed above, it was clear that learners' autonomy and effort were important parts of foreign language learning in face-to-face education. It was possible to say that there could be a relationship between EFL learners' effort to learn a new language and their level of autonomy. However, there was not much research about this relationship in the context of distance education in higher education. For this reason, this research aimed to fill this gap in foreign language learning. With this aim, the research questions of the current study were formulated as followed:

1- What are the levels of EFL learners' perceived foreign language learning effort in online distance education?
2- What are the levels of EFL learners' perceived autonomy in online distance education?
3- Is there a relationship between EFL learners' levels of perceived language learning effort and perceived learning autonomy in online distance education?

2. METHOD

The current study was designed based on a baseline descriptive survey method as it aimed to determine the participants' perceived foreign language learning effort and their perceived autonomy levels. Isaac and Michael (1997) acknowledged that descriptive survey method was used for the following reasons:

> "to answer questions that have been raised, to solve problems that have been posed or observed, to assess needs and set goals, to determine whether or not specific objectives have been met, to establish baselines against which future comparisons can be made, to analyse trends across time, and generally, to describe what exists, in what amount, and in what context" (as cited in Glasow, 2005, p. 1).

Additionally, a correlation analysis as one of the associational models was carried out to examine the relationship between the learners' perceived language learning effort and their perceived autonomy. Associational models were used to determine the existence and the degree of the relationship between two or more variables (Karasar, 2012).

2.1. Participants

The population of the study was composed of 220 learners, 75 (34.1%) of which were male and 145 (65.9%) were female studying in four different faculties of a state university including Science and Letters, Theology, Engineering, Sports Science and Vocational School of Health Sciences. All the participants were those who were studying compulsory English course (three hours a week) for a year through online distance education at a tertiary level in Turkey. The students were all first-grade students and had an A1 language learning level for English.

2.2. Data collection and instruments

The data were collected through online survey during the fall semester of the 2020-2021 academic year. The study was carried out during the pandemic (corona virus, Covid 19). The participants were informed that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and would not affect their grade in the course.

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2.2.1. The foreign language learning effort scale

The Foreign Language Learning Effort (FLLE) scale originally developed by Karabıyık and Mirici (2018) was administered to the students in Turkish. The FLLE was defined as "a student self-report instrument that measures the level of effort students put forth in foreign language learning" and it is "believed to be a practical measure for researchers seeking to investigate effort as a multidimensional construct" (Karabıyık & Mirici, 2018, p. 377). The first section of the questionnaire consisted of the participants' demographic information. It asked participants to fill out information considering their age, major and gender. The second part included 17 items with four subscales as non-compliance (three items), procedural (three items), substantive (eight items) and focal (three items). It was designed to elicit the students' responses on a five-point Likert scale ranging from one to five as "never" to "always". As aforementioned, the FLLES covered four subscales including non-compliance effort, procedural effort, substantive effort and focal effort. The participants' responses were assessed as never (1-1.80), rarely (1.81-2.60), sometimes (2.61-3.40), often (3.41-4.20) and always (4.21-5.00). The participants were required to rate the statements such as "I review the topics covered in my foreign language class" or "I engage in disruptive behaviors in classes". The Cronbach's alpha value for the scale was found to be .86. As sub-dimensions of the scale were concerned, the Cronbach's alpha was .85 for non-compliance effort and it was .85 for procedural effort. Moreover, it was .81 for substantive effort and it was .75 for focal effort (Karabıyık, 2016). In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients calculated for the data set collected from 220 students were found .79.

2.2.2. The autonomy perception scale

The second instrument, namely the Autonomy Perception Scale, originally developed by Demirtaş (2010) who benefitted from the autonomy scale developed by Figura and Jarvis (2007) was administered to the participants in Turkish. The scale covered 30 items assessing the level of autonomy perceptions of the students towards language learning. The Cronbach's alpha value for the scale was .89. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha value was found to be .92, which was quite satisfying. A five-point frequency scale ranging from "never" to "always" was utilised for the purpose of the study. The students were required to rate the statements such as "I plan my English learning process" or "At the end of a learning activity, I make comments on how well my friends have learnt". 3.50 was accepted as a cut-off score as a mean score at 3.50 or over displayed that the participants employed the autonomous skill to a sufficient degree (Demirtaş & Sert, 2010).

2.3. Data analysis

The data collected from the participants were firstly coded and then analysed through SPSS 25. The data were analysed using basic descriptive statistics like arithmetic means and standard deviations and Pearson correlation analysis. In accordance with the aim of the study, two scales were administered in the students' mother tongue, Turkish, in order to gather the data of the study. The results of the study were presented in three sections based on the research questions of the study. The level of significance was 0.05 for the analyses.

2.4. Ethical approval

In this study, all rules that are required to be followed within the scope of the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed. None of the actions listed

under the title of "Actions Violating Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", which is the second part of the directive, were taken.

The ethics committee permission document required for the collection of the data used in this research was obtained from İnönü University Social and Humanities Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the decision number 2021/19-22 dated 07.10.2021.

3. RESULTS

3.1. EFL learners' perceived foreign language learning effort levels in online distance learning

The findings were presented in tables in accordance with the research questions of the study. The level of significance was 0.05 for the analyses, which were conducted using SPSS 25. As aforementioned, the FLLES covered four subscales including focal effort, non compliance effort, substantive effort and procedural effort. Table 1 showed the overall results of the four scales of the scale below.

Table 1.

Results on Non-compliance, Procedural, Substantive and Focal Efforts Levels of the Students

Non compliance effort items	N	Mean	S.D.
2. I engage in disruptive behaviors in classes.	214	1.35	.80
8. I cheat on exams.	215	1.31	.62
14. I plagiarize my homework assignments.	215	1.40	.67
Overall mean score		1.35	0.69
Procedural effort items			
4. I do my homework on time.	215	4.38	.79
10. I submit my homework on time.	215	4.60	.69
16. I carry out the assigned in-class tasks.	215	4.25	.83
Overall mean score		4.41	.77
Substantive effort items			
1. I prepare well for my foreign language exams.	215	3.98	.76
3. I review the topics covered in my foreign language class.	215	3.65	.87
5. I review the topics to be covered in my class.	215	3.13	.96
7. Even if I am not given homework assignment I practice from various sources.	215	3.11	1.09
9. I engage in foreign language mediums in out-of-class activities (e.g. read books, watch movies, speak to foreigners, etc.)	215	2.92	1.38
11. I revise my assignments if I receive any corrections.	215	4.60	.66
13. I consult my foreign language instructor or other experts for advice on how to improve my English.	215	3.59	1.17
15. If possible, I volunteer for extra homework assignments.	215	2.96	1.16
Overall mean score		3.49	1.00
Focal effort items			
6. I attentively listen to my instructor.	215	4.49	.64
12. I attentively listen to the contributions made by my peers.	215	4.42	.72
17. I concentrate solely on the lesson in my classes.	215	4.34	.67
Overall mean score		4.41	.67
Overall mean score		3.44	

As indicated in Table 1, the overall perceived language learning effort mean score was 3.44. The first subscale was consisted of 3 items (2, 8, 14) denoting non-compliance effort. Table 1 displayed that it was seen that the participants' mean score for procedural effort was 1.35 and it showed that it was at "never"

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level. Specifically, it was clear that the learners never cheated on exams (M= 1.31) or engaged in disruptive behaviours in classes (M=1.35) and plagiarized their homework assignments (M=1.40).

The second subscale was comprised of 3 items (4, 10 and 16) elaborating procedural effort. Table 1 demonstrated that the learners' mean score was found to be 4.41 for procedural effort and it was at "always" level. In detail, the students acknowledged that they always submitted their homework on time (M=4.60), did their homework (M= 4.38) and carried out the assigned in-class tasks (M=4.25).

The third subscale included substantive effort with 8 items (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15). Table 1 displayed that the mean score for factor three was obtained as 3.49. It meant that it was at "often" level. Specifically speaking, the participants reported that if they received any corrections, they always revised their assignments (M=4.60). Furthermore, they often prepared well for their foreign language exams (M=3.98), reviewed the topics covered in their foreign language class (M= 3.65) and consulted their foreign language instructor or other experts for advice on how to improve their English (M=3.59). Additionally, the students sometimes reviewed the topics to be covered in their class (M=3.13), practiced from various sources even if they were not given a homework assignment (M=3.11), volunteered for extra homework assignments if possible (M= 2.96) and engaged in foreign language mediums in out-of-class activities (M=2.92).

Finally, the forth subscale included focal effort with 3 items (6, 12 and 17). As shown in Table 1, the learners' mean score for factor four was found to be 4.41 and it was at "always" level. It was observed that the participants reported that they always attentively listened to their instructor *(*M=4.49*),* listened to the contributions made by their peers (M= 4.42) and concentrated solely on the lesson in their classes (M=3.88).

3.2. EFL learners' perceived autonomy level in online distance learning

The Learner Autonomy Scale (Demirtaş, 2010) including 30 items was administered so as to give responses to the second research question of the study as to what degree EFL learners were autonomous. Table 2 indicated the students' perceptions of autonomy.

Table 2.

Results on EFL Learners' Level of Autonomy Perceptions

Items	N	Mean	S.D.
1. I plan my English learning process.	215	3.29	1.18
2. I plan my time while learning English.	215	3.13	1.21
3. I identify my aims and targets in English learning.	215	3.56	1.16
4. I look for better ways to learn English.	215	3.97	1.07
5. I try to find tools and materials that well match with my level in order to better learn English.	215	3,70	1.13
6. I try to practice English with my friends and teachers.	215	2.90	1.23
7. I exchange ideas with my friends and/or teachers on how to learn English.	215	3.28	1.14
8. I try to seek help from my friends and/or teachers when I learn unfamiliar subjects.	215	4.45	3.57
9. At the end of a learning activity, I give feedback to my friends and teachers on how well I have learnt.	215	3.47	1.12
10. At the end of a learning activity, I ask my friends and teachers for feedback on how well I have learnt.	215	3.59	1.13

Table 2. continue
Results on EFL Learners' Level of Autonomy Perceptions

11. At the end of a learning activity, I make comments on how well my friends have learnt.	215	2.93	1.20
12. I write down either my comments or the comments made by others about my learning activity.	215	2.94	1.25
13.I listen to English broadcasting in radio, internet, etc.	215	3.09	2.43
14. While listening to English, I focus on certain keywords.	215	3.94	1.13
15. If possible, I listen to the same English listening material a few times in order to increase my understanding of it.	215	4.00	1.11
16. I try to understand English song lyrics while listening to them.	215	3.54	1.35
18. I try to use every opportunity to utter each new word or structure that I have heard.	215	3.26	1.23
19. I try to use every opportunity to write down each new word or structure that I have heard.	215	3.23	1.24
20. I pay attention to images while watching a TV programme or movie in English in order to better grasp it.	215	4.29	3.61
21. I take notes of new words, word groups, idioms and structures while watching.	215	3.50	1.33
22. I try to use every opportunity to utter each new word or structure that I have come across, while watching.	215	3.22	1.27
23. I try to use every opportunity to write down each new word or structure that I have heard while watching.	215	3.17	1.28
24. I read books, periodicals, internet etc. in English.	211	2.31	1.24
25. Before starting to read, I first try to make predictions about the topic, by looking at the titles and pictures.	211	3.63	1.25
26. I try to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words in the text without resorting to the dictionary.	211	3.39	1.27
27. I take note of new words, word groups, idioms and structures, while reading.	211	3.17	1.39
28. In order to promote my vocabulary knowledge, I regularly go through the text that I have read before.	211	2.94	1.34
29. I try to make use of every opportunity to involve a new word or structure in speech, which I came across while reading.	211	3.01	1.31
30. I try to make use of every opportunity to involve new words and structures in writing, which I came across while reading.	211	3.05	1.32
Overall mean score		3.38	1.42

As shown in Table 2, the participants' mean scores ranged between 3.50 and 4.45 for 12 items such as 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, and 25. Specifically, the learners reported that they tried to seek help from their friends and/or teachers when they learned unfamiliar subjects (M=4.45), they paid attention to images while watching a TV programme or movie in English in order to better grasp it (M=4.29) and they listened to the same English listening material a few times in order to increase their understanding of it if possible (M=4.00) with the highest mean score. Furthermore, they looked for better ways to learn English (M=3.97), they focused on certain keywords while listening to English (M=3.94) and they tried to find tools and materials that well matched with their level in order to better learn English (3.70). Before starting to read, they first tried to make predictions about the topic by looking at the titles and pictures (3.63), they asked their friends and teachers for feedback on how well they had learnt at the end of a learning activity (3.59) and they took notes of new words, word groups, idioms and structures while listening (3.58). They identified their aims and targets in English learning (3.56), they tried to understand English song lyrics

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while listening to them (3.54) and they took notes of new words, word groups, idioms and structures while watching (3.50). Nevertheless, as for the remaining 18 items, the mean scores varied between 2.31 and 3.47. In more detail, the students stated that they read books, periodicals, internet etc. in English (M=2.31) and tried to practice English with their friends and teachers (M=2.90) and they made comments on how well their friends had learnt at the end of a learning activity (M=2.93) with the lowest mean score. Moreover, they wrote down either their comments or the comments made by others about their learning activity (M=2.94) and they regularly went through the text that they had read before in order to promote their vocabulary knowledge (M=2.94) at a low degree.

3.3. The relationship between EFL learners' levels of perceived language learning effort and perceived learning autonomy in online distance learning

It was also investigated whether there was a correlation between the students' perceived language learning effort and autonomy perceptions as shown in Table 3. For this purpose, Pearson correlation analysis was used in order to measure the relationship between perceived language learning effort and autonomy.

Table 3.

Results on Relationship between EFL Learners' Autonomy Perceptions and Language Learning Effort Subscales

		Non-compliance	Procedural	Substantive	Focal
Autonomy	Pearson correlation	,118	,385**	,735**	,417**
perceptions	Sig. (2-tailed)	,082	,000	,000	,000
	N	220	220	220	220

To be more specific, so as to better comprehend the overall result presented above, the relationship between perceived language learning effort subscales and the learning autonomy perceptions was also explored to determine where any relationships laid. As displayed in Table 3, the strongest positive relationship was found between substantive effort and autonomy (r= .735, p< 0.000) according to the Pearson coefficient analysis. Moreover, the students' autonomy perceptions were found to be positively related to non-compliance effort (r= 0.385, p= 0.00) and focal effort (r=0.417, p= 0.000). However, there was not a correlation between the students' non-compliance effort and their autonomy.

4. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper comprehensively examined the correlation between the students' perceived language learning effort and their learning autonomy perceptions in the context of online distance education. The findings of the study were primarily based on self reported data gathered quantitatively by questionnaires rather than actual behaviours reflecting learner autonomy and learning effort. The findings confirmed the link between autonomy and language learning effort of the students. To be specific, the first research question of the study was designed to elicit the degree of EFL learners' perceived language learning effort in distance education. The results of the initial descriptive analyses of perceived language learning effort showed that the students often put effort to learn a foreign language.

Regarding the first subscale, the non-compliance effort, the learners' mean score was found to be at "never" level, which showed the restrained effort exertion (Bozick & Dempsey, 2010). The reason behind this finding could be related with the fact that the researcher of the study was also the instructor of the students. Therefore, the students could feel uncomfortable while giving responses to the items of the non-compliance effort. However, similar result was found in the findings of the previous research (Özer, 2020). The second

subscale, namely procedural effort was related to "endeavours engaged to fulfil the demands specific to the foreign language classroom" (Karabıyık, 2016, p.77). The results of the procedural effort subscale indicated that the participants employed procedural effort in learning a foreign language at "always" level. In another study (Özer, 2020), the students showed procedural effort in learning a foreign language at "often" level. Both studies had nearly similar findings. The third subscale was substantive effort including "behaviors that denote active involvement in learning a foreign language" (Karabıyık, 2016, p.77). For substantive effort, the mean score was found to be at often level, which did not support the findings of the previous study (Özer, 2020). The students got the highest mean score in this part for reviewing their homework at always level and they obtained the lowest mean score in engaging in activities out of the classroom at sometimes level. The fourth subscale of the language learning effort was focal effort. In line with the results of procedural effort subscale, the students declared that they always put focal effort when learning a language. This finding was in the opposite direction of the results of the previous study (Özer, 2020), in which the students showed focal effort at "often" level. The students reported that they always listened to their teachers and classmates and focused on only the lesson when they were in the classroom.

In the present study, for the second research question aiming to give a response to the question to what degree EFL learners perceived themselves as autonomous in distance learning, the Autonomy Perception scale was implemented. By looking at the mean scores of the Autonomy Perception Scale, it was seen that the students could either employ the autonomous skills to a minimum degree or they were not capable of using them since they got low scores in more than half of the items in the scale. Despite the fact that the students reported that they had the capacity for perceived autonomous learning skills at a sufficient degree in some parts of the scale (Çakıcı, 2017; Üstünlüoğlu, 2009; Yıldırım, 2008; Bekleyen & Selimoğlu, 2016), it was possible to say that the students could not satisfactorily make use of autonomous learning skills (Demirtaş & Sert, 2010). The previous study (Fırat, 2016) indicated that learners' autonomy in distance learning environment was found to be high while the students' overall mean score of perceived autonomy in the current study was under mean score.

Finally, the third research question intended to determine whether there was a significant difference between learners' perceived autonomy perceptions and their perceived learning effort in online foreign language learning. The current study showed a significant correlation between students' learning autonomy perceptions and their perceived language learning effort in distance learning. According to Pearson correlation result of the research, it was possible to say that the more autonomous the students were, the more effort they made in learning a foreign language. This finding was consistent with the results of the previous study showing that the link between autonomy and learning effort was mutual since they reinforced each other (Scharle & Szabó, 2000 as cited in Sawan, 2016).

5. CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to achieve three main purposes. According to the first goal of the study, it was aimed at exploring the learners' perceived language learning effort levels while the second aim focused on determining the learners' perceived learning autonomy levels. Finally, the last goal of the study intended to examine the relationship between the levels of learners' language learning effort and those of their learning autonomy perceptions. Building on the above findings, according to the students' perceptions of language learning effort it was concluded that EFL learners always made procedural and focal effort, they often exerted substantive effort in order to learn a foreign language and they never exhibited non-compliance effort for learning a foreign language. Furthermore, a statistically significant difference was found between the EFL learners' learning autonomy perception and their perceived language learning effort in online distance education.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The current study has several limitations. Despite of the fact that the findings were based on the learners' self-reported data, which implied certain built-in limitations; they provided a foundation for future studies

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about EFL language learners' autonomous learning skills and their learning effort. In this vein, further research can be administered by using qualitative data collection tools such as learner diaries and semi-structured interviews. Secondly, this research was conducted with a limited number of freshmen tertiary level students studying English however; further studies can be carried out with a large number of participants from different educational background. Thirdly, further studies can include the possible impacts of age and success on language learning effort and learner autonomy. Lastly, it was suggested that factors or reasons hindering and enhancing the levels of learners' language learning effort and a greater sense of autonomy should be investigated in the context of online distance foreign language education.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

1. Giriş

Mobil teknolojinin ve internetin uzaktan eğitimde yaygın olarak kullanılması sayesinde, öğrenciler çevrimiçi dil öğrenimlerini kendi kendilerine düzenleme şansına sahiptir (Wang & Zhan, 2020). Bunun sonucu olarak, öğrencilerin kendi öğrenmelerinde daha fazla sorumluluk almaları ve çevrimiçi öğrenmeye daha fazla çaba göstermeleri gerekmektedir. İnternet kullanımının öğrencilerin öğretmenlerine ve kitaplarına bağımlı olmadan öğrenmede özerk olmalarına yardımcı olduğuna inanılmaktadır (Mohammadi, Ghorbani & Hamidi, 2011). Teknoloji, yabancı dil öğreniminde özerkliği artırmak için güçlü bir araç olarak ele alınmaktadır (Bravo, Intriago, Holguin, Garzon & Arcia, 2016). Wang ve Zhan'a (2020) göre, "araçsal motivasyon, öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenme çabalarının olumlu bir yordayıcısıdır, bu da öz-düzenlemeli öğrenme verimliliğini ve strateji kullanımını etkileyebilir" (s. 20). Ancak, bahsi geçen çalışma dışında, uzaktan eğitimde İngilizce öğrenenlerin öğrenme çabası üzerine çok fazla araştırma yapılmamıştır. Literatür incelendiğinde öğrencilerin bir dili öğrenmek için harcadıkları çabanın genellikle motivasyonla ilgili bir çıktı olarak araştırıldığı görülmüştür (Al Shaye, Yeung & Suliman , 2014; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005, akt. Özer, 2018). Özerklik ve motivasyon arasındaki bağlantı dil öğrenimi bağlamında incelenmiştir. Harmanlanmış öğrenme ve asenkron uzaktan öğrenmede öğrencilerin özerkliği ve motivasyonu arasında pozitif ve anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur (Güneş, 2018). Sawan (2016), İngilizce öğrenenlerin özerkliği ile motivasyonları arasında düşük derecede ama pozitif bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koymuştur ancak aynı çalışma katılımcıların özerk davranışları ve çabaları arasında çok güçlü pozitif bir ilişki olduğunu da göstermektedir. Motivasyon ve öğrenme başarısı, öğrencilerin kendi öğrenmelerinden sorumlu olmalarına ve öğrenmeleri hakkında karar verme kapasitesine sahip olmalarına bağlanmaktadır böylece eğitim motivasyon teorileri ile özerklik arasında önemli bir bağlantı olduğu sonucu ortaya çıkmaktadır (Gandhimathi & Devi, 2016).

Bununla birlikte, çevrimiçi uzaktan İngilizce dersinde öğrenme çabası konusu henüz araştırılmamıştır. Ayrıca çevrimiçi uzaktan İngilizce öğrenenlerin dil öğrenme çabası ile özerklik algıları arasındaki ilişki yeterince araştırılmamıştır. Bu nedenle bu çalışma alanyazında eksik olan konuların araştırılmasını amaçlamaktadır. Bu genel amaç doğrultusunda aşağıdaki sorulara cevap aranmıştır:

1-Çevrimiçi uzaktan eğitimde İngilizce öğrenenlerin algıladıkları yabancı dil öğrenme çabaları düzeyi nedir?

2- Çevrimiçi uzaktan eğitimde İngilizce öğrenenlerin algılanan özerklikleri düzeyi nedir?

3- Çevrimiçi uzaktan eğitimde İngilizce öğrenenlerin algılanan dil öğrenme çabası düzeyleri ile algılanan öğrenme özerkliği arasında bir ilişki var mıdır?

2. YÖNTEM

Araştırma nicel araştırma desenlerinden betimsel tarama modeline göre tasarlanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde, betimsel istatistikler (ortalama ve standart sapma) ve Pearson korelasyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Veriler çevrimiçi anket yoluyla toplanmış ve katılımcılara araştırmaya katılımlarının tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalı olduğu ve ders notlarını etkilemeyeceği bilgisi verilmiştir. Katılımcılardan toplanan veriler önce kodlanmış, ardından SPSS 25 ile analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın evrenini bir devlet üniversitesinin Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi, Mühendislik Fakültesi, Spor Bilimleri ve Sağlık Hizmetleri Meslek Yüksekokulu olmak üzere dört farklı bölümünde öğrenim gören 75'i (%34,1) erkek, 145'i (%65,9) kadın olmak üzere 220 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcıların tamamı, 2020-2021 eğitim-öğretim yılı güz döneminde çevrimiçi uzaktan eğitim yoluyla bir yıl zorunlu İngilizce dersi alan öğrencilerdir.

3. BULGULAR, TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

Bu çalışmada çevrimiçi uzaktan eğitim bağlamında öğrencilerin algılanan dil öğrenme çabası ile öğrenme özerkliği algıları arasındaki ilişki kapsamlı bir şekilde incelenmiştir. Çalışma bulguları, katılımcıların özerklik algıları ile algılanan dil öğrenme çabası arasında bir bağlantı olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır.

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Algılanan dil öğrenme çabasının ilk tanımlayıcı analizlerinin sonuçları, öğrencilerin genellikle bir yabancı dil öğrenmek için çaba sarf ettiğini göstermiştir. Öğrenciler, hiç kopya çekmediklerini, derslerde bozucu davranışlarda bulunmadıklarını ve ödevlerinde intihal yapmadıklarını belirtmişlerdir (Özer, 2020).

Özerklik Algısı Ölçeği puan ortalamalarına bakıldığında öğrencilerin özerk becerileri en az düzeyde kullanabildikleri ya da maddelerin yarısından fazlasında düşük puan aldıkları için bu becerileri kullanamadıkları ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğrencilerin özerk öğrenme becerilerini bir ölçüde yeterli düzeyde kullanma kapasitesine sahip olmalarına rağmen (Çakıcı, 2017; Üstünlüoğlu, 2009; Yıldırım, 2008; Bekleyen & Selimoğlu, 2016) genel anlamda özerk olmadıkları görülmüştür. Öğrenciler özerk öğrenme becerilerini yeterince kullanamamaktadırlar (Demirtaş & Sert, 2010). Bu bulgular Fırat'ın (2016) uzaktan eğitim ortamında öğrenen özerkliğinin yüksek olduğu bulgusundan farklılık göstermiştir.

Bu çalışma öğrencilerin öğrenme özerkliği algıları ile uzaktan eğitimde algılanan dil öğrenme çabaları arasında önemli bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Araştırmanın Pearson korelasyon analizi sonucuna göre öğrenciler yabancı dil öğrenmede ne kadar özerk olurlarsa o kadar fazla çaba sarf etmektedirler. Bu bulgu, birbirlerini güçlendirdikleri için özerklik ve öğrenme çabası arasındaki bağlantının karşılıklı olduğu sonucuyla tutarlılık göstermektedir (Scharle & Szabó, 2000, akt. Sawan, 2016; Sawan, 2016).

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