



Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

The Role of Teacher Cooperation in Promoting Learner Autonomy: Perspectives from Focus-group Inservice Teacher Training

Öğrenci Özerkliğini Teşvik Etmede Öğretmen İşbirliğinin Rolü: Odak Grup Hizmet İçi Öğretmen Eğitiminden Perspektifler

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Abstract: Learner autonomy in language learning and teaching has been a notable focus of interest, and there is an abundance of literature available on this topic. However, how learner autonomy is practised in the language classroom has not received much attention. To address this gap, the current study set out to investigate English language instructors' classroom practices in public and private universities and the potential contribution of inservice teacher training (INSET) in promoting learner autonomy through quantitative and qualitative analyses. The data from the questionnaires was analysed by using SPSS to get inferential and descriptive statistics. We used an independent samples t-test to show the differences between public and private universities as well as the effect size of differences. Findings revealed that there is partial learner autonomy in institutions and the type of university (public or private) did not differ in terms of classroom practices and teaching strategies. Analyses of reflective writing papers also showed that inservice teacher training plays a significant role in promoting learner autonomy in language classes. Perceived impacts, drawbacks, and envisioning the future implementations of INSET programs were discussed as emerging themes from thematic analyses.

Keywords: learner autonomy, inservice teacher training, language learning, teacher collaboration.

Öz: Dil öğrenimi ve öğretiminde öğrenci özerkliği dikkate değer bir ilgi odağı olmuştur ve bu konuda çok sayıda okur-yazar mevcuttur. Bununla birlikte, dil sınıflarında öğrenen özerkliğinin nasıl uygulandığı fazla ilgi görmemiştir. Bu eksiklikten yola çıkarak, mevcut çalışma, nitel ve nicel analizler kullanarak İngilizce öğretmenlerinin devlet ve özel üniversitelerdeki sınıf içi uygulamaları ve hizmet içi eğitimin (INSET) öz yeterliliğe olan katkısını incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Anketlerden elde edilen veriler çıkarımsal ve tanımlayıcı istatistikler elde etmek için SPSS kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Devlet ve vakıf üniversiteleri arasındaki farkları ve farklılıklardaki sonucun etki büyüklüğünü göstermek için bağımsız örneklem t testi kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, kurumlarda kısmi öğrenci özerkliğinin olduğunu ve üniversite türünün (devlet veya özel) sınıf uygulamaları ve öğretim stratejileri açısından farklılık göstermediğini ortaya koymuştur. Yansıtıcı yazma kâğıtlarının analizi ayrıca hizmet içi öğretmen eğitiminin dil sınıflarında öğrenen özerkliğini geliştirmede önemli bir rol oynadığını göstermiştir. Tematik analizlerden ortaya çıkan temalarda INSET programlarının gelecekteki uygulamalarına dair algılanan katkılar, dezavantajlar ve tavsiyeler, tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğrenci özerkliği, hizmet içi öğretmen eğitimi, dil öğrenimi, öğretmen işbirliği

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1. Introduction

Living in an era that has evolved the world into a global village enables society to reach information far quicker and easier than before. People are no longer restricted to educational institutions to get informed about any topic. Autonomous learners who can take control over their learning have become more salient with the increase in decentred classrooms (Benson, 2006; Borg, 2011; Barillaro, 2011; Holec, 1989; Little, 1995; Smith, 2000). Learners should not depend on a single source; they need to evaluate various sources and choose what can be most useful for them.

Teachers have been the only source of knowledge, but today we can witness, especially in European countries, the shift from a teacher-centred classroom into a learner-centred one. (Camilleri, 1997). In more conservative countries, this situation is reversed, and learners still depend on their teachers, which inevitably results in a lack of self-motivation for research. (Al Asmari, 2013). The teacher is, therefore, very important to guide learners and get them used to taking control of their learning. To guide learners, teachers should be aware of this phenomenon and lead their courses accordingly.

Living in a competitive world requires people to keep up with the needs of social life. In an educational environment, both students and teachers have different needs at different times. Teachers, as having an important role in this cycle, might have the pressure to update their knowledge with the changing needs of the school and students. Learning to teach should not be considered a completed process while the formal training is over. On the contrary, it is an ongoing process and professional development is the key concept in providing teachers with the opportunity to broaden their knowledge during their career (Atay, 2008; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001).

1.1. Defining Learner Autonomy

According to Benson (2006), an autonomous individual has control over his/her life by acting independently and having a choice over available options. As such, these people are not inclined to pursue the crowd but rather, they act on their own and decide their path. Learner autonomy supports self-esteem and fosters people's independence. There is not a precise definition for what we understand from learner autonomy, but there is a common agreement on this term. The autonomous learner can be defined as someone who can set his/her learning objective, take responsibility for his/her learning, implement available learning strategies and evaluate his/her progress (Benson, 2006; Dickinson, 1993; Holec, 1989; Little, 1995) Teachers' beliefs, on the other hand, can be defined as teachers' pedagogic beliefs or beliefs of relevance to an individual's teaching and their view on education that guide their behaviour as teachers (Borg, 2011). According to De Vries and Kahlberg (1987), constructivist teachers are aware of the rationale behind their choices. Therefore, they know why they choose one option over another. The autonomous teacher can think about how children are thinking and at the same time think about how to intervene to promote a constructivist culture. Autonomous teachers do not just accept uncritically what curriculum specialists give them. They think about whether they agree with what is suggested. Therefore, autonomous learners should be viewed as persons who have the freedom to start and lead their learning in the direction of personal autonomy. Those learners possess a capacity for this, and they are not bound to institutions, but they know how to learn from a variety of authentic sources (De Vries & Kahlberg, 1987).

The student is primarily the focus of study on learner autonomy; however, the teacher's involvement is also briefly acknowledged. Every instructor unwittingly incorporates learner autonomy into their lessons (Camilleri, 1997). Many educators do not view their role as solely imparting knowledge; rather, they interpret the curriculum and organize the learning materials. It is intended that teachers, whether intentionally or unintentionally, already foster a certain level of learner autonomy in the classroom. Teachers need to understand that they are no longer expected to be the only knowledge providers; they should act as task assigners or counsellors instead. Considering the teachers' roles in learner autonomy, Camilleri (1997) directed international dimensional research in Malta, Slovenia and the Netherlands at the secondary school level. An important finding of this research suggests that English Language Teachers believe that the concept of learner autonomy has a pedagogic validity. The data does

not suggest unqualified support, but it reveals a willingness among teachers to develop learner autonomy in significant areas of their teaching by trying out new methods.

While the research by Camilleri (1997) showed the perspective from European countries, Al Asmari (2013) carried out comparable research in Saudi Arabia and attempted to represent Taif University's English Language Instructors' point of view. This study found that although instructors stressed the value of learner autonomy, they were hesitant to alter how they guided students because they believed that doing so would result in uneasy feelings on their part. These attempts would lead students to believe that their instructor is not performing his or her duties because their students come from a culture that greatly values the authority of the institution and the teacher. Additionally, teachers claim that because they have dominated the classroom for most of their careers, sharing responsibilities may lead to a fear of losing control.

More recent studies indicate that developments in technology have provided a significant contribution to the promotion of learner autonomy in language learning and teaching (Eren, 2020a). Tsai (2021) analysed the effects of flipped instruction on learner autonomy in an EFL classroom, and findings revealed that language courses delivered via Moodle provided significant contributions in terms of autonomous strategy, behaviour and self-confidence of language learners. Tseng et al. (2020) investigated the role of learner autonomy and collaboration in learning vocabulary in digital environments by administering a 3D vocabulary learning software among young learners. The findings of this quasi-experimental study revealed that collaboration fostered vocabulary retention significantly longer than self-study, suggesting that success in vocabulary learning not only arose from learner autonomy but also required active engagement and collaboration with peers. Vangrieken and Kyndt (2020) examined how teachers perceive and value the relationship between autonomy and collaboration through quantitative SEM model and qualitative content analyses. Findings revealed three basic teacher profiles comprising autonomous collaborative, autonomous individualistic and low curricular autonomy collaborative, indicating the importance of interaction. However, effect sizes were small and qualitative analyses showed that openness in collaboration differs based on the domain of autonomy. These results show that apart from individual autonomy, collaborative autonomy is also a significant element. Yoon et al. (2020) explored the explanatory power of the grit, faculty support for learner autonomy and engagement in achievement through a path analysis in a flipped classroom. Findings indicated that teacher support to foster learner autonomy predicted learner achievement, and authors provided strategies to improve learner autonomy and engagement in flipped classrooms. Eren (2020b) investigated teacher autonomy from a cross-cultural perspective through a repertory grid study and interviews with inservice teachers, and findings revealed that although teachers from various cultures interpreted autonomy from different perspectives, these differences were complementary to each other, contributing to a broader picture in defining autonomy.

1.2. Role of Inservice Teacher Training in EFL

To keep teachers informed about the changes and needs during their career, in-service training (INSET) is provided and these training courses play a crucial role in transmitting these changes and needs to teachers (Cimer, Çakır and Cimer, 2010; Fullan, 1991). From the 1990s on, INSET has gained momentum and spread from primary school to university instructors.

To carry out an effective INSET, education providers have to follow some criteria, which can be defined in six conditions that are necessary to create expected change. Wolter (2000) describes these necessary conditions as feasibility, acceptability, relevance, trialability, adaptability and ownership. These conditions have a crucial role in matching the expectations of both parties. First of all, teachers and the realities of the classroom should be placed at the centre and involve teachers both in the planning and execution of this training (Uysal, 2012; Sandholtz, 2002). Teachers' needs should be analysed well, and their experiences have to be taken into consideration. To carry out an effective INSET activity, teachers' ideas must be valued, and they must be treated as experts. The content of the programme must be negotiated beforehand, and teachers must be encouraged to reflect on their beliefs and behaviours to

provide a long-lasting change in their classroom practises as these might be useful for teachers to develop a sense of ownership. These criteria help teachers raise awareness about their teaching and their professional confidence (Hayes, 2000; Uysal, 2012).

INSET programmes have been popular among teachers; they can meet new people and discuss their professional problems but these programmes generally tend to be away from the classroom environment and factors that affect learning. Thus, expected outcomes are not generally met and create disappointment in the classroom reflection of professional development. These in-service programmes are generally undermined by their one-size-fits-all orientation (Atay, 2008; Yan and He, 2012). Although it is aimed at training teachers about the development and use of different teaching methods during INSET activities, these professional programmes, in general, strictly adhere to one-size-fits-all philosophy (Diaz-Maggioli, 2005). This inevitably creates a lack of interest among teachers towards professional development.

Teachers even tend to consider ongoing in-service training as a waste of time, and they attend these courses for obligatory reasons. These courses do not meet the needs of teachers who are at different stages of their professional careers. A study conducted by Pacek (1996) states that when participants of the in-service training turn back to their daily routine, little change is observed in their teaching. In her study, she described the post-course evaluation of the INSET program for Japanese secondary school teachers. The teacher trainers were native British and aimed to teach a communicative approach. However, because of the cultural differences between Britain and Japan, the course had very little impact on teachers' implementation of the methodology.

Basri (2020) carried out a comprehensive qualitative study on learner autonomy and faculty support for teacher candidates in the faculty of education in terms of factors that limit learner autonomy and faculty support. Her findings revealed that differences resulting from teachers' and learners' backgrounds, disparity of teachers' and learners' expectations, pampering behaviours, and crowded classrooms were the main challenges that inhibit autonomy. The researcher also found that there is a dynamic interaction between learner autonomy and teacher support and these two constructs must be treated together rather than in isolation. Schuster et al. (2021) examined collaboration among teachers in Germany and tried to explain the underlying factors that constitute a network of collaborative environments and types of collaboration among colleagues. Findings suggest that although individual traits are an important factor in building a collaborative environment, collaborative networks are mostly based on earlier personal relationships within established schools. This underscores the necessity of collaborative networks to lower obstacles while engaging in collaboration with peers from various backgrounds.

Considering the problems with traditional in-service programmes, Wolter (2000) suggests a participant-centred approach to INSET course design. He claims that participants of these courses should be called experts in their local learning/teaching environment. Teachers know their teaching environment and they are aware of the problems in these contexts. In this participant-centred approach, teachers become the initiators of ideas rather than mere receivers of innovation. As they have enough knowledge about their educational environment, they can determine better applicability of the innovations presented in these programmes. Uysal (2012) also states that comfortable settings and collaboration are important factors for successful INSET programmes. Teachers are more likely to discuss their classroom realities and problems in a hospitable atmosphere. To reveal the relationship between learner autonomy and inservice training, the current study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do instructors perceive learner autonomy in English language classrooms?
2. Is there a difference in instructors' teaching strategies between public and private universities?
3. What are instructors' attitudes towards focus-group inservice training?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study is based on a convergent mixed-method design to have an in-depth analysis of the research questions. Convergent mixed method designs are preferred when quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed in one phase to see whether each data set complements or disconfirms each other (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). Such a design was instrumental for us since the quantitative aspect would explain the nature of learner autonomy, and qualitative analyses would provide a complementary analysis by focusing on instructors' perspectives on the contribution of inservice training.

2.2. Context and Participants

The sampling of this study consisted of English Language Instructors working at a Public and Private University in the Mediterranean region, Turkey. 29 instructors from the public university participated in this study and their experiences vary between 1- over 25 years. 13 instructors from the private university took part in this research and their working experiences are limited between 0 to 5 years, except two instructors; one is between 10-20 years and the other is over 25. The qualitative data comprised 11 instructors (8 female, 3 male) and they are teaching basic English in this department. They are also teaching day and evening classes.

2.3. Instrument

A five-point Likert-scale questionnaire developed by Al Asmari (2013) was used to get instructors' beliefs towards learner autonomy. The questionnaire had three sections and each section consisted of ten questions. Options in the questions were labelled from 1 to 5 (1= Not at all, 2= Little, 3=Partly, 4= Much, 5= Very much). The first section was intended to get a picture of the current situation of learner autonomy at the university level. The second section focused on reflecting on instructors' teaching strategies. The third section aimed to get instructors' views towards a futuristic approach to learner autonomy. We found the Cronbach's alpha value as 0.71 indicating that the questionnaire is reliable and has consistent internal validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.4. Focus-group in-service programme

In-service teacher training programmes usually consist of one-week long training with the attendance of all the staff at the conference hall. The reflections from instructors who participate in these programmes have been consistent with the problems of in-service programmes mentioned in the literature. Over many years, both local and native teacher trainers have carried out in-service programmes, but they have had little impact on classroom practice. Considering the problems mentioned in the field, the professional development unit (PDU) at a public university considered this feedback and introduced a more participant-based INSET activity. The PDU designed focus groups consisting of five instructors and one teacher trainer. Instead of one-week long training, it is considered to spread this activity into one semester. The members of this group were expected to meet every fortnight. It is expected to learn instructors' perceptions about the efficacy of this focus-group in-service training and its contribution to learner autonomy.

2.5. Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire was handed out to 42 instructors at a public university and 20 instructors at a private university. The data from the questionnaires was analysed by using SPSS to get inferential and descriptive statistics. We used independent samples t-tests to test our research questions and to figure out the effect size from the results of the analyses. Before conducting the independent samples t-test, we carried out several tests to learn whether our data was suitable to meet the assumptions of parametric analyses. First, we screened the data and replaced the missing values. Then, we checked homoscedasticity through Levene's test and analyses showed that the homogeneity of the variance was met and there was no violation ($p > .830$). After that, we checked the distribution of the data using the Shapiro-Wilks' test and the normality of the data was not violated ($p > .134$). We used Cohen's d to

report effect sizes and interpreted $d = .02$ as small, $.05$ medium, and $.08$ as big effect sizes respectively. Next, we analysed frequencies for each item and Table 1 shows basic interpretations of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Categorization of the replies

Reply	Interpretation
Not at all, Little	Resistance to Learner Autonomy
Partly	Collaboration between Teacher and Learner
Much, Very much	Strong Support for the Learner Autonomy

The first two options in the questions, "Not at all" and "Little" can be interpreted as resistance to the learner autonomy. The "Partly" section can be accepted as a collaboration between the teacher and the students towards the activities. "Much" and "Very much" might express a strong belief in the importance of learner autonomy.

For the qualitative section of the study, we carried out a reflective writing assignment to get instructors' perceptions about the training. Farrel (1999) states that reflecting is a robust method of shaping teachers' development. On the other hand, Borg (2001) points out that reflective writing provides much insight into personal views. Additionally, field notes were taken during four sessions of the training to give detailed information about the administration of the activity. As a supplementary source for the study, the researcher took notes via after-training conversations with the instructors. The reflective writing papers were collected and analysed qualitatively by grouping findings under related research questions. The field notes and post-training notes were also analysed to show the structure and the administration of the training.

2.6. Ethical Issues

Ethical protocols are observed during quantitative and qualitative phases of the study within the scope of the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive". Participation in the research was voluntary and all participants were informed about the aim of the study. This research is carried out with the permission obtained with the 08 numbered decision of the Hatay Mustafa Kemal University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee in 10/06/2021.

3. Findings

3.1. Analysis of the Quantitative Data

Findings indicate partial learner autonomy at public and private universities. Instructors at both universities gave almost the same answers with little differences regardless of the differences in teaching experiences and institutional differences. An overall dataset is presented in Figure 1.

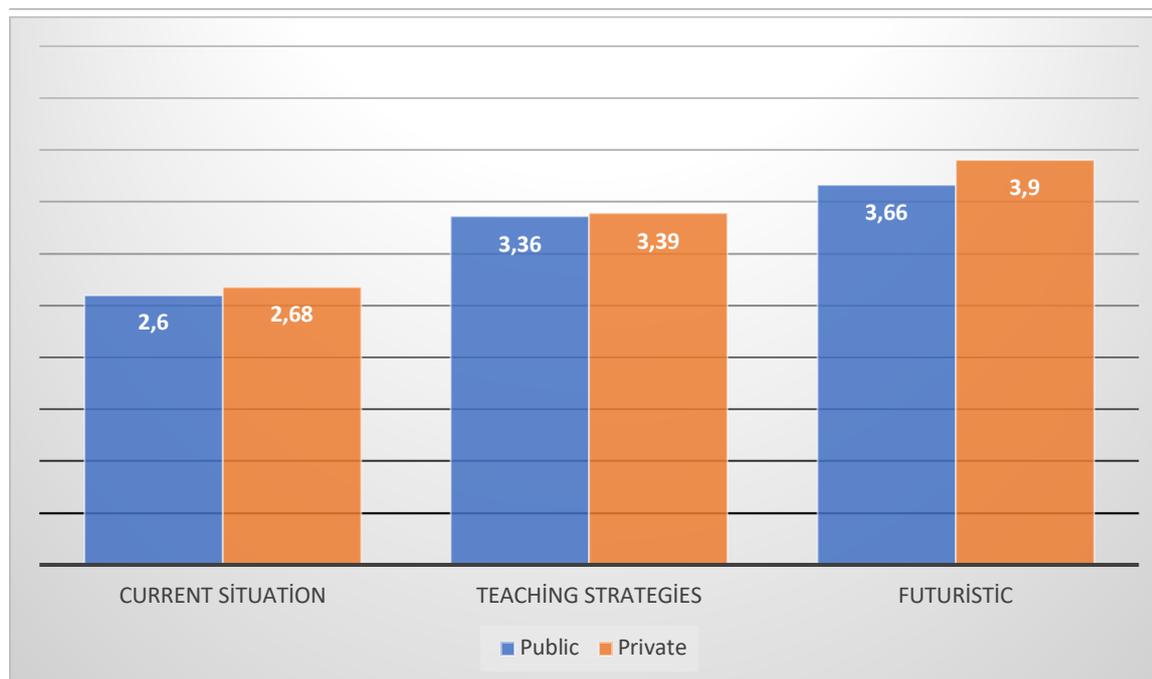


Figure 1. Means for the Overall Dataset

Regarding the current situation in terms of learner autonomy, independent sample t-test results are presented in Table 2. Findings indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between public and private universities ($p > .05$). The effect size of the difference between the universities was small ($d = .18$).

Table 2. Independent Samples T-test Results for the Learner Autonomy- Current Situation

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Public	29	2.6	.44	.571	.18
Private	13	2.68	.42		

The first section investigated to find out the current situation at both universities and the results indicate that none of the mean scores is above 2.9 in this section except question 1 (Q1). The mean scores may show that there is little learner autonomy at these institutions. The Q1 asks whether students compare their results and the mean score for Q1 is 4.2/4.15 with the highest average. The Q4 is about students' self-motivation. Although both universities state that motivation is a problem, it is a bigger problem at public university (%68.9: Not at all+ Little). In Q6, we can see that almost none of the students can identify their strengths and weaknesses at the beginning of the term (Public: %72.4; Private: %84.6; Not at all+ Little). Also, in Q9, it is possible to see that students do not set up their own goals and this is quite higher at private (%84.7- Not at all+ Little). In Q10, almost all instructors agree that students do not discover the concepts on their own, rather they wait for the teacher (Public: %89.6; Private: %84.6; Not at all+ Little).

Regarding the teaching strategies at both institutions, independent samples t-test results are presented in Table 3. Findings show that there was no statistically significant difference between the universities ($p > .05$). The effect size was negligible ($d = .07$).

Table 3. Independent Samples T-test Results for the Teaching Strategies

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Public	29	3.36	.49	.876	.07
Private	13	3.39	.30		

The second section of the questionnaire intended to express the teaching strategies at the institutions and the overall mean scores in this section state that teaching strategies partly fulfil learner autonomy at both universities. The Q11 and the Q12 are about communicative skills and the percentage for communicative tasks is higher at private university (Q11: %84.7, Q12: %76.9; Much+ Very Much). Also, in Q13, all the instructors at private institution stated that they prefer learner-centred plus teacher facilitation in their teaching. In Q18, most of the instructors at both universities agreed that students' poor responsibility is the main problem in teaching English (Public: %72.4, Private: %84.6; Much+ Very Much). In Q19, although instructors at public university stated that poor learner quality is the main problem in teaching English (%58.6; Much+ Very Much), only % 30.8 of the instructors at private institution considered this as a problem.

To explain instructors' opinions about the prospective role of learner autonomy, independent samples t-test results are presented in Table 4. Results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between instructors' perceptions ($p \leq .05$). The effect size of the difference regarding the future of learner autonomy was big ($d = .67$). This indicates that instructors at private universities put more emphasis on the prospective role of learner autonomy.

Table 4. Analysis of the Independent Samples t-test for the Learner Autonomy- Futuristic

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Public	29	3.66	.35	.05*	.67
Private	13	3.90	.36		

The third section of the questionnaire tries to elicit opinions about the future implementation of learner autonomy. The Q21 is about continuous professional development and all the instructors at private university favoured the importance of this issue (%100: Much+ Very Much), but only %55.1 of the instructors at public university favoured this issue as very important. For Q22, almost all instructors at both institutions stated the importance of reflection during teaching (Public: %96.5; Private: %92.3; Much+ Very Much). Questions 23, 24 and 25 express the importance of learner training and almost all instructors support this issue (over %70 for Much+ Very Much in these questions). A high percentage of instructors, in Q29, pointed out that learners should be autonomous, and teachers should ensure this autonomy (Public: %75.6; Private: %69.2). For the Q30, instructors state that they do not receive all necessary theoretical support from their universities (Public: %44.8; Private: %38.5; Not at all+ Little).

3.2. Analysis of the Reflective Writing

3.2.1. Perceived Impacts

All instructors agreed that focus-group in-service training has been quite beneficial in promoting learner autonomy by sharing experiences. The difficulties instructors face in the classroom were discussed in those meetings and experienced instructors shared their advice on classroom problems with inexperienced ones. Especially, inexperienced instructors stated that looking at similar problems from more experienced instructors' perspectives gave them a sense of comfort as they realised that they had been flattering small problems. On the other hand, instructors stated that exchanging ideas had priceless importance for broadening their views. In big conference halls, teachers tend to be shy and do not reflect opinions. However, in focus-group meetings, they had more opportunities to talk about their views as they felt much more valuable in a more sincere atmosphere. One of the instructors coded as T1 expressed her opinions as follows:

T1: This [focus-group training] has been a very useful activity because we were able to talk about each other's approach towards our profession. We saw our similarities and

differences. From time to time, I asked these questions myself "Yes, I can apply that in my class; I haven't thought about this issue from that perspective; Why haven't I applied this before?" We were also able to share our materials. Teachers from my generation compared the similar and different views of teachers from a younger generation.

We can also see that "sharing" was not only limited to opinions but also classroom materials were shared. Experienced teachers have many more sources for teaching different skills. Experienced teachers both benefitted from these materials and discussed the best way to teach them in different classrooms.

3.2.2. Perceived Drawbacks

One of the main problems of INSET activity was the time restriction. Instructors were not mostly pleased with the timing of the activity. The meetings were held every fortnight but were restricted to the lunch break. Instructors claimed that they had a very busy schedule from morning to late evening classes and arranging those meetings during their break time made them nervous and angry. Spending their lunch break with meetings made this activity perceived as a burden. This even caused some serious breakdowns in gathering time among some groups. Some teachers attended late, and others tried to keep the meeting as short as possible. For that reason, the timing had an important negative effect on this training. Another important drawback was instructors' concern about the feedback of their opinions. They expressed their ideas, but they also wanted to know whether the directory gave necessary attention and value to these opinions. Instructor coded as T3 expressed these issues in this way:

T3: Finding the right time to meet is a real pain in the neck. For that reason, I believe that meetings in my group were mostly superficial. I also think that the issues we highlighted are not valued by the directory. In addition, the topics of the in-service training were determined by the directory and most of these subjects were not related to the problems that I had to deal with in my classroom.

Finally, as the T3 mentioned, a needs analysis was a big problem for many teachers. Teacher trainers addressed some subjects for in-service training but as many teachers mentioned, the needs of instructors were not defined beforehand. This might have demotivated some instructors because of the differences between their expectancy from the training and their classroom needs. A more participant-centred training requires the needs assessment in a localised context. These findings are consistent with the ones from Uysal (2012) who asserted that the biggest drawback of the INSET was course content which was not based on teachers' needs. She claimed that this outcome was expected as teachers were not involved in the planning and execution phases of the course.

3.2.3. Envisioning the Future

The problems pointed out as drawbacks of the training mostly constitute advice for a better training activity for next year. Instructors agree on the solid steps to be taken as feedback for their opinions. This will show that their ideas are valued and there are concrete measures for a better educational environment. Instructor coded as T6 states this view as:

T6: We have to get feedback about the problems we have mentioned. This will increase the motivation and enthusiasm among teachers. Most training activities remain a good memory and I haven't seen the classroom implementation of the techniques in traditional training events. There should be more regular meetings. The directory must set a time for this training and should give back our lunch break.

As we can see, teachers are not very satisfied with organizing those meetings during lunch breaks. One another teacher also criticizes this issue by stating that if this training is necessary for professional development, it must be organised accordingly. Apart from these issues, two inexperienced teachers wanted a peer observation by matching an experienced teacher with an inexperienced one.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results indicate that learner autonomy at both institutions is only partially present. The differences between public and private universities are not particularly noticeable. Additionally, the teaching backgrounds of the instructors have little bearing on how they choose to teach. The assertions about the level of student decision-making participation are all relatively low. These findings coincide with the results by Al-Asmari (2013) and Eren (2020b) and we can say that both cultures depend on institutional authority as well and classroom teachers' needs for classroom authority are the main problem for these results. Additionally, following a strict curriculum can be another problem. A huge part of the teachers claim that students do not discover the concepts on their own, rather they wait for the teacher (Public: %89.6; Private: %84.6). This may have resulted from teacher-centred learning. Especially when we consider the lack of motivation in public, it wouldn't be a presumptuous claim to say that students do not try to learn the language.

The average for communicative teaching strategies is higher at private university and we can say that this institution places more emphasis on the productive use of language which might increase the motivation among students as they are trying to use the language in an authentic context. Another interesting point is that instructors at both universities complain that the poor responsibilities of the students are the main problem in teaching English. On the other hand, findings indicate that neither institutions nor teachers give responsibility to learners for their learning, so this creates a dilemma on both sides.

Compared to private university, only %55.1 of the instructors at public university think that continuous professional development is important. The teaching experiences of almost all instructors at private institution vary between 0-5 years and they all favoured professional development. It can be said that teachers with longer teaching experiences do not favour continuous professional development much. Lacey (2007) emphasizes that teachers who have had control of the classroom for most of their teaching life are not akin to change in their teaching and this might explain the loss of interest towards professional development. Instructors claim that they receive little theoretical support. It is necessary to arrange autonomy-centred in-service for teachers. Studies show that if teachers are not autonomous language learners, they might have a negative impact towards the development of learner autonomy because language learners tend to follow the models they observe from their teachers (Little, 1995; Smith, 2000).

Analysis of the qualitative data shows that instructors accept focus-group in-service training as a valuable INSET activity for exchanging ideas and fostering self-esteem, which plays a crucial role in promoting learner autonomy. They were able to relate their experiences to less experienced teachers and share their opinions. In addition to experience, classroom materials were also exchanged among them. This helped teachers feel more valuable when compared with traditional in-service training in which teachers were not always able to talk about their problems. As traditional INSET activities are not generally successful in exchange of opinion, teachers do not feel them necessary for professional development, which in turn creates a lack of reflection for teachers. It was also noted that classroom problems became easier to overcome by talking about similar problems with more experienced teachers. These results are in line with the findings from Schuster et al. (2021) whereby researchers highlighted that individual traits are significant factors in facilitating collaboration among peers. Our results also confirm the findings by Tseng et al. (2020) regarding the necessity of collaboration and active engagement to improve learner autonomy in the classroom.

It is observed that although instructors favour the training in terms of the exchange of ideas, there are some important drawbacks of the training. The most stunning problem is found about the mismatch between training topics and instructors' expectations. Although a more participant-centred approach is employed to make the training more appealing to a local context, we see that topics prepared beforehand without a needs analysis do not solve the problem. A participant-centred in-service training should cover the topics based on teachers before the activity. Otherwise, there might not be much difference between carrying out the activity for a large group in a conference hall and doing it for a small group. On the

other hand, instructors constantly stated that they wanted to see feedback for their comments during the activity. Instructors stated that they are the experts in the classroom and to overcome the problems, their opinions should be valued by applying concrete steps about the decisions during the in-service training. Also, the timing was considered an important problem and teachers did not want to sacrifice their lunch break for official meetings. The school management should make a plan by considering teachers' daily workload. The findings of this study also coincide with Basri (2020) where the researcher emphasized the intrinsic relationship between teacher support and learner autonomy and suggested that these two concepts must tread together rather than analysed discreetly. Our findings also reiterate the studies that emphasize the importance of teacher collaboration in fostering learner autonomy (Vangrieken & Kyndt, 2020; Yoon et al., 2020).

In conclusion, we can say that instructors are in favour of focus-group in-service training as this gives them a voice for their concerns about their classroom. They feel much more valuable by reflecting on their opinions, but they want to see that these ideas are also valued by the directory. Considering the little impact of traditional in-service training, focus-group training can be a good solution as long as the topics are related to the localised context. To create a society that can think and act on its own, it is crucial to educate people as autonomous learners. Teachers are at the centre of the educational circle in Turkey even at the university level and to be able to train learners as autonomous, teachers themselves should know what it means to be autonomous, and they should not be afraid of sharing responsibility with students. This will both lessen teachers' load and motivate students to be more active learners instead of passive attendees of the classroom. For that reason, educational planners should consider this important issue and revise their curriculum accordingly.

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