The Relationship Between Teacher Classroom Leadership and Learner Autonomy: The Case of EFL Classrooms[1]

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Abstract

Learner and learning-centered approaches have prevailed in language education for over three decades yet it is fallacious to claim that the roles of teachers have been rather passive in this process. Quite the contrary, teacher support, guidance and facilitation have turned out to be of capital importance in the development of such learner skills as autonomy and self-regulation. This study sought to identify the relationship between classroom leadership styles of Turkish EFL writing instructors and the autonomous learning skills of their students. The Full Range Leadership (FRL) Model was the theoretical framework on which the determination of instructors' leadership styles was grounded. Correlational survey was adopted as the research design, through which research data were collected via a questionnaire consisting of two independent scales, Classroom Leadership Instrument (CLI) Scale and Autonomous Learning Scale. The questionnaire was administered to 305 students from English Language Teaching and English Language and Literature Departments at a Turkish state university. Research data were analyzed through correlational analyses on SPSS. The results of the study revealed that transformational and active transactional leadership styles of instructors significantly correlated with learner autonomy and hence, it was inferred that the students of those instructors displaying such leadership characteristics appeared to be more autonomous in EFL learning.

Key words: In-class teacher leadership, EFL classrooms, full range leadership, transformational leadership, learner autonomy.

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Sınıf-içi Öğretmen Liderliği ve Öğrenen Özerkliği İlişkisi: İngilizcenin Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğretildiği Sınıflar Örneği

Öz

Öğrenen ve öğrenme merkezli yaklaşımlar dil eğitiminde bir süredir ön planda olmakla birlikte, bu süreçte öğretmen rollerinin pasifleştirildiğini iddia etmek pek mümkün değildir. Bunun tam aksine, öğretmenlerin öğrencilere destek olması, rehberlik yapması ve öğrenmeyi kolaylaştırması öğrenen özerkliği ve öz düzenleme gibi öğrenci becerilerinin geliştirilmesinde büyük öneme sahip olmuştur. Bu çalışmada, Türkiye'de İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği sınıflarda yazma dersini veren öğretim elemanlarının sınıf liderliği stilleri ile bu öğretim elemanlarının öğrencilerinin özerk öğrenme becerileri arasındaki ilişkiyi belirlemek amaçlanmıştır. Öğretmenlerin liderlik stillerinin belirlenmesinde kuramsal çerçeve olarak Tam Kapsamlı Liderlik (TKL) Modeli temel alınmıştır. Araştırma deseni olarak ilişkisel tarama modeli kullanılmış, Sınıf Liderliği Ölçeği ve Özerk Öğrenme Ölçeğinden oluşan bir anket aracılığıyla çalışma verileri toplanmıştır. Anket, Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesinde İngiliz Dili Eğitimi ve İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümlerinde İngilizce yazma dersini alan toplam 305 öğrenciye uygulanmıştır. Toplanan nicel veriler, SPSS programı üzerinden ilişkisel analizlere tabi tutulmuştur. Çalışmanın sonuçları, öğretmenlerin dönüşümcü ve aktif etkileşimci liderlik özelliklerinin, öğrencilerin öğrenen özerkliği ile anlamlı bir şekilde ilişkili olduğunu ve dolayısıyla, bu liderlik özelliklerini sergileyen öğretmenlerin öğrencilerinin İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenmede daha özerk olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sınıf içi öğretmen liderliği, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce sınıfları, tam kapsamlı liderlik, dönüşümcü liderlik, öğrenen özerkliği

Introduction

Teacher effectiveness and teacher-student relationship as two important aspects of group dynamics in the classroom environment bear high relevance to effective student learning (den Brok, 2001; Farrell, 2015; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). Social constructivist theoretical approaches such as Sociocultural Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which focus on the constructive effects of socially-mediated experiences on the cognitive and affective development of learners, also highlight the significant role teachers play in students' intellectual development and learning. Eventually, classroom leadership, which refers to teacher-student relationship largely taking place in the classroom setting and more specifically with interactional and interpersonal teacher actions that have effects on students in cognitive, affective and social aspects (Balwant, Stephan, & Birdi, 2014; Treslan, 2006), is crucially associated with this active role of teachers/instructors in classroom interactions (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2009; Gai, 2005; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005) and the potential impact it has on the achievement of various learning outcomes.

One aspect of student learning that effective classroom leadership bears the potential to contribute to is learner autonomy, which has received increasing interest lately in both general education and second/foreign language (L2) learning. In a broad sense, learner autonomy is defined as one's ability to take charge or control of his/her learning (Holec, 1981). It has been amongst the learner-related issues to which great importance is attached in applied linguistics and second language acquisition research particularly in the last three decades (Benson, 2007, 2011, 2013;

Chan, 2003; Cotterall, 2000; Dickinson, 1995; Lee, 1998; Little, 1991; 2009, 2012; Littlewood, 1996, 1999). Indeed, the focus of language education shifted towards the learner with the advent of autonomy and other learner-oriented approaches (Illés, 2012); nevertheless, this shift of focus has not totally inactivated teacher roles in the learning process. On the contrary, teachers supporting, guiding and facilitating the learning process have gained more crucial positions in the improvement of learners and learning (Benson & Voller, 1997). Teachers have been assigned with the continuing role of encouraging learners' autonomy in both psychological and practical aspects, and with the integration of autonomy-support into classroom activities (Smith, 2008).

The instructional programs aiming to foster learner autonomy are suggested essentially to include scaffolding instruction, assuring guidance and allowing learners to make their own decisions about learning (Cotterall, 2000). During this process, teachers are supposed to be on good terms with students; provide support and guidance for setting clear learning goals; give feedback; encourage; and reinforce student development (Lee, 1998). These teacher behaviors necessary for autonomy facilitation are actually amongst the essential characteristics of an effective teacher leader (Can, 2014; Koh, 2008; Stein, 2010), and this correspondence eventually pinpoints a potential relationship of teacher leadership and learner autonomy, which has been the focus of the present study.

Previous research has already recognized the critical contributions of teacher support to the development of learner autonomy (Brown, 2007; Chan, 2003; Cotterall, 2000; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dinçer, 2014; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2009; Lee, 1998; Little, 2012; Reeve, 1998, 2002) yet, the possible effects of teacher leadership on learner autonomy largely remains unexplored. Even though there are several studies addressing the relationship between leadership and autonomy (Bass, 1999; Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland, Demerouti, Olsen, & Espevik, 2014; Gilbert, Dagenais-Desmarais, & St-Hilaire, 2017; Kovjanic, Schuh, Jonas, van Quaquebeke, & van Dick, 2012; Vondey, 2008; Wang & Gagné, 2013), they are mostly found in organizational leadership literature and their contexts are different from classroom settings.

There are still few works that address learner autonomy in teacher classroom leadership discourse. For instance, Katyal and Evers (2004, p. 381) who attempt to contribute to an enhanced understanding of teacher leadership argue that teacher leadership is now more "complex and multi-faceted as it manifests itself both in its instructional and social roles within schools, as well as adjusting and adapting to the pertinent issue of the students' autonomous learning outside the school". Another exceptional work is the book of Dörnyei and Murphey (2009), entitled Group Dynamics in the Language Classroom, which mentions effective classroom leadership as an important aspect of language teaching and suggests that promoting students' individual and collaborative autonomy has got to be among the goals of an effective language classroom leader. As another rare example, a recent study on the relationship between instructor leadership and learner autonomy in an instructional setting by Harrison (2013) provides findings confirming a significantly positive association between instructor leadership, specifically the transformational leadership style, and learner autonomy. In the current paper, in-class teacher leadership is addressed within the framework of the Full Range Leadership (FRL)

Model, which is one of the theoretical frameworks of the study as will be discussed below.

Theoretical Frameworks of the Study

The theoretical foundations that this study is grounded upon are the Full Range Leadership (FRL) Theory developed by Avolio and Bass (1991) and the Socio-Cultural Learning Theory of Vygotsky (1978). FRL has been the most widely investigated model for leadership with particular emphasis on the effectiveness of transformational leadership style. As Antonakis and House (2002) evaluate, the theory has been an integration of previous leadership theories and it has exceptionally been accepted in related literature and supported by findings of many empirical studies.

FRL recognizes three leadership styles: transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership, listed from the most effective and active to the most ineffective and passive style. According to the theory, transformational leaders are characterized by a charismatic/idealized influence attributed by their followers and also reflected through their actual behaviors; by individualized consideration about their followers' needs, weaknesses and strengths; by inspirational motivation through which they inspire followers about achievement of a shared vision; and by intellectual stimulation which supports followers' intellectual and cognitive abilities such as creativity or problem-solving (Avolio & Bass, 2002; Bass, 1985, 1999). Transactional leaders, on the other hand, typically provide followers with contingent rewards on condition that group objectives are achieved; actively monitor and pay attention to follower performance to prevent deviations from group objectives (active management-by-exception); or passively wait until deviations occur and intervene afterwards (passive management-by-exception) (Avolio & Bass, 2002; Bass, 1985, 1999). Lastly, laissez-faire leaders simply avoid meeting the functional requirements of leadership. The person exhibiting laissez-faire leadership abstains from making decision and taking responsibilities about supervision (den Hartog et al., 1997).

Another theoretical framework this study is related to is the Socio-Cultural Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). According to this theory, learning occurs with social practice, and intellectual development primarily depends on social interaction and mediation. The concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the space between what one can achieve alone and by collaborating with others (Zuengler & Miller, 2006) is the core component of this theory. An important aspect of ZPD which is meaningful for the present study is its implication that in order to achieve higher degrees of development, learning experiences should include optimal external challenge and support so that the learner could achieve revealing his/her full potential (Peer & McClendon, 2002). This outer intervention is referred to as mediation, or mediated learning experience, which suggests that interaction and instruction influence cognitive capability of the learner (Lee, 2014). Another concept closely related to ZPD and socially-mediated learning is scaffolding. It can be defined as the process when a teacher supports a learner while solving a problem or carrying out a task or reaching a goal which would be improbable to achieve with unaided efforts (Bruner, 1978; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Scaffolding is considered significant in language classrooms in particular since negotiation of meaning and

linguistic assistance are considered to be the necessary contributors of language development (Kayi-Aydar, 2013, p. 324).

Research has supported the basic necessity of interpersonal relationships for the development of cognitive and linguistic abilities, and "this process, whether in the classroom or elsewhere, includes transmission, construction, transaction, and transformation in a continuing, complex interplay" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 192). With this understanding, the present study has been grounded on socio-cultural learning as a theoretical framework since it is hypothesized in this study that certain teacher characteristics and skills including effective classroom leadership might have positive learning outcomes including the enhancement of learner autonomy. In this sense, any work interrogating whether teacher leaders with certain characteristics are practically autonomy-supportive or not appears to promise scholarly significance. Addressing the scantiness of research on the teacher leadership-learner autonomy relationship in language teaching and learning literature, the current study aimed to examine the relationship between EFL instructors' classroom leadership styles and the autonomous learning abilities of their students.

Method

Research Design
Correlational survey research design was particularly adopted in the collection and analysis processes of the current study. This design is basically concerned with identifying the non-causal relationships between variables independent of each other. The aim of selecting the correlational survey model was to determine the direction, degree and significance of a relationship between EFL instructors' leadership styles and learner autonomy of their students.

Setting and Participants
The setting of the research was English Language Teaching (ELT) and English Language and Literature (ELL) Departments of a state university in the Eastern Region of Turkey. In the determination of research population, convenience sampling method was followed, and the particular university and departments where the research data were collected were chosen according to their accessibility for the researcher.

One specific course was determined initially since course content could potentially influence students' perceptions of their instructors (Koh & Tan, 1997; Pounder, 2004, 2005). Because of reliability concerns, the researcher purposefully selected a course that was taught in both departments at more than one year of study with the aim of reaching a maximum number of participants. The curricula of both departments were examined and courses taught during fall semesters of all four grades and the preparatory year were listed. The courses of Writing I at the preparatory classes and Advanced Writing I at the first grade were found to be available in both departments. Eventually, preparatory and first year undergraduate students taking the Writing I and Advanced Writing I courses taught by four different instructors in the fall semester of 2015-2016 academic year were determined as the sample participants of the present study. Table 1 below presents the demographic information of the participating students. The four instructors that the students rated were coded in the table as IA, IB, IC and ID.

Table 1

Demographic Information about the Students Participating in the Survey

Variables	Categories	Classes	N	%
Gender	Female		223	74,3
	Male		77	25,7
Department	ELT	3	104	34,7
	ELL	7	196	65,3
Instructor	IA	4(preparatory)	111	37,0
	IB	3(first year)	85	28,3
	ID	2(first year)	68	22,7
	IC	1(preparatory)	36	12,0
TOTAL			300	100

As Table 1 displays, almost three fourths of the participants were female (74,3 %) while one fourth was male (25,7 %). As for their departments, one third of the students were from ELT department (34, 7 %) and two thirds were from the ELL department (65, 3 %). The main study was conducted in five preparatory classes (one in the ELT department and four in the ELL department) and five first year classes (two in the ELT and three in the ELL department). Lastly, the students rated four different instructors. The instructor with the highest number of students participating in the study was IA (37,0 %), followed by IB (28,3 %), ID (22,7 %), and IC (12,0 %).

Data Collection Instruments

Research data were collected with a combination of the Classroom Leadership Instrument (CLI) of Pounder (2004), which is a modified form of Bass and Avolio's (2000) Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X short version, 45 items in total), and the Autonomous Learning Scale (ALS, 12 items in total) of Macaskill and Taylor (2010).

Classroom leadership instrument. MLQ is acknowledged as the most commonly used instrument to survey transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006) and it is a 5-point Likert scale that measures the nine dimensions of the FRL model consisting of three leadership styles: transformational (with five components), transactional (with three components) and laissez faire leadership (with no components), and the three leadership outcomes: leader effectiveness, follower satisfaction and follower extra effort. The results related to the leadership outcomes are excluded in this report since they were irrelevant to the scope of the present paper. The nine dimensions measuring the three leadership styles in the scale were as follows: a) idealized influence (attributed), b) idealized influence (behavior), c) inspirational motivation, d) intellectual stimulation, e) individualized consideration, f) contingent reward, g) active management-by-exception (active MbE), h) passive management-by-exception (passive MbE), i) laissez-faire leadership. With the aim of adapting the scale statements into an educational setting, Pounder (2004) had already modified MLQ into CLI in terms of the wording of the items, and therefore, this version was found more suitable for the current study. Since the results related to

leadership outcomes were irrelevant to the scope of the present paper, that part of the scale was excluded.

The autonomous learning scale. The ALS of Macalister and Taylor (2010), on the other hand, is a 5-point Likert scale designed to measure learner autonomy in two sub-scales: independence of learning and study habits. The scale consists of twelve items in total. Various scales have been developed and used to measure learner autonomy; yet, the ALS was used in this study since it had a brief nature and was applicable to university classroom context in particular (Harrison, 2013).

With the aim of testing the construct validity of the two scales, a correlation analysis was conducted. As Table 2 presents, the CLI dimensions correlated significantly with each other (p<.05, p<.01, p<.001). While all transformational components and transactional contingent reward and active MbE were in a positive correlation, passive MbE and laissez-faire correlated negatively with all these dimensions. These results are consistent with those of Pounder's (2004) Hong Kong study where CLI was originally used. The independence of learning and study habits sub-scales of ALS also positively correlated with each other (p<.001).

Table 2
Correlations of CLI and ALS sub-scales

CLI subscales											
Sub-scales	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1.IS	-										
2.IM	.599***	-									
3.IC	.623***	.617***	-								
4.II-A	.633***	.677***	.598***	-							
5.II-B	.524***	.520***	.459***	.519***	-						
6.CR	.633***	.562***	.557***	.539***	.491***	-					
7.A-MbE	.555***	.533***	.413***	.565***	.530***	.539***	-				
8.P-MbE	-.144*	-.139*	-.166**	-.167**	-.069	-.112	-.066	-			
9.LF	-.285***	-.293***	-.260***	-.291***	-.143*	-.236***	-.248***	.423***	-		
ALS subscales											
10. IL										-	
11.SH										.540***	-

IS: intellectual stimulation; IM: inspirational motivation; IC: individualized consideration; II-A: idealized influence attributed; II-B: idealized influence behavior; CR: contingent reward; A-MbE: active management-by-exception; P-MbE: passive management-by-exception; LF: laissez-faire; IL: independence of learning; SH: study habits; *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

As regards the research reliability, Cronbach's (1951) Alpha results of the pilot survey were .79 and .71 for CLI and ALS, respectively. For the main survey, Cronbach's Alpha and split-half coefficient values of the CLI were found to be .90 and .82, respectively. The same internal consistency coefficient values were measured for ALS, too. As a result of the initial tests, the Cronbach's Alpha value of ALS was found .69. When the results were observed with the aim of understanding which items reduced the consistency, it was found that if one of the items (item number 10) was omitted, the value would increase to .79. After further consultations, the item

was omitted from the scale to avoid reliability risks. Table 3 illustrates internal consistency scores of the two scales in the main survey.

Table 3.
Cronbach's Alpha and Split-half Coefficients

Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha	Split-half Coefficient
Classroom Leadership Instrument	.90	.82
Autonomous Learning Scale	.79	.77

Data Collection and Analysis

After obtaining necessary permissions from the copyright holders of the scales and the faculty administrators of the related departments, the researcher administrated the survey personally during course hours of the selected courses with the aim of reaching maximum participation, making explanations when necessary, and making sure that the students concentrated on the particular instructors teaching the selected courses. After the data collection process, the responses were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for statistical analysis. Initially, with the purpose of deciding whether parametric or nonparametric tests should be used in the analysis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was conducted, and the results showed that none of the variables in the study had a normal distribution ($p<.05$) and therefore, a nonparametric test, i.e. Spearman Brown rank order correlation, was adopted for correlational analyses.

Findings

The mean scores, standard deviation and minimum and maximum scores regarding students' ratings on the transformational, transactional and laissez faire leadership styles of their instructors are presented in Table 4 below. In the determination and interpretation of the instructors' leadership styles, the ranges were determined as 0.00–0.80 (not at all), 0.81-1.60 (once in a while), 1.61-2.40 (sometimes), 2.41-3.20 (fairly often) and 3.21-4.00 (frequently, if not always) in accordance with the five-point nature of this scale.

Results indicated that according to the students' perceptions, their instructors fairly often displayed transformational leadership (M=2.70 ± .64) behaviors, and the majority of its constructs were perceived to be displayed fairly often, excluding idealized influence-behavior which was perceived to be displayed at "sometimes" interval. Transactional leadership behaviors were sometimes displayed according to the students' viewpoints (M=2.38 ± .48) and the least rated leadership style the students perceived in their instructors' behaviors was laissez-faire leadership (M=.96 ± .81). The results showed that from their students' perspective, the instructors displayed transformational leadership styles slightly more often than transactional, and that the instructors fairly often demonstrated either one or both of the leadership styles since, according to the results, laissez-faire leadership style was observed at "once in a while" frequency.

Table 4
Descriptive Scores of Leadership Styles and Their Components

Leadership/component	N	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Transformational	300	.15	4.00	2.70	.64
IS	300	.00	4.00	2.99	.70
II(attributed)	300	.00	4.00	2.92	.79
II (behavior)	300	.25	4.00	2.38	.69
IC	300	.00	4.00	2.47	.88
IM	300	.00	4.00	2.75	.80
Transactional	300	1.00	3.67	2.38	.48
CR	300	.50	4.00	2.68	.78
Active MbE	300	1.00	4.00	2.98	.71
Passive MbE	300	.00	4.00	1.49	.77
Laissez-Faire	300	.00	4.00	.96	.81

IS: intellectual stimulation; II: idealized influence; IC: individualized consideration; IM: inspirational motivation; CR: contingent reward; MbE: management-by-exception

As regards the components, the highest rated components were intellectual stimulation (M=2.99 ± .70) and active management-by-exception (M=2.98 ± .71), the first being a transformational and the latter a transactional component. Idealized influence (attributed) also had a similar score (M= 2.92 ± .79). The score of inspirational motivation (M=2.75 ± .80), contingent reward (M=2.68 ± .78), and individualized consideration (M=2.47 ± .88) were also within the range of "fairly often" frequency.

Descriptive scores for students' learner autonomy and the components of independence of learning and study habits are provided in Table 5. In the interpretation of the analysis results regarding students' responses to ALS, the ranges were determined as 1.00-1.80 (not at all like me), 1.81-2.60 (quite unlike me), 2.61-3.40 (neither like nor unlike me), 3.41-4.20 (quite like me), and 4.21-5.00 (very like me).

Table 5.
Descriptive Scores of Learner Autonomy and Its Components

	N	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Learner Autonomy	300	1.36	5.00	3.61	.59
Independence of learning	300	1.17	5.00	3.64	.62
Study habits	300	1.00	5.00	3.56	.83

Mean value of the overall autonomy of the students was 3.61 (± .59), and the subordinating constructs of autonomy had similar scores (M=3.64 ± .62 for independence of learning; M=3.56 ± .83 for study habits). It is clear from these figures that the average of independent learning trait was rated slightly higher than study habits. The mean scores for learner autonomy and its dimensions indicated that the students' perceived learner autonomy is quite high.

The correlation between instructors' leadership styles and students' learner autonomy was tested with Spearman Brown rank order correlation and the results are given in Table 6 below. Büyüköztürk (2015) suggests that a correlation coefficient

in the range of 0.00-0.30 refers to a low correlation while 0.30-0.70 refers to medium and 0.30-1.00 refers to high correlation between two independent variables. According to the results, a statistically significant low positive correlation was found between transformational and transactional leadership styles and learner autonomy (r=.234, p<.001, r=.154, p<.01, respectively) while a statistically significant low correlation in negative direction was found between laissez-faire leadership and learner autonomy (r= -.134, p<.05).

Table 6.
Spearman Brown Rank Order Correlation between Leadership Styles and Learner Autonomy

		Learner Autonomy	Transformational	Transactional	Laissez-faire
Transformational	r	.234	1		
	p	.000***			
Transactional	r	.154	.594	1	
	p	.007**	.000		
Laissez-faire	r	-.134	-.302	-.024	1
	p	.020*	.000	.678	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

As regards the components of leadership styles and the dimensions of learner autonomy, significant positive correlation was found between learner autonomy and the following components of transformational leadership: intellectual stimulation (r=.205, p<.001), idealized influence-attributed (r=.150, p<.001), individualized consideration (r=231, p<.001) and inspirational motivation (r=.248, p<.001), as Table 7 illustrates. Among transactional leadership components, contingent reward (r=.180, p<.01) and active management-by-exception (r=.186, p<.01) were in a lower statistically significant positive correlation with learner autonomy. Passive management-by-exception component of transactional leadership was found to have a statistically insignificant negative correlation with learner autonomy.

As Table 7 displays, the leadership component with the highest correlation with independence of learning was individualized consideration (r=.224, p<.001) and apart from that, intellectual stimulation (r=.172, p<.01) and inspirational motivation (r=.152, p<.01) were the transformational leadership components in significant correlation with this dimension of learner autonomy. With respect to study habits, the highest correlation was with inspirational motivation (r=.245, p<.001) and also, significant correlations were observed for intellectual stimulation (r=.187, p<.01), idealized influence-attributed (r=.156, p<.01) and individualized consideration (r=.170, p<.01) components of transformational leadership. The transactional leadership components of contingent reward (r=.168, p<.01) and active management-by-exception (r=.199, p<.01) also significantly correlated with study habits in a positive direction.

These results indicated that students' autonomous learning skills increased when the instructors displayed more transformational and transactional and less laissez-faire leadership styles. All transformational leadership components showed a positive relationship with both learner autonomy in general and its sub-dimensions whereas transactional leadership components in positive correlations with autonomy

and its dimensions were limited to contingent reward and active management-by-exception. Lastly, passive management-by-exception and laissez-faire leadership were found to correlate negatively with learner autonomy. The results are discussed below in detail.

Table 7.

Spearman Brown Rank Order Correlation between Leadership Components and Learner Autonomy

Leadership style		Learner Autonomy and Its Dimensions		
Transformational		Learner Autonomy	Independence of Learning	Study Habits
Intellectual Stimulation	r	.205	.172	.187
	p	.000***	.003**	.001**
Idealized Influence-Attributed	r	.150	.102	.156
	p	.009**	.079	.007**
Idealized Influence -Behavior	r	.101	.086	.080
	p	.082	.137	.168
Individualized Consideration	r	.231	.224	.170
	p	.000***	.000***	.003**
Inspirational Motivation	r	.248	.152	.245
	p	.000***	.008**	.000**
Transactional				
Contingent Reward	r	.180	.151	.168
	p	.002**	.009**	.004**
Active MbE	r	.186	.125	.199
	p	.001**	.031*	.001**
Passive MbE	r	-.041	-.007	-.047
	p	.483	.904	.418

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the relationship of teacher leadership and learner autonomy in a tertiary-level Turkish EFL classroom context. The results of the study indicating a relationship between teacher leadership and learner autonomy have some implications in terms of effective EFL teaching and learning. As obvious from the research findings, the students of those instructors with more of transformational leadership and the contingent reward and active management-by-exception components of transactional leadership, i.e. active transactional leadership, as Pounder (2004) refers to it, were more autonomous in their learning. It is also worth noting that transformational leadership had a higher relevance to learner autonomy when compared to transactional leadership. The finding that the inspirational motivation, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation components of transformational leadership correlated with autonomy in higher degrees might have some implications. Firstly, it may be interpreted that the inspirational motivation aspect of transformational teaching, which theoretically involves motivating students through teacher actions and utterances such as assigning challenging tasks, expressing one's expectations for better performances and promoting self-reflection (Boyd, 2009), may contribute to students' self-awareness about their potentials, to their willingness to study harder and eventually to their independent learning skills and study habits as the two components of learner autonomy that the present study

measured. Secondly, individualized consideration, through which transformational teachers/instructors build close relations with students, recognize students' learning needs and monitor each student's individual progress (Boyd, 2009; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012), may help students to discover their own weaknesses and strengths and accordingly regulate their own learning more effectively. Thirdly, through instructors' intellectual stimulation, which fosters creative thinking and problem solving skills (Pounder, 2005; Rowold, 2005), students can develop more effective strategies to solve their learning problems.

As a matter of fact, the association of leader-follower relationship and autonomy development might appear paradoxical at the first glance in a terminological sense since autonomy generally connotes such terms as independence or self-directedness and hence, how a person/people led by another person can be autonomous is a question that can easily occupy one's mind. However, the particular leader type is the determinant factor in the direction of leadership-autonomy association. Teacher support seems to be essential in autonomy development as long as the teacher acts as a facilitator during the processes of learners' re-orienting their learning and discovering personal capabilities (Lee, 1998). An effective leader as recognized in transformational leadership notion can broaden the capacity of others to think on their own, find new ideas, and question outdated practices (Bass & Avolio, 1994) and therefore, may display autonomy-supportive leadership.

Several studies in relevant literature support the present findings. Katyal and Evers (2004), for instance, explored the effects of teacher leadership on student engagement and concluded that the conception of teacher leadership should be extended to include the enhancement of autonomous student learning, outside the school in particular, rather than following the traditional notion of teacher leadership inside the classroom. Another work focusing on the relationship between instructor leadership and learner autonomy has been Harrison's (2013) doctoral dissertation where she investigated the relationship of transformational leadership to learner autonomy and creativity and the mediator effect of teacher immediacy in a virtual learning environment. Her results also revealed a positive relationship of instructor transformational leadership with learner autonomy. All four components of transformational leadership style were significantly associated with learner autonomy in Harrison's (2013) study; however, contrary to the present research, transactional leadership was found to negatively correlate with learner autonomy. This might stem from any differences between the two studies with respect to factors such as research context, course content, cultural differences or student and instructor profiles. In another study, Yılmaz, Oğuz and Altınkurt (2017) examined the relationship between Turkish teachers' leadership and their autonomy-supportive behaviors and their results indicated a significantly positive relationship.

Considering the active role of teachers in the development of learner autonomy, the negative correlation of laissez-faire leadership and passive MbE with learner autonomy is actually an anticipated result since these two leader traits are conceptually on the inactive and ineffective end of the full range leadership spectrum (Avolio & Bass, 2002). They have also been empirically found to negatively correlate with various positive outcomes of leadership, e.g. leader effectiveness, follower

satisfaction and follower extra effort (Bass, 1999; Pounder, 2004, 2008a, 2008b) and besides these outcomes, with students' affective and cognitive learning (Kim, 2012).

Other studies on the relationship between leadership and follower autonomy has largely been from other fields such as organizational psychology or leadership development (Breevaart et al., 2014; Gilbert et al., 2017; Gözükara & Şimşek, 2015; Kovjanic et al., 2012; Vondey, 2008; Wang & Gagné, 2013), and have been discussed in contexts different from instructional settings. Although all these studies have suggested a positive correlation between transformational leadership and follower autonomy, relating their findings to those of the present study and drawing firm conclusions on this comparison might be misleading and besides, it is not likely to contribute to the generalizability of the study results. It is still appropriate to infer that the argument that effective leadership might contribute to follower autonomy is generalizable across fields, which indeed is a good start as a rationale for further investigation of classroom leadership of teacher with regards to autonomy-supportive actions.

This study has been a rare one, contributing to both leadership and educational research areas and specifically to EFL teaching- and learning-focused discussion. It has further placed effective classroom leadership among the desirable traits of autonomy-supportive EFL teachers. Yet, it had some limitations. One of the conditions delimiting the scope of this study was population and sample-related. Due to the nature of convenience sampling chosen in the selection of the participants of the study, the population and sample groups in the study were confined to the ELT and ELL departments of one single university in Turkey. Another limitation of this study related to generalizability is that although teacher leadership is interchangeably used for instructor leadership in this paper, it might be faulty to generalize the results to classroom leadership behaviors of teachers at primary and secondary schools. The setting of the research was undergraduate level university classrooms, definitely different contexts from schools in various ways with respect to student-teacher relationships, students' and instructors' expectations from each other and from the course, and the demographics of both teachers and students. Hence, scrutinizing leadership in the teaching and learning contexts of EFL in various levels of education and focusing on different teacher and learner profiles will definitely take the discussion on teacher leadership-learner autonomy relationship at least a few steps further. Additional research will shed more light on the uncharted territories on this teacher leadership-learner autonomy relationship, which will be of significant value for all related areas.

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