E- Öğrenme Güncesi: Dil Öğreniminde Öğrencinin İnisiyatif Kullanmasını Arttırmaya Yönelik Bir Araç

E-Learning Journal: A Means For Learner Control Over The Language Learning Process

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Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, eleştirel irdeleme yöntemiyle tutulan elektronik öğrenme güncesinin (e-öğrenme güncesi), dil öğrenim sürecinde öğrencinin inisiyatif kullanımını ne derece arttırdığını ortaya koymaktır. Bu çalışmada Türkiye'de bir üniversitenin 4 yıllık Mütercim Tercümanlık Bölümü'nde (İngilizce-Fransızca-Türkçe), anadili İngilizce olmayan, ancak İngilizce eğitim gören ve iki akademik dönem boyunca metin inceleme ve yazılı anlatım dersini alan 71 birinci sınıf öğrencisi yer almıştır. Veriler e-öğrenme güncesi, dönem sonu uygulanan anket ve dönem sonu uygulanan mülakat yoluyla elde edilmiştir. Bulgular uyarınca e-öğrenme güncesi, eleştirel irdeleme becerilerini arttırarak öğrencilerin dil öğrenim sürecinde daha fazla inisiyatif kullanmalarını sağlamıştır. Dahası, dil öğrenme sürecinde e-öğrenme güncelerinin kullanımı, bilgi iletişim teknolojilerinin kullanımını ve öğrencilerin buna yönelik olumlu tavrını arttırmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: e-öğrenme güncesi, eleştirel irdeleme, bilgi-iletişim teknolojileri, öğrenen özerkliği.

Abstract

This study aims to explore the extent to which e-learning journals stimulate learner control over the language learning process through critical reflection on the process itself. The study involved 71 first-year non-native English-speaking students taking a two-semester "Text and Composition" course at the Department of Translation and Interpretation (English-French-Turkish) at a four-year English medium university in Turkey. The data were collected through e-learning journals, post-course interviews and post-course questionnaires. The results indicated that e-learning journals encouraged learners to reflect critically on their learning, resulting in increased learner control over the language learning process. Moreover, e-learning journals promoted positive change in the attitudes of the learners towards using more ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) in the language learning process.

Keywords: E-learning journal, critical reflection, Information and Communication Technologies, ICT, learner autonomy.

Introduction

Language learning is a complex process, involving learner control, that is, reflective engagement of learners, in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of their own learning processes for the development of competence in the use of language as well as competence leading to cultural and intercultural understanding (Zimmerman, 2001; Little & Perclova, 2001). Learners' reflective engagement in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of their learning makes "… what they learn a fully integrated part of what they are, so that they can use the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom in the world beyond" (Little, 2001, p. 1).

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Learners' reflective engagement in the language learning process relies highly on the development of critical reflection and self-assessment, both of which are crucial to encourage learner control in the language learning process. Critical reflection, that is, thinking with a disciplined focus (Little & Perclova, 2001), stimulates learners' awareness as well as control of their cognitive resources as they learn, encouraging them to monitor and assess their own performances (Zimmerman *et al.*, 2002; Little & Perclova, 2001; Zimmerman, 2001; Schunk, 2001; Bandura, 1997). Thus, learners' own initiatives in accessing resources, the support and opportunities to use the language in wider contexts, and self-monitoring and assessment of those experiences, are of crucial importance to engage learners' intrinsic motivation to learn and develop.

Critical reflection upon learning, however, can best be practiced by some sort of behavioural record of reflection, because "…reflection is not facilitated simply by allowing time for it, or even by offering questions to encourage thinking and critical self-awareness", but by systematically and critically focusing on the learning so as to maintain persistence for the development of a reflective thinking capacity and habit (Candy *et al.*, 1989, p. 114). Research has shown that persistence in the development of a reflective thinking capacity can be maintained through reflective writing (Clark, 1997). That is, structured and systematic reflective writing encourages meaningful self-observation in learning through regularity, stimulating behaviour observation on a continuous basis, and proximity, stimulating behaviour observation close in time to its occurrence rather than long after it (Schunk, 2001).

Learning journals: The role of writing in language learning

Research linking learning journals with learner autonomy in the language learning process (Dam, 2000; Little & Perclova, 2001) derives its main source from the fact that learner control over the language learning process is essential to "enable learners to maximize their potential for learning via critical reflection and self-evaluation, and to enable them to become independent and self-reliant users of their target language" (Little, 1997, p. 99). In order to achieve this, it is important to raise two kinds of language awareness: spontaneous use of the target language leading to gradual development of language awareness in the psycholinguistic sense and language awareness as externally derived knowledge about the target language as a basis for critical reflection and analysis. Spontaneous use of target language "…develops as an obligatory part of our innate capacity for learning and processing language" (Little, 1997, p. 99), while "…externally derived knowledge about language starts when children learn to read and write" (*ibid*). Thus, in the pursuit of learner autonomy, it is crucial to use the target language as the normal medium of classroom communication. It is also crucial to encourage reflection on the target language both as a medium of communication and as a 'rule-governed system'. Reflective writing tasks in second/foreign language learning processes are, therefore, crucial to mediate between two kinds of language awareness (Little, 1997).

In many formal language learning contexts, however, the development of written language is neglected and not emphasized as much as that of spoken language. Of course, oral communication using the target language fosters proficiency in spontaneous oral communication, which as a result leads to language awareness in the psycholinguistic sense. However, proficiency in spontaneous oral communication using the target language is not sufficient to externalize the interactive process of language learning within learners. Thus, it is of crucial importance to focus explicitly on writing in order to externalize the interactive process of language learning within learners (Vygotsky, 1978).

In formal language learning contexts, tasks that incorporate writing with reflection gain more significance in that these tasks stimulate thinking and further reflection, encouraging not only the natural development of writing, but also bringing the learner to an inner understanding of the significance of writing in the language learning process. In this respect, reflective learning journals, which integrate writing with reflection, can create a personal and meaningful context for learners to become more aware of the use of the target language.

Moreover, reflective learning journals can become a means to encourage self-reflection upon the learning process by engaging the highest state of cognitive, metacognitive and psychological involvement of the learners into the process of their own learning (Haigh, 2001; Jeffrey Cantrell, 1997; O'Rourke, 1998).

Closely related with thinking and learning, the medium of writing in reflective learning process using the target language can become a unique form of reflection, feedback and reinforcement, resulting in further reflection and thinking in language learning. Writing as a tool for reflective learning can thus encourage a more responsive and open relationship between what students learn in their learning process. Consequently, learners can establish their own pace and explore their own way of thinking and reasoning (Bialostosky, 1998; Clark, 1997; Graham *et al.*, 1998; Little, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978). Such an approach not only raises learner awareness of the metalinguistic aspects of the language they learn (Clark, 1997; Gombert, 1992; Little, 1997), but also encourages them to learn a language by attaching more personal value to the process of their own learning.

E-learning journals: Integrating ICT into the reflective learning process

Distinct from pen and paper, recording reflections through the medium of writing in the electronic environment can facilitate the process of language learning as well as language use. Such electronic recording of reflections can often promote increased written output, facilitating learner reaction to their writing and thus fostering the sense of personal engagement and discovery essential to successful language learning. In such a context, compared to writing with pen and paper, the recorded reflections upon learning in the form of written texts with word processing, for instance, can become a resource as learners spontaneously use and analyze the target language as a medium of communication. Thus, learners can refer to, copy, move, edit, look for, analyze and integrate their reflective thinking upon their language learning process more explicitly through the written text in an electronic environment. Moreover, peer evaluation using e-mails can encourage learners to become reflectively engaged in their own language learning and extend their linguistic skills, resulting in maximum learning advantage (Cox, 1999; Kemble & Brierley, 1991; Little, 1996; Zvacek, 1992). Furthermore, the use of the Internet can encourage learners to develop their knowledge of the target language as they reflect upon their learning.

Consequently, by using ICT, learners can develop two kinds of language awareness. The first one is spontaneous language use that is, learning English by using English through the medium of writing, which gradually develops learners' language awareness in the psycholinguistic sense. The second one is to become involved in analytical reflection on the target language, encouraging self-assessment of the learning process and entailing the development of knowledge about the target language (Little, 1997, p. 103).

Context for the study

In many non-native target language speaking countries where learners are required to master a foreign language both as part of their field of study and the medium of instruction, it is important to emphasize the use of the target language through reflective writing tasks in order to foster more learner control over the language learning process (Yıldırım 1997; Yumuk, 2002). Reflective written tasks through the integration of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) in such a context can raise learner awareness on the use of the target language, engaging them in the self-monitoring and evaluation of their own learning through the use of the target language (Dam, 2000; Little, 1996; Little & Perclova, 2001). Moreover, such learner involvement can also stimulate a more positive attitude toward the use of ICT in the language learning process (Little, 1996).

Research Question

This paper aims to explore the effectiveness of e-learning journals as a means to encourage reflective engagement of learners in the language learning process, thus stimulating more learner control over the language learning process. The study also highlights the role of ICT support in this process.

For this purpose, the study specifically focuses on the following three questions:

1. What is the effect of e-learning journals in encouraging learner control over the language learning process?

2. What is the effect of e- learning journals in the development of a habit of critical reflection upon the language learning process?

3. What is the role of ICT in stimulating the language learning process?

Method

Subjects

The study involved 71 first-year translation students taking two consecutive courses of "Text and Composition" during two academic semesters in the fall of 2001 and spring of 2002. Of 90 students registered in the fall of 2001 and of 94 students registered in the spring 2002, the same 71 students who took both courses were involved in the study. Students who did not take the two courses in sequence were excluded from the study in order to ask the same questions in the instruments to the same group of subjects in two time periods.

Instruments

The data were collected from e-learning journals kept by learners for two academic semesters, with the same post-course questionnaires and post-course interviews administered at the end of each semester. Students were explicitly informed about the purpose of e-learning journals in language learning and required to base their reflections on six areas as they studied the target language (See Table 1). Students reflected on their learning experiences using the target language (English).

Table 1.
E-Learning Journal Structured Areas For Reflection

Structured areas for reflection
1. Content of learning
2. Process of learning
3. Relevance of learning to school and real life
4. Self-assessment of learning
5. Goal setting/goal commitment in learning
6. Level of student responsibility in learning

The post-course questionnaire for Semester 1 consisted of two parts. Part 1 consisted of four questions, which explored students' background concerning their previous reflective writing experiences in the form of e-learning journals, self-assessment experiences, ICT use in learning through Internet searches, e-mail communication, and word processing. Part 2 of the questionnaire consisted of 23 yes/no/explain questions investigating the development of such abilities as critical reflection on and self-assessment of the language learning process as well as the improvement in the use of target language via e-learning journals.

The post-course questionnaire for Semester 2 consisted of only the same 23-yes/no/explain questions as in post-course questionnaire for Semester 1. Questions 1-14 asked about the role of

e-learning journals in stimulating learner control over the language learning process, while questions 15-23 specifically asked about ICT support in such a process.

The post-course interviews administered at the end of both Semester 1 and Semester 2, consisted of seven questions that explored changes in students' perceptions concerning the effectiveness of e-learning journals in stimulating more learner control over the language learning process as well as changes concerning ICT use in such a process.

Preparing learners for the e-learning journal

In Semester 1, students were involved in three focused discussions concerning what learner control over the language learning process is, how ICT support can stimulate learner control over the language learning process, and how ICT use can facilitate reflective writing process through e-learning journals.

Focused Discussion I: Learner control over the language learning process

Two in-class sessions during the first two weeks were devoted to gather students' views of learning, their roles as learners, the role of the teacher in this process, and the significance of focused thinking on learning in encouraging learners to question what, why, how, and with what result they learn in the language learning process (Dam, 2000). Students were also encouraged to reflect upon the implications of all these in their academic life as well as life beyond school so as to better understand the relevance of school learning to real life knowledge (Barnes, 1976).

Focused Discussion II: The use of ICT in language learning

Three classroom sessions in the first two weeks were devoted to inform students about ICT supported language learning through Internet searches, e-mail communication, and word processing skills. In the first discussion session, learners were trained to carry out key word searches on the Internet and were also encouraged to discuss the contribution of Internet searches to learning both at and beyond school. In the next two focused sessions students were shown basic word processing skills in preparation for e-learning journals. The sessions also aimed at training learners to use e-mail for peer feedback.

Focused Discussion III: Critical reflection through e-learning journals

In this focused session, students were encouraged to discuss the significance of learner involvement in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of language learning. They were also encouraged to discuss the significance of learners' critical reflection on and self-assessment of the language learning process in order to stimulate more learner control over the learning process. This session aimed to inform students about six structured areas upon which to base their reflections.

The session also aimed to encourage students to be flexible and use their own style of writing as they record their reflections on learning concerning the six areas. Students were informed that in the reflective writing process, they would be collaborating with peers through peer evaluation by sending e-mail attachments. Students were also informed that 10% of the course grade would be allocated for their e-learning journal experiences in the course.

Data Analysis

Students' perceptions concerning the effectiveness of e-learning journals were analyzed by looking at changes in their responses to identical 23-yes/no/explain questions in the post-course questionnaire at the end of Semester 1 and Semester 2.

For each of the 23-yes/no/explain post-course questions, the Fisher Exact test, a variation of chi-square suitable for yes/no questions, was conducted to determine the change in the perception of students for Semester 1 and Semester 2. Students' previous reflective writing and ICT experiences investigated in the post-course questionnaire for Semester 1 were analyzed based on frequencies and percentages.

Content analysis of the qualitative data collected from e-learning journals in both semesters was done on the basis of six coding areas in order to identify the development of a habit of critical reflection upon the language learning process (See Table 1). The statistical significance concerning the content analysis results in Semester 1 and Semester 2 were tested based on Chi-Square statistics.   The post-course interviews were analyzed based on frequencies and percentages in both Semester 1 and 2.

Findings

Post-Course Questionnaire

The results of post-course questionnaire Part I, which explored students' ICT use in the reflective learning process prior to the course are shown in Table 2. None of the subjects reported that they had been involved in reflective writing experiences through e-learning journals in their learning process before taking the course. Only about 3% of the subjects reported that they had been involved previously in self-assessment of learning. Students reported infrequent use of ICT, with about 80% of subjects reporting such use as less than once a week. Less than one-fourth of the subjects reported Internet search experience, use of word processing, or e-mail communication in their learning process prior to the course (See Table 2).

Table 2.
Students' Prior Ict Use And Reflective Writing Experience

Prior experience of	Yes (n=71)	%
1. E-learning journal	0	0,0
2. Structured self-assessment of learning	2	2,8
3. ICT use in learning		
• Less than once a week	57	80,3
• Approximately once a week	5	7,0
• More than once a week	2	2,8
4. ICT use in learning through		
• Internet searches	6	8,5
• E-mail communication	13	18,3
• Word processing	15	21,1

Table 3 summarizes student responses to the 23-yes/no/explain questions in the post-course questionnaire for Semester 1 and Semester 2. Each post-course questionnaire item in Semester 2 was found to be statistically significantly different from Semester 1 ($p < 0.01$). That is, the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the post-course questionnaire responses in Semester 1 and Semester 2 was rejected. For students' responses to questions 1-14, about e-learning journals stimulating learner control over the language learning process, the most increase is clear in question 12, related to students' questioning of their own view of learning (from 26.8% to 66.2%). Moreover, students' responses to question 11, relating to more learner control over learning, increased from 37% to 73%. Students' responses to question 10, exploring the increase in learners' self-confidence in having more control over learning increased from 44% to 73%.

Table 3.
Student Responses To Post-Course Questionnaires

		Semester 1 (n=71)		Semester 2 (n=71)		
		Yes	%	Yes	%	
1.	record your learning experiences	66	93,0	70	98,6	*
2.	express yourself and your learning process	50	70,4	61	85,9	*
3.	think about your own learning process in a more focused way	43	60,6	56	78,9	*
4.	set your own learning goals	34	47,9	47	66,2	*
5.	become more committed to achieve your learning goals	33	46,5	45	63,4	*
6.	read and consult your learning journal entries to monitor your learning process	34	47,9	49	69,0	*
7.	focus on difficulties in your learning and solutions to those	41	57,7	52	73,2	*
8.	assess your own learning process	42	59,2	55	77,5	*
9.	have more control over your own learning process	31	43,7	48	67,6	*
10.	develop your self-confidence in learning	31	43,7	52	73,2	*
11.	have more control over learning	26	36,6	52	73,2	*
12.	question your view of learning	19	26,8	47	66,2	*
13.	improve your English as you write	40	56,3	55	77,5	*
14.	improve your writing	35	49,3	55	77,5	*
15.	become more conscious about ICT support in your learning process	39	54,9	55	77,5	*
16.	become more conscious about the use of the Internet in your learning process	35	49,3	55	77,5	*
17.	use e-mails to collaborate with others outside class	30	42,3	45	63,4	*
18.	read and consult the learning journal entries easily	38	53,5	48	67,6	*
19.	add, remove, cut and paste more easily as you write	40	56,3	56	78,9	*
20.	store your e-learning journal permanently	38	53,5	56	78,9	*
21.	have faster and easier access to visual support as you write (use of tables, graphs, bars and so on)	38	53,5	56	78,9	*
22.	use English language more accurately with the spelling and grammar check as you write	40	56,3	56	78,9	*
23.	improve your word processing skills	40	56,3	55	77,5	*
Total		863	52,8	1226	75,1	*

* All responses highly significant based on Fisher Exact Test ($p < 0.01$)

As for Questions 13 and 14, which investigated improvement in the target language through e-learning journals, the change is significant with about 15% increase in Semester 2 compared to Semester 1. The least amount of change, shown in question 1, which asked students if e-learning journals encouraged them to record their own learning experiences, was still significant, with 93% answering 'yes' in Semester 1, and nearly 99% answering 'yes' in Semester 2.

Questions 15-23 related to ICT support in the process of e-learning journal and question 16, investigating the level of student awareness on the use of the Internet showed a significant change in the perceptions of students in Semester 2 with a 28% increase, indicating more learner awareness for Internet use in the language learning process. Moreover, the positive change in

the perception of students to question 15, asking about their level of learner awareness on ICT support in learning through e-learning journals increased by nearly 23%.

An interesting observation in post-course questionnaires for Semester 1 is that 50 or more of students responded positively to only two questions out of 23 (questions 1 and 2). On the other hand, at the end of second semester, 50 or more of students answered positively to sixteen of the 23 post-course questions, indicating an increase in the level of student awareness on e-learning journals as a means to encourage learner control over the learning process.

E-learning journal content analysis

The frequencies and percentages of the content analysis concerning six structured areas for learner reflection in Semester 1 and Semester 2 are shown in Table 4. Table 4 also shows the Chi Square statistics for each of six structured area. Five of the structured areas in the content analysis in Semester 2 were found to be statistically significantly different from Semester 1. The only structured area, which showed no statistically significant difference in Semester 2, compared to Semester 1, is 'self-assessment of learning' (area 4). The results from area 1 indicate that the majority of the students critically reflected upon the content of their learning in both semesters (93% in Semester 1 and 99% in Semester 2). For area 4, nearly 62% of student reflections in Semester 1 and 97% in Semester 2 resulted in self-assessment of their learning, with a nearly 35% increase in Semester 2. Moreover, area 2 shows that student reflection upon the process of their learning had a 31% increase. Similarly, area 6, exploring students' perceptions concerning their responsibilities showed an increase of 31%. The least increase was with area 5, exploring goal/setting and commitment in learning, at 11% (See Table 4).

Post-course Interview

The post-course interview results for both semesters are shown in Table 5. Nearly 42% of students in Semester 1 and 75% students in Semester 2 reported that they questioned their previous learning habits, indicating an increase of 33%. Approximately the same amount of students (42% in Semester 1 and 75% in Semester 2) indicated that they used the Internet to support their learning in the course. All the students in Semester 1 and Semester 2 (100%) reported using word processing to support their learning (See Table 5).

Table 4.
Content Analysis Of E-Learning Journals

Coding	Semester 1 (n=71)		Semester 2 (n=71)		P
Structured areas for reflection	*Yes*	*%*	*Yes*	*%*	*
1. Content of learning	66	93,0	70	98,6	*
2. Process of learning	41	57,7	63	88,7	*
3. Relevance of learning to school and real life	43	60,6	62	87,3	*
4. Self-assessment of learning	44	62,0	69	97,2	
5. Setting learning goals/ commitment to learning goals	35	49,3	43	60,6	*
6. Student responsibility	30	42,3	52	73,2	*

* Highly significant change (Chi Square, p   0.01).

Table 5.
Student Responses To Post-Course Interview Questions

	Semester 1 (n=12)		Semester 2 (n=12)	
Category of description	*Yes*	*%*	*Yes*	*%*
E-learning journal encouraging				
1. Self-assessment	7	58,3	9	75,0
2. Self-expression as a learner	9	75,0	10	83,3
3. More learner control over learning	6	50,0	10	83,3
4. Intrinsic motivation in learning	6	50,0	8	66,7
5. Questioning of learning	5	41,7	9	75
6. ICT use in learning				
Internet	5	41,7	9	75,0
E-mail	10	83,3	11	91,7
Word processing	12	100,0	12	100,0
7. Improvement in the use of English language				
• Writing	4	33,3	9	75,0
• Grammar	5	33,3	8	66,7

Discussion

Fostering reflective learner engagement in the process of language learning is essential to promote a change in learners' view of learning from less to more learner control over the language learning process (Dam, 2000; Little, 2001; Little & Perclova, 2001; Yumuk, 2002). In this respect, the results of this study indicated success in that e-learning journals encouraged learner control over the language learning process through reflective engagement of learners in the language learning process (Bandura, 1997; Little, 2000; Schunk, 2001; Zimmerman, 2001; Zimmerman *et al.*, 2002). As is shown in one of the students' reflections in her e-learning journal in Semester 1, students started to question their teacher-dependent view of learning, by showing that they thought such dependency would be insufficient to develop language competency necessary to achieve accurate translation in their academic as well as real life:

"*Getting accustomed to new things is a difficult period to get through…I need patience…without being self-confident in doing research and analyzing the texts, I will have difficulty   in translating … nobody wanted us to be organized and think about what we learned at high school…I am not really sure of what I will develop with e-learning journal writing. I hope it will be more interesting than I think.*"

In addition, as is indicated by one of the students in his e-learning journal reflections in Semester 2, learner control in the translation process is crucial since a good translator should use his/her own initiative to carry out ICT supported research in preparation for translation in order to cope with the challenges in the market as translators:

"*A new facility of the Internet…I have tried the most popular on-line database to find a text. I have come up with plenty of results. Reading the summaries, I will determine the ones which interest me the most…Undoubtedly that short period of searching made me gain a lot of time considering the importance of time for a university student who has a long way to discover thoroughly what goes around the world…I think I can better interpret a text after long researches and by the help of the Internet we can easily find texts in English to support our translation.*"

This result may imply that systematic and ongoing engagement of learners in the reflective writing process is crucial in order to let go of more control to the learners in the language

learning process (Dame, 2000). Moreover, learner involvement in the use of the target language is essential to encourage more learner control over the language learning process as learners develop competence in using the target language more efficiently (Dam, 2000; Little, 2001; Little & Perclova, 2001), as indicated by one of the learners in his e-learning journal in the second semester:

"The professional life requires some very important skills such as a good mastery of languages we learn…the searching methods on-line that we are learning will make us more conscious of what goes on in the world day by day, and   to   read and learn about them…"

Furthermore, assuming that reflective engagement of learners in the language learning process is an initial step to stimulating reflective thinking capacity in learners (Little, 1997; Little, 2001; Little & Perclová, 2001), the results of the study also indicate success in that the structured and systematic reflective writing process via e-learning journals encouraged the development of reflective thinking capacity in learners, as is indicated by one of the learners in her e-learning journal in Semester 1:

" …I have started to make plans about my future…how I spend the time at university will also determine my future life and job opportunities…"

On the macro level, the results of post-course questionnaires, post-course interviews, and content analysis of e-learning journals in semester 2 compared with semester 1 revealed that persistence in reflective writing through e-learning journals encouraged more focused thinking, resulting in more learner commitment to the language learning process. Except for one structured area (area 4: self-assessment of learning), student reflections concerning the other structured areas (content of learning, process of learning, relevance of learning to school and real life, commitment to learning goals, student responsibility) in Semester 2 showed statically significant difference from Semester 1. One reason for there being no significant difference could be that students had perceived e-learning journals as a graded (10% of the course grade) self-assessment tool integrated in the course since the beginning of Semester 1. However, the results still indicate an increase in the number of students self-assessing their own learning goals, as shown by one of the students' in her e-learning journal below (Dam, 2000; Schunk, 2001):

"What is the aim of my being here   at university ? …One of the most important questions of my life!…"

Likewise, the post-course questionnaire and interview results show that learners develop a more positive attitude towards ICT use in the language learning process with the Internet, word processing and e-mail communication (Little 1996). As is reflected in his e-learning journal in Semester 1, although students find it difficult to get used to ICT use in learning, they were clear about its importance in real life at and beyond school:

"We got informed about computers in this course, an important field which really causes me a lot of problems. Now when writing these journals I have difficulty. Since I cannot write fast,   and   I get bored. I have to overcome those problems as soon as possible. Computers have already become inseparable parts of our daily lives…"

This result shows that in spite of the difficulties learners may encounter as they experience a change from less to more learner control over the learning process, persistence in ICT support can encourage them to interact with computers, thus improving their computer skills as they take more control over their learning. After getting involved in more ICT interactivity through Internet searches, e-mail communication and word processing facilities integrated in the course in both semesters, learners were not only encouraged to monitor their own learning in a focused and systematic way but also collaborate with others (Little, 1996; Orhun, 2002; Pachler, 2001; Winne & Stockley, 1998; Yumuk, 2002). As indicated by one of the learners in his e-learning journal entry in Semester 2, the use of ICT encouraged students to track their own progress in a faster, easier and more useful way:

"I   have   become faster in writing on the computer…it is still difficult sometime …I can find my way now to find out texts on the Internet more easily to write better essays..."

Conclusion

At least until students enter higher education, teacher-dependent learning habits are more likely to dominate many learners who are carrying out language learning in their academic studies in Turkey, resulting in rather passive learning. However, since effective language learning highly involves learner control over the language learning process, promoting a change in the view of learners toward more learner control over learning should become one of the priority targets in formal language learning contexts in Turkey.

The findings of the present study suggest that greater and more frequent exercise of reflective writing in language learning process through e-learning journals can reinforce critical reflection on and self-assessment of language learning, both of which encourage learners to externalize and make their language learning process more explicit. In this respect, letting go of control to the learners in language learning process can be encouraged through learner engagement in critical reflection on and self-assessment of learning, thus fostering the development of a reflective thinking habit in learning. It is also important that persistence in the development of a reflective thinking habit can be maintained through regularity via such reflective writing tasks as e-learning journals. Likewise, the use of e-learning journals can also encourage persistence in the use of the target language, which is essential as learners develop a language competence for more efficient use of the target language. Furthermore, ICT support in the reflective writing process can encourage learners not only to take initiatives to use ICT as a resource for language learning but also achieve more accurate and efficient use of the target language through the use of the Internet, e-mail communication and word processing.

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