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Editors

Dr. Murat İskender
Dr. Mustafa Koç
Dr. Hüseyin Çalışkan
Dr. Orhan Kocaman



Learned Resourcefulness and Burnout Levels of English Teachers

Gülten Genç¹

¹İnönü University, School of Foreign Languages, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine the relationships between some individual characteristics, learned resourcefulness and burn out on the one hand and the relationships between burn out and learned resourcefulness on the other. The participants in this research included 163 English teachers teaching in the schools located in Malatya. The participants were asked to anonymously fill out a questionnaire involving three parts which respectively investigated their background, burnout level and learned resourcefulness (Rosenbaum's Learned Resourcefulness Scale and Maslach Burnout Inventory). The findings indicated that more than half of the teachers possess moderately high level of learned resourcefulness and they are experiencing burnout at moderate level in three aspects of MBI. In addition, the analysis suggested an inverse relationship between learned resourcefulness and the three burnout subscales: as learned resourcefulness increases, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment decrease. Furthermore; the independent variables (age, gender, and marital status) were not found to be significant in learned resourcefulness and any of the burnout dimensions. "The school type" is the only variable which was found to be significant in the three burnout sub-dimensions. Results are discussed in the light of current literature and suggestions were provided.

Keywords: Teachers' burn out, learned resourcefulness, English language teachers

1. Introduction

The professional life of a teacher today has many more complex and demanding factors than teachers experienced in the past. As some of the most crucial parts of the education process teachers today have greatly extended roles and a broader range of possibilities both in the classroom and in the wider school community. Those roles and responsibilities force the teachers themselves to be challenging and innovative in their job. As a result, all teachers are expected to develop their own capacity to strengthen education, psychology, theory and practice of learning; to be customized to improve the teaching skills.

Many teachers are feeling overwhelmed by the challenges that face them daily in their teaching careers. Teachers can feel stressed from trying to meet the needs of their students and the expectations of parents and administrators. If teachers do not feel that they have the tools or resources to meet those needs and demands then they can feel frustrated, angry, which causes stress levels to increase drastically. High levels of stress can lead to a feeling of burn-out in their teaching profession (Canter, 1994).

1.1. The Burn out Theory

The most widely researched definition of burnout was developed by Maslach (1982), which defines burnout as having feelings of exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. Using the Maslach definition for teaching, burnout has been linked to environmental factors such as lack of support from families, society, the

¹Corresponding author's address: İnönü University, School of Foreign Languages, Malatya, Turkey

e-mail: gulten.genc@inonu.edu.tr

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government, and administration, in addition to personal factors such as low efficacy, internal attributions for failure, and neuroticism (Luk, Chan, Cheong and Ko, 2010). Other researchers suggest the burnout encompasses two overall components – exhaustion and disengagement –which more appropriately reflect a job-demands/job-resources model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli, 2001). Regardless of the definition, burnout is likely to result from when teachers feel exhausted, depersonalized, disengaged, and out of options for changing teaching and learning outcomes (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2009).

The five stages of burnout— honeymoon, fuel shortage, chronic symptoms, deep depression, and hitting the wall— possess distinct characteristics (Veninga and Spradley, 1981). People who have experienced burnout usually recognize the symptoms; acknowledgement is a key element of prevention. Stage one, the honeymoon, begins with high job satisfaction, energy, and efficiency. Stage two, fuel shortage, is marked by fatigue, trouble sleeping, and inefficiency at work. The third stage, chronic symptoms, reveals exhaustion, illness, anger and depression. Without interventions, stage three can escalate to stage four, deep depression. The deep depression stage is characterized by severe self-doubt and obsession with personal problems. The fifth and final stage, hitting the wall, results in the end of a career. With increased levels of responsibility, higher expectations, and greater accountability, teacher morale is eroded (Botwinik, 2007).

A person experiencing burnout suffers from a sense of emotional and physical depletion and no longer believes that the pressures or stressors from work are tolerable (Patterson, Collins and Abbott, 2004). Additionally, burnout victims believe that all their efforts are unappreciated and unnoticed by colleagues and superiors, thus leaving them feeling hopeless and worthless.

The burnout syndrome appears to be a response to chronic, everyday stress (rather than to occasional crises). The emotional pressure of working closely with people is a constant part of the daily job routine. What changes over time is one's tolerance for this continual stress, a tolerance that gradually wears away under the never-ending onslaught of emotional tensions (Maslach, 2003).

1.2. Burn out in Educational Settings

In educational settings, a diminished sense of personal accomplishment can convince educators that their efforts to meet the students' needs have failed. Most teachers want to make a difference in students' lives (Cochran-Smith, 2006). Burned out teachers believe that their exerted efforts neither make a difference nor matter. The outlook devalues the educator's perception of accomplishment and instills a feeling that giving up is the only option (Grayson and Alvarez, 2008). When a person suffers from a sense of diminished personal accomplishment, elevated levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization manifest and multiply. While suffering from extreme exhaustion, people experiencing burnout can begin to detach and alienate themselves from peers and become quite cynical about work and home life (Johanns, 2007). Maslach and Leiter (1997) termed this action of detachment, *depersonalization*. Teachers experiencing this aspect of burnout can demonstrate cynicism through negative comments or actions towards colleagues and students. Cynical behaviors manifest as mental and physical distancing from all stimuli the victim encounters (Grayson and Alvarez, 2008). The third pattern Maslach noted was the highest stage of burnout. In this stage, victims experience a diminished sensation of personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1982). When teachers believe that they cannot meet their goals, the work they produce is substandard. When they think that goals are unattainable, they risk suffering as a casualty of chronic stress and share feelings of emotional exhaustion; they have lost the ability to recover from the constant stress and pressure of daily activities. In the field of education, veteran teachers realize that "they can no longer give of themselves as they were able to earlier in their career" (Schwab, 1983). Emotionally exhausted teachers compare the sensation to a tired feeling that intensifies over time, eventually draining the affected teacher of all emotional resources (Grayson and Alvarez, 2008).

According to Maslach and Leiter (1997), the chronic erosion of feelings and skills over time is not as striking as an immediate crisis. Consequently, people assume that burnout is no big deal, and they misjudge the risks. When burnout does set in, people tend to keep working, even if not as well as before, so there are no serious threats to general productivity. When teachers experience the condition of burn out it can have a devastating effect on not only the teachers themselves, but also on the students, schools, and education as a whole. Maslach and Leiter (1997) claim that burnout is not a trivial problem but an important barometer of a major social dysfunction in the workplace. As such, burnout deserves serious attention. The emotional and financial costs are too high for it to be ignored or dismissed any longer.

Professionals in the fields of education, social work, and law enforcement tend to show the highest levels of burnout (Maslach, 1982). High levels of burnout inflict both physiological and psychological harm. Burnout victims suffer from problems with self-confidence, low self-esteem, and clinical depression (Grayson and Alvarez, 2008). Haberman (2004) asserted that 20% of the respondents claimed that they personally drank too much alcohol, and 15% of that group labeled themselves alcoholics. In medical terms, 25% reported suffering from ailments such as high blood pressure,

insomnia, depression, and gastrointestinal complications. Özdemir (2007) emphasized that many victims of burnout isolate themselves instead of seeking out social support. In addition to weakening the physical and mental health of educators, burnout can also affect a teacher's reaction to student behavior, ability to teach, and professional commitment.

1.3. Handling Teacher Burn Out

Teacher burnout is related to several factors (Botwinik, 2007; Kokkinos, Panayiotou and Davazogou, 2005; Lau, Yuen and Chan, 2005; Sanbul, 2003). According to Manassero, Garcia-Buades, Torrens, Ramis, Vazquez, and Ferrer (2006), extreme workload, student behavior, lack of the administrative support, excessive testing, overcrowded classrooms, and job dissatisfaction all contribute to burnout among educators.

Eradicating burnout is unlikely; however, identifying the elements that cause burnout may prevent the syndrome from developing. Wood and McCarthy (2002) affirm that preventing burnout is preferable to treating the syndrome. Generally, a person under stress relies upon internal coping mechanisms. However, when coping mechanisms fail, burnout can result. Educators believe that their hard work does not make a difference; therefore, there is no reason to care, and invest time, energy, or effort on students or the teaching profession.

Teacher burn out has a drastic impact on the whole school system involving the staff, administration, students, parents, and families. The result tremendously affects the person's health and organizational climate creating a hostile work environment which leads to decreased productivity and fractured relationships. Diminished productivity of teachers at school setting is forcing the authorities and educators to understand the reasons and find ways to cope with teachers' burn out. Interventions for reducing burnout include professional development, stress management, support groups, mentoring, and reorganization of the work environment (Cheek, Bradley, Parr and Lan, 2003). However, this research proposes a new way of overcoming burn out: learned resourcefulness.

1.4. Learned resourcefulness

Rosenbaum (1990) described learned resourcefulness as "an acquired repertoire of behavioral and cognitive skills with which the person is able to regulate internal events such as emotions and cognitions that might otherwise interfere with the smooth execution of a target behavior". Learned resourcefulness consists only of skills and behaviors that are learned and does not include intelligence, social or motor skills. Rosenbaum stressed that individuals can learn self-control or self-management skills and behaviors through modeling, conditioning or instruction.

The four individual tendencies of learned resourcefulness include the use of cognitive strategies, problem solving skills, the ability to delay immediate gratification, and the belief in the ability to perform. Cognitive strategies are defined as an individual's ability to recognize real or imagined change. The perception and interpretation of change occurs automatically without conscious effort (Rosenbaum, 1990). Problem solving skills are defined by Rosenbaum (1990) as "...constellations of complex skills which are evoked by many situations but also have the quality of providing the basis for additional learning" (p. 9). Problem solving is not a personality trait, but a set of learned behaviors in constant interaction with the social and physical environment of the individual. Delay of immediate gratification is accomplished when an individual engages in anticipatory self-regulation. Anticipatory self-regulation is initiated when certain information is recalled that disrupts the progress of a planned or habitual behavior (Rosenbaum, 1988). Belief in the ability to perform is defined as confidence to execute necessary behaviors or control various emotions. The ability to perform is fostered by the successful practice and use of cognitive strategies, problem solving skills, and the successful delay of gratification (Rosenbaum, 1990). Each of the four aspects of those behaviors can be learned and could contribute to the coping skills of the individuals.

Behaviorists have studied the effects of self-statements as a factor in helping an individual change their physiological responses to situations as well as their thoughts about events (Haaga and Davison, 1986; Mischel, 1983; Reynolds and Stark, 1983; Rosenbaum and Jaffe, 1983). Self-verbalizations or self-statements can be successfully used to reduce a potentially devastating experience to one that can be handled appropriately.

Results of some recent studies carried out about learned resourcefulness indicating that high resourcefulness was related to fewer depressive symptoms (Huang, Sousa, Tu and Hwang, 2005), better engagement in academic self-control behaviors (Kenneth and Keefer, 2006) and better ability to deal effectively with academic stress (Akgün and Ciarrochi, 2003) caused the researcher to handle learned resourcefulness as a possible way to cope with teacher burn out.

In Turkey, the Ministry of Education has a strong interest in promoting language learning and improving language teaching methods since it is in the process of the preparation to become a member of the European Union. Moreover, as emphasized in the previous literature (Pasquale, 2011; Fatemi, Ghadi and Fayyaz, 2015), foreign language teachers are expected to have cultural sensitivity and raise the cultural awareness of their students since they interact with different cultures and to decide to what extent they should teach the target culture. Consequently, all the English teachers are

expected to integrate themselves in this process which sometimes puts an extra burden on the shoulders of English teachers. From a theoretical standpoint, this research was designed to help clarify whether high levels of learned resourcefulness lead teachers to overcoming burn out and regaining their enthusiasm towards teaching.

The present study sought specifically to extend previous research on coping ways of burn out that might be used by teachers. Based on the previous empirical studies on learned resourcefulness as coping mechanisms to enhance teachers' occupational well-being and satisfaction, it was anticipated that developing learned resourcefulness levels would be associated with teachers' well-being and alleviate them from burn out. The aim of this study was to examine the relationships between some individual characteristics, learned resourcefulness and burn out on the one hand and the relationships between burn out and learned resourcefulness on the other. So, the research focused on the following research questions:

- 1-What is the learned resourcefulness level of teachers and what are the affecting factors?
- 2-To what extent are teachers showing signs of burnout and what are the factors of teacher burnout?
- 3- What, if any, is the relationship between teacher burnout and learned resourcefulness?

2.Method

2.1. Research Design: The research design chosen for the study was a quantitative design. The correlation research method identifies relationship among variables. The relationship between teachers' burn out and their learned resourcefulness are at the heart of this study. The independent variables for the research questions are age, gender, marital status and the type of the school participants are working.

2.2. Participants: The participants (may also be referred to as "teachers") in this research included randomly selected 163 English teachers teaching in the schools located in the city center of Malatya. The age of the teachers ranged from 24 to 55 with the mean of 32.0 (SD=7.254) and 77% were between 26 and 44 years of age. Women made up 27.49 % of the sample and 72.51 % of the participants were men. 35.0% of the entire group were single (divorced or widow), whereas 64.4% of them were married.

2.3. Research Instruments (Validity and Reliability): The participants were asked to anonymously fill out a questionnaire involving three parts which respectively investigated their background, burnout level and learned resourcefulness. The first part of the questionnaire about teachers' burn out was originally developed by Maslach, Jackson and Schwab (1996). It consisted of 22 items and was originally developed to evaluate three aspects of burn out: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. The Emotional Exhaustion subscale, consisting of nine items (1, 2,3,6,8,13,14,16 and 20), describes feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. Depersonalization subscale, consisting of five items (5, 10, 11, 15, and 22), describes unfeeling and impersonal responses to coworkers or recipients of services. The Personal Accomplishment subscale, consisting of eight items (4, 7,9,12,17,18,19 and 21), describes feelings of competence and success towards one's achievements. Lower mean scores on the Personal Accomplishment correspond to greater degrees of burn out, while higher mean scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales correspond to greater degrees of experienced burnout (Zalaquett and Wood, 1997). Internal consistency of the instrument was estimated by Cronbach's alpha. The adaptation of the scale into Turkish was carried out by Ergin (1992). The original form of the scale consisted of a seven-point rating scale but the Turkish version of the scale was composed as a five-point rating scale. The reliability coefficients for the subscales for this study were as follows: Emotional Exhaustion: .779; Depersonalization: .739; and Personal Accomplishment: .773.

The second part of the questionnaire about learned resourcefulness was originally developed by Rosenbaum (1980) and adapted for Turkish use by Siva and Dağ (1991). The original version of the questionnaire consists of 36 Likert-type items using a 6-point scale indicating the extent to which participants evaluate the item as characteristics of themselves. A higher composite score indicates greater resourcefulness. Test-retest reliability was reported as .86 and alpha coefficients ranged from .78 to .86. Siva (1991) also developed a new scoring system with a 5-point Likert scale in which the highest and the lowest possible total score changed between 36 and 180, higher scores indicating high resourcefulness. In the present study, the Cronbach-alpha coefficient value for the overall reliability analysis of the instrument was found as .811 which shows a satisfying level of reliability beyond the minimum desirable level of reliability as stated by Pallant (2005): "Ideally, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of a scale should be above .7" . The third part of the questionnaire was a combination of open-ended and multiple-choice items concerning the participant's age, gender, marital status, the type of the school they are working for, the faculty that they graduated from and the years of teaching experience. Questions about demographic variables are asked at the end of the instrument. Asking these questions at the end of the instrument can increase response rates (Dillman, 2000).

2.4. Procedure: The questionnaires sought information about the levels of burn out and learned resourcefulness of English teachers. The researcher herself explained the purpose of the study to the English teachers and participation in the study was entirely voluntary. The questionnaires were given in the participants' native language.

2.5. Data Analyses: According to the nature of the research, the study used descriptive statistics (frequencies, range, means, and standard deviations), t-test and ANOVA as the statistical analysis methods. All collected data were coded and computerized using the SPSS software and the alpha level for the tests was set at .05. After calculating each participant's burn out and learned resourcefulness scores, their scores were compared to the variables selected for the study and each other.

3.Results

The study sought to determine if a relationship exists between teacher burn out, and learned resourcefulness levels. The study also examined if relationships exists between burnout rates, learned resourcefulness levels and some variables such as age, gender and marital status. Analyzed data and results of the study will be presented based on the research questions in the following paragraphs.

Learned resourcefulness levels of the participants were identified by assigning participants to high and low groups based on the median score (median = 3.60, mean =3.63, SD =0.46) obtained from the SCS (Table 1). Participants whose scores were above the median were considered as High Resourceful; participants whose scores were below the median were evaluated as Low Resourceful individuals. As the questionnaire was a 5-likert scale survey involving 36 questions with 5.00 as the highest score and 1.00 as the lowest score, it is clear that the highest score that can be obtained from the whole questionnaire is 180 while the lowest one is 36. Median score of the participants has been found to be 3.60 and the number of the teachers obtaining at least 3.60 was 93 (57 %). Seventy teachers (43%) obtained less than 3.60 and can be interpreted to have relatively low level of learned resourcefulness than the rest of the participants. This result also indicates that more than half of the participants possess moderately high level of learned resourcefulness.

As mentioned before, Maslach Burnout Inventory evaluates three aspects of burnout as Emotional Exhaustion (9 items), Depersonalization (5 items) and Personal Accomplishment (8 items). Each aspect of burnout requires a separate subscale and the scale does not create a composite score (Norton, 2004). Therefore, cutoff points were determined for each of the subscale to categorize the levels of burnout as high, moderate and low groups. Responses were analyzed in order to determine low, moderate, or high levels of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. Means and standard deviations for the three burnout subscales are presented in Table 2.

When the cut-off points and mean scores are taken into account for the first sub-scale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, low level of Emotional Exhaustion can be defined as a score between 9-20; moderate level between 21-32, and high level 33 and over. For the next subscale of the Inventory; low level of Depersonalization can be defined as a score between 5-11; moderate level between 12-17, and high level 18 and over. As for Personal Accomplishment subscale, it should be noted that the Personal Accomplishment subscale was scored in the opposite direction so that the lower the score, the higher the level of burnout. For this subscale, the mean score between 8-17 is considered high; 18-27 is considered moderate and 28 and over is low level of burnout. As it is revealed in Table 1, teachers' burnout levels in the all three subscales are at moderate level. The mean score of the teachers for Emotional Exhaustion (23.35) subscale is between 21-32; for Depersonalization (12.94) subscale it is between 12-17 and for the Personal Accomplishment (18.28) subscale it is between 18-27.

When the scores of the teachers are handled on the basis of this classification, it is quite clear that English teachers have a moderate level of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment.

Table 1: Range of Burnout Scores and Learned Resourcefulness

VARIABLES	Min.	Max	M	SD
Emotional Exhaustion	9	45	23.35	0.67
Depersonalization	5	25	12.94	0.77
Personal Accomplishment	8	40	18.28	0.66
Learned Resourcefulness			3.63	0.46

Regarding the effects of age on teachers' learned resourcefulness and three burnout levels, (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) three Spearman correlations were conducted. Firstly, it was seen that age (r: 0.128; p: 0.131) wasn't statistically significant in the learned resourcefulness levels of teachers. Secondly, the correlation between age and Emotional Exhaustion (r: 0.020; p: 0.806); Depersonalization (r:-0.003; p: 0.971); and Personal Accomplishment was not strong or significant, (r:-0,020; p: 0.810), suggesting that no relationship exists between age and three burnout subscales. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Spearman Correlations between Burnout Scores-Learned Resourcefulness and Age

BURNOUT SUBSCALES	r	p
Emotional Exhaustion	0.020	0.80
Depersonalization	-0.003	0.97
Personal Accomplishment	-0.020	0.81
Learned Resourcefulness	0.128	0.13

As for the other independent variables such as gender, marital status and school type are concerned; the Independent Sample T-test was conducted to assess the relationship between those variables and learned resourcefulness levels of the teachers. As can be seen in Table 3, it has been found out that none of the independent variables such as gender (p: 0.224), marital status (p: 0.621) and the school type (p: 0.405) of the teachers significantly correlated with the learned resourcefulness levels of the English teachers (Table 3).

Table 3: Mean Score, Standard Deviation and Range of Learned Resourcefulness Scores in terms of Marital Status, Gender and School Type

	N	%	Mean	Std. Dev	t/F Value*	P
GENDER					-1.22	0.22
Female	36	27.4	3.56	0.54		
Male	95	72.5	3.67	0.41		
MARITAL STATUS					-0.47	0.62
Married	53	35.4	3.60	0.43		
Single	91	64.5	3.64	0.48		
SCHOOL TYPE					-0.83	0.40
Public	134	93.7	3.62	0.47		
Private	12	6.29	3.75	0.48		

In order to look into male and female teachers’ difference in their burnout levels, an independent-measures t test was applied to data and the results indicated that there wasn’t a statistically significant difference between male and female with respect to their Emotional Exhaustion (0.439); Depersonalization (0.118) and Personal Accomplishment (0.186) levels as it is indicated in the Table 4.

When the correlation between teachers’ marital status and their burnout levels are considered, it was found that there is not any significant difference. That is, the results of t-tests demonstrate that significance levels are 0.304 for Emotional Exhaustion, 0.929 for Depersonalization and 0.836 for Personal Accomplishment subscales. The results are presented in Table 4.

With regard to the type of school that the teachers are working at currently, a statistically significant difference was found between the schools with respect to the three subscales with the significance level of 0.045 for Emotional Exhaustion; 0.010 for Depersonalization and 0.041 for Personal Accomplishment. Results for statistical tests in order to determine the relationship between the school type and the three burnout levels suggest that teachers working for public schools have higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization but lower level of Personal Accomplishment than those of the teachers working for private schools (Table 4).

Table 4: Mean Score, Standard Deviation and Range of the Three Burnout Scores in terms of Marital Status, Gender and School Type

		N	Mean	Std. Dev	t/F Value*	P
EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION	Married	55	2.52	0.6	1.03	0.30
	Single	95	2.64	0.66		
	Female	40	2.62	0.67	0.766	0.43
	Male	97	2.53	0.66		
	Public	138	2.63	0.65	2.02	0.04*
DEPERSONALIZATION	Private	10	2.18	0.79		
	Married	54	2.15	0.62	0.839	0.92
	Single	98	2.26	0.75		
	Female	39	2.28	0.72	1.57	0.11
	Male	102	2.06	0.76		
PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT	Public	140	2.19	0.76	2.596	0.01*
	Private	11	1.58	0.62		
	Married	56	2.28	0.62	0.206	0.83
	Single	98	2.26	0.64		
	Female	42	2.33	0.60	1.329	0.18
	Male	99	2.18	0.64		
	Public	141	2.30	0.66	2.05	0.04*
	Private	11	1.88	0.43		

Lastly, Pearson R correlations were conducted to assess if relationships exist between learned resourcefulness and the three burnout scores (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment). As can be seen in Table 5, the study indicated significant inverse (negative) correlations between the learned resourcefulness levels of the teachers and their burnout levels ((Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment). An inverse relationship is a negative correlation; as one variable increases, the other variable decreases. A Pearson R correlation is a bivariate measure of association that also determines the strength of the relationship between two variables. Thus, the strength of the relationship between learned resourcefulness and the tree burnout subscales is assessed as well. The correlation between learned resourcefulness and Emotional Exhaustion was significant, ($r = -0.319$ P: 0.010), suggesting that an inverse relationship exists, so as learned resourcefulness increases, emotional exhaustion will decrease and vice versa. This is a relatively high but moderate negative r score. The correlation between learned resourcefulness and Depersonalization was significant as well ($r = -0.294$; p: 0.0001), suggesting that an inverse relationship exists, so as learned resourcefulness increases, depersonalization will decrease and vice versa. This is a stronger negative r score. Similarly, the correlation between learned resourcefulness and Personal Accomplishment was found significant ($r = -0.219$; p: 0.0001), suggesting that an inverse relationship exists, so as learned resourcefulness increases, lack of Personal Accomplishment will decrease and vice versa. This is a moderate negative r score. The results are revealed in Table 5.

Table 5: Pearson R Correlations between Learned Resourcefulness and Three Burnout Scores

BURNOUT SUBSCALES	EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION		DEPERSONALIZATION		PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Learned Resourcefulness Scores	-0.319	0.010*	-0.294	0.0001*	-0.219	0.0001*

4. Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The literature review and the findings of this study have been compared and synthesized to draw the results and ascertain the conclusions of this research. The results of this study indicate that English teachers have a moderate level of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Diminished Personal Accomplishment. The literature for Emotional Exhaustion symptoms indicates that teachers feel exhausted and overextended, emotionally and physically. Teachers may feel drained and have difficulty unwinding from work. According to the literature, teachers that show signs of Depersonalization blame their students, exhibit signs of cynicism, and have a cold or distant attitude toward work and people on the job. Lastly, in the literature review in the area of personal accomplishment indicated a teacher showing these symptoms would feel ineffective and have a sense of inadequacy. Teachers may lose the ability to have confidence in making a difference in students' lives (Farber 1991; Maslach and Leiter, 1997; Maslach et al, 2001). Since the teachers in the present study are exhibiting "moderate" levels of burnout, they may have some of the above-mentioned symptoms, but definitely not to the extent of being labeled as "high". However, this could reveal an area of concern for the schools and other stakeholders (administrators, students, parents) in the future. Even the fact that reduced personal accomplishment exacerbates overall teacher morale and teachers' ability to cope productively and positively on the job, it seems that teachers are struggling with the factors causing burnout in terms of three dimensions. This result concurs with some research in the literature conducted in Turkey and abroad. Tortop's study (2012) revealed that physics teachers are experiencing low level of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization while they are having a moderate level of Personal Accomplishment. Budak and Sürgevil (2005) also concluded that academicians in Turkey have low level of burnout. According to Mowers (2010) teachers are experiencing low level of Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment but medium level of Emotional Exhaustion. Besides, the source of literature may provide a wide range of studies indicating that teachers are experiencing burnout at different levels and at least in one of the subdimensions. Based on the fact that high burnout level determined in any one of the three burnout areas is enough in order for burnout exists, (Maslach and Leiter, 1997) it wouldn't be wrong for one to think that teaching itself may be leading teachers to burnout and teachers need professional guidance before choosing teaching as a job and professional help on the job. However, as Akbaba (2004) pointed out, the reality that decision about the job in Turkey is mostly made by chance causes burnout to be inevitable which is another handicap of Educational Settings and makes the professional help on the job essential for teachers.

Similarly, several studies which specially focused on burnout experienced by EFL teachers at schools and universities (Cephe, 2010; Özkanal and Arkan, 2010; Mukundan and Khandehroo, 2010 and Öztürk, 2013) also revealed the results that are in accordance with the results of the present study indicating that EFL teachers have different levels of burnout. Regarding the relationship between independent variables and teachers' burnout levels, it was clear that there were not any significant differences between the three burnout levels in terms of three subdimensions and the independent variables; age, gender and marital status. The only variable which had a significant relationship with the three of burnout levels Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment of the teachers was the "school type". Some of these findings of this research supported what was cited in the literature review. Some research (Kirilmaz et al.2003; Hipps and Malphin, 1991; Freed, 1994; Özer, 1998) showed that there are no significant differences between male and female teachers in any sub-dimension of the burn-out scale. However, according to some others (Yavuz, 2009; Budak and Sürgevil 2005; Ergin, 1992; Pines,1997) no significant difference was determined between male and female teachers in the subdimensions of burnout. As for age, it is also possible to encounter studies in the literature having contradictory results. Although there are some studies (Seferoğlu et al. 2014; Koruklu, et al.2012, Maslach, et al., 2001) revealing that age is a significant predictor of teachers burnout, studies (Mclauchlan, 2010; İkiz, 2010; Aydoğan, et al.2009, Budakand Sürgevil, 2005) indicating results similar to the present study in general concluded that, age is not

among significant predictors of burnout. Another finding of the research which shows that marital status of the teachers is not a significant factor on three burnout levels is also in line with some of the studies in the literature (Gold, Bachelor, 2001; Farber, 1984, Budak and Sürgevil, 2005, Tümkeya, 1996) However, previous research study results revealed contradicting results in terms of marital status. Most literature sources reported that singles (versus unmarried; both divorced and widow) are more likely to experience burnout than married people (Özdemir, 2007; Goutas, 2008; Izgar, 2013). As a matter of fact, both results seem to make sense. Marriage, on the one hand, is among social support factors and could prevent teachers from burnout by raising their tolerance level as aforementioned studies indicated but on the other hand, unsatisfied marriage could lead to excessive stress and burnout as Wolpin, et al. (1991) suggested. Therefore, it should be noted that marital status ought to be accepted as individual factors depending on the satisfaction of the relationship (Girgin, 1995). Finally, the result of the present study suggested that teachers may experience burnout in some ways regardless of their marital status, age and gender. Those factors are not predictors of teacher burnout so long as teachers encounter unfavorable conditions in the workplace and are not incapable of coping with them.

However, there are significant differences between three burnout levels and the type of school that the teachers are working. It seems that teachers working for public schools have higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization but lower level of Personal Accomplishment than those of the teachers working for private schools. In Turkey, unfortunately the income levels and social rights of the teachers working in public and private schools are not similar. In addition, public schools usually have uncomfortable working conditions and poor, unclean and unsafe work environment. So this finding is not surprising at all for the researcher. School type has also been found as a significant factor in some other studies as well. Karahan (2011) and Yavuz (2009) also reported that school type is among the predictors of teachers burnout. Literature review exhibited that teachers working in elementary and secondary school differed significantly in terms of burnout (Karahan, 2011). At this point, it should be noted that aforementioned characteristics of public schools which were claimed to explain as possible reasons of teachers' burnout by the researcher may not be sufficient and some other factors such as organizational climate and the relations with administrators and other teachers ought to be concerned.

The study indicated significant inverse (negative) correlations between the learned resourcefulness levels of the teachers and their burnout levels (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment). It can be concluded that as learned resourcefulness increases, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and lack of Personal Accomplishment will decrease and vice versa. This might be interpreted that having high learned resourcefulness is connected to a strong sense of one's skills as a teacher. Teachers with high learned resourcefulness try to do their job as best as they can to help their students (Gibson and Dembo, 1984) and tend to maintain a positive attitude towards their job. Additionally, if teachers have high learned resourcefulness, they feel successful in their jobs as well. Recommending strongly that teaching and developing learned resourcefulness as one means to alleviate burnout, this finding is parallel with some others in the literature (Keinan and Melamed, 1987; Naisberg-Fennig et al. 1991; Cilliers, 2003, Yürür, 2011).

In conclusion, in this study an attempt was made to determine the relationship between burnout and learned resourcefulness and some factors affecting them, and related to the findings some results were drawn and interpreted. Related to the results, some suggestions could be generated. Thus, the study will conclude with recommendations for educational policy makers, further study and research which may benefit teachers and their profession.

Besides considering measures to prevent burnout, learned resourcefulness skills of teachers ought to be increased through training programs developed and carried out by authorities. Since acquisition of learned resourcefulness skills might be possible through education, these skills should also be integrated into the curriculum. However, more research must be conducted to determine the other possible factors such as culturally specific issues on teachers' burnout and experimental studies on learned resourcefulness might be carried out to examine the effects of the program on developing the skills. In addition, this study was a quantitative survey study that gathered data from the teachers working in one province. Further research should be conducted in other provinces or regions of the country using different data collection techniques to provide detailed information about how teachers feel about the symptoms and reasons of burnout.

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Forgiveness Flexibility

Tuğba Seda Çolak¹ & Mustafa Koç²

¹Düzce University, Düzce, Turkey

²Sakarya University, Sakarya, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Forgiveness flexibility is the skill to minimize the negative effect of an event by using cognitive, affective and behavioral skills while taking a stand at the end of an injurious process. A number of studies were conducted to test the flexibility of the structure of forgiveness. The theoretical structure, structural validity and the confirmatory factor analysis supported the theoretical structure of forgiveness flexibility. The criterion validity evaluated in similar manners was found high. Forgiveness flexibility designed as a three dimensional structure and its sub-dimensions was confirmed theoretically as the recognition of forgiveness and the internalization of forgiveness through insight and its practice.

Keywords:

Recognition Forgiveness, gaining insight, forgiveness as attitude.

Introduction

Forgiveness has been defined as a willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgement, and indifferent behavior toward offender (Enright, Freedman & Rique, 1998); responding with beneficence to the offender (Baskin & Enright, 2004); including empathy, humility and courage against offender (Worthington, 1998a). healing emotional wounds, restoring relationships (both inter- and intrapersonal), maintaining physical health, healthy intimate relationships and breaking the chain of violence (DiBlasio & Proctor, 1993; Fincham, Hall & Beach, 2006; Szablowinski, 2010; Wade, 1989) are some functions of forgiveness. According to Fitzgibbons, Enright, and O'Brien (2004), "Forgiveness is a way to decrease negative feelings, hostile behaviors and obsessive thoughts". Wade and Worthington (2005) defines forgiveness as a positive method to cope with injury through reorientation of thoughts, feelings and behaviors toward offender. At the same time lay people describe the concept of forgiveness as a multidimensional concept which includes cognitive, emotional and behavioral components (Kearns & Fincham, 2004).

One of the most important elements in forgiveness is the victim's ability to evaluate -or rather re-evaluate- the offender not only within the framework of the incident that cause the offense, but within the offender's own circumstances (Enright & Kitle, 1999). It should be prevented that the offending incident's forgiveness does not harm the forgiving individual's sense of self-respect and mental health (North, 1998). In fact, the

¹ Corresponding author's address: Düzce University Education Faculty Psychological Counseling and Guidance Department, Düzce, Turkey
Telephone: +905448390335
e-mail: tugbacolak@duzce.edu.tr
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positive interest of the forgiving person towards the offender will increase (Wade & Worthington, 2005). Forgiveness is a concept that helps the individual remove the negative feeling from their life and turn it into a neutral or positive feeling. In literature, we can see tools to measure forgiveness. These measurement tools help determine to what extent the individual has forgiven or what exactly the individual has forgiven. In short, there are measuring tools are mainly result-oriented measures. However, forgiveness requires a process. The make sense out of the incidents and to make a decision of forgiveness requires an internal transformation within the individual. The term forgiveness flexibility has been suggested in order to explain this transformation process.

Flexibility is defined as a necessary component of an individual's capability of adapting to difficult situations and its communicational skills (Cheung, 2001; Martin & Anderson, 1998). Based on the conditions created by the values individuals are related to, flexibility enables people to be insistent in their behavior when they desire to live the present moment, or to change their behavior in order to learn how to do things and to have better mental health (Bond, Hayes & Barnes-Holmes, 2006). There have been developed a number of terms in literature related to the concept of flexibility. All these concepts commonly emphasize the harmoniousness of an individual and the protection of mental health. Psychological flexibility is a qualification including the acceptance of experiences and behaving in accordance with an individual's values (Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda & Lillis, 2006). Cognitive flexibility is an individual's ability to try new ways of communication and its desire to meet different situations (Martin & Anderson, 1998). Coping flexibility has been defined as the ability to realize and discontinue ineffective coping strategies, to develop new coping strategies and to implement them (Kato, 2012). Based on the literature work on forgiveness, we can define forgiveness flexibility as an individual's ability to extricate its cognitive, emotional and behavioral potential while determining a position in face of an offending incident in order to minimize the negative effects of this incident in an optimal amount of time. The individual goes through a cognitive preparatory phase by knowing what real forgiveness is. He/She tries to make sense out of the offensive incident or person, approaching the incidents with gained insight rather than evaluating the incident from its offensive perspective. Flexibility is predicted as the behavior the individual will adopt, from the moment he/she feels ready to remove the negative effects of the offense and its components that caused the offence, and shows an effort to increase positive feelings towards the incident. In this context, the requirements for a healthy forgiveness process have been identified as the individual's acknowledgement of the concept of forgiveness, to truly know and internalize the concept and to finally apply forgiveness through a method which is true to the individual.

Acknowledging the Concept of Forgiveness

Acknowledging the concept of forgiveness is important by means of increasing awareness and to make sense out of the incidents. The process of forgiveness starts with a self-aware decision. A process model developed by Enright and the "Human Development Study Group" (1996) starts off with the acknowledgement of the concept. Diblasio (1998) believes that individuals have a cognitive control over deciding to forgive. The first step in the forgiveness process is the victim's decision to overcome the incidents (DiBlasio & Proctor, 1993; Szablowinski, 2010); and as a result, an effort to try to understand the offender (Fitzgibbons et al., 2004). People are more inclined to forgive people they feel close to and they can emphasize with (McCullough, Root, Tabak & Witvliet, 2009), along with family members (Hantman & Cohen, 2010). These findings could be interpreted in two ways. First, external factors such as the nature of the offense or the status of the relationship before the offense are effective in taking the first step of deciding to forgive (Baskin & Enright, 2004). Another implication might be that people feel an obligation towards forgiving the people they feel close to. This obligation may result in a social expectation and thus cause the emotional forgiveness to fail (Karremans et al., 2011). Forgiveness is entirely subjective and can only happen when it is purged from external pressure. This indicates the importance of acknowledging the concept of forgiveness correctly.

Internalizing the Nature of Forgiveness

Forgiveness requires insight (Worthington, 1998b) and this insight enables to break a vicious circle resulting from the offense (Hargrave, 1994). Forgiveness especially focuses on the individual's internal transformation (Enright et al., 1998) and includes the increase in feelings such as empathy and compassion (Haris, Thoresen & Kopez, 2007). Findings have shown that individuals with high emotional stability and harmoniousness see forgiveness as a useful mechanism to maintain a relationship, and therefore forgive easier (Neto, 2007). After the offense, the individual should seek to make sense of the process, to accept what is experienced and to minimize the negative effects of the process. The individual who truly acknowledges the concept is fully aware what good the individual will do to him/herself by forgiving (Strelan, Mckee, Calic, Cook & Shaw, 2013). Besides extricating negative emotions, the recovery of the relationship could also be a side-product of forgiveness.

Actualization of Forgiveness

From a behavioral standpoint, forgiveness is defined as the overcoming of destructive behavior within a relationship (McCullough et al., 2009). If forgiveness is not correctly acknowledged and the necessary internal transformation has not taken place, the process of condone, excuse, forget, ignore, reconciliation, deny (Enright et al., 1998; Enright & Kitle, 1999) will come into play instead of forgiveness. Another possibility is pseudo-forgiveness. Pseudo forgiveness includes the expectation of appreciation by the offender (Enright et al., 1998).

In order for an individual to correctly apply forgiveness, it is crucial that the individual knows what forgiveness is and what it is not. The awareness on forgiveness created by knowledge on a cognitive level will make the individual prepared for the initiation of the forgiveness process. With the internalization phase, the process with which the individual needs the most time begins. The individual becomes ready for the practice phase after he/she has accepted what has happened and has identified individual methods on how to integrate coping mechanisms with his/her own personal preferences. In practice, the individual -as a being with freedom of choice- decides on a forgiving attitude towards the offense.

Study 1²

The aim of this study was to develop a valid and reliable scale to measure Forgiveness Flexibility. Forgiveness flexibility scale was designed as three dimensional and dimensionality of the scale was investigated with a wide sample. The study was conducted among 1040 participants.

Method

Participants

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on 401 individuals (229 female/ 172 male) aged between 19 and 63 years. Educational backgrounds of the participants range between literate to postgraduate. Of all the participants 60.8% are married, 36.4% are single and 2.7% has the marital status "other". Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed with 639 participants from different grades and departments of Faculty of Education, Sakarya University in 2012-2013 academic year.

The process followed in the development of the scale was planned by considering the six-step process suggested by Laster and Bishop (2000). Initially, related literature was reviewed. Secondly, academic books written on this subject and scales about the concept of forgiveness were examined. Conceptual and operational definitions of "Forgiveness Flexibility" was made after literature review. At the end of this entire process, an item pool was generated based on the question "what is forgiveness" answered by the students studying in different departments of Sakarya University. There were 84 items in the first item pool. At this stage, the items were reviewed and recurrent items were removed. To test the understandability of the items, it was applied to a group of 60 students consisting of first, second, third and fourth grade students in Psychological Counseling and Guidance. The necessary corrections were made on the items in this application by making interviews with the participants about the ambiguous items.

² Study 1 is a part of PhD dissertation written by the first author.

As a result of factor analysis for which eigenvalue was considered 1, the number of factors is three as seen in scree-plot graphic. In this aspect, a three-factor structure was preferred regarding the scale. After determining the factors in the structure, the loads of the items in these factors were examined. Since 15 items have low item loading or there is a difference of less than .10 in two factors, they were excluded from the scale and re-EFA was performed over 15 items.

Forgiveness Flexibility Scale (FFS)

FFS is Likert type scale developed to measure if the individual has got forgiveness flexibility or not. The scale consists of 15 items and has three subscales. Example items for recognition subscale are "Forgiveness is deceiving self" and "Forgiveness is submitting". The example items for internalization subscale are "Forgiveness saves the individual from the trap of past" and "Forgiveness is an important factor for me to be peaceful". Example items for practice subscale are "I try not to make the wrongdoings a current issue" and "I allow the compensation of the mistake". The participants are asked to grade how much the described situation with the items of each subscale fits themselves with a score 1-5. The individual can grade the situation with 1= "I strongly disagree", 2= "I disagree", 3= "Neither agree nor disagree", 4= "I agree" and 5= "I strongly agree".

The scale gives a total score and three sub-scores. The lowest and highest total scores which can be obtained are 15 and 75. The lowest and highest scores which can be obtained from "Recognition" sub-scale is 4 and 20, "Internalization" sub-scale is 5 and 25. The lowest and highest scores which can be obtained from "Practice" subscale are 6 and 30. Low score indicates the incompetence in forgiveness flexibility and high score indicates the competence in forgiveness flexibility. The scale can be applied both individually and with group. Time for replying is 2 minutes.

The scale was applied to sample group for structure validity and reliability studies. According to the data obtained from the scales, EFA was performed for structure validity. In determination of the items to be included in the scale in EFA, it was taken into consideration that eigenvalues of the items are 1, loading values of items are at least .30, the items were included only in one factor and there was a difference of .10 between the factors if the item would be included in two factors (Büyüköztürk, 2010). In addition, varimax axial rotation of 25 degrees was performed during structure validity.

Model fit with item-factor structure obtained with EFA was tested with CFA. Reliability values of the scale were checked with internal consistency coefficients. SPSS 11.5 package program was used in determination of EFA and internal consistency coefficients and Lisrel 8.54 package program was used for CFA.

Results

Statistical processes in the study were performed with the order of EFA, CFA and determination of internal consistency coefficients. The findings are presented in the statistical process order.

Content Validity

It is the content validity which indicates whether the items forming the test are quantitatively and qualitatively sufficient in measuring the behavior (attribute) to be measured (Büyüköztürk, 2010). The scale form of 52 items prepared was submitted for the opinion of six lecturers working in the Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance at Sakarya University and Karadeniz Technical University for content validity based on expert assessment. The experts stated opinion on the understandability of the items and to which dimension each item belongs to. As a result of expert evaluations, it was asked to remove or correct 22 items. Since the number of experts who wanted the removal of 22 items was higher than those who wanted their correction, all of these items were removed. The analyses for psychometric properties of the scale were performed over 30 items.

Structure Validity

It indicates test's degree of measuring an abstract concept (factor) properly in terms of a behavior to be measured (Büyüköztürk, 2010). To ensure the structure validity of the scale, EFA and CFA were conducted.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

EFA is a statistical technique which aims to gather and measure the variables which measure the same structure or attribute and explain them with few factors (Büyüköztürk, 2010). Initially, EFA was performed for the structure validity of FFS. KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) test which tests the adequacy of the sample was first checked to make this analysis. KMO value was found as .85. According to Büyüköztürk (2010), it was concluded that factor analysis can be performed on such data for this value is acceptable over .70. Since, the data obtained by checking Bartlett Sphericity Test ($\chi^2(105) = 1525.54, p=.000$) showed significant difference, it was determined to be proper for factor analysis (Büyüköztürk, 2010). Varimax (25) axial rotation was performed, primarily for principal component analysis in a way that eigenvalue of 30 items were 1 in factor analysis. Since 15 items have low item loading or there is a difference of less than .10 in two factors, they were excluded from the scale.

EFA was performed over 15 items. As a result of analysis, it was found that FFS has a three-factor structure (see figure 1). In the first one of these factors, there are four items in total which are 1st, 5th, 8th and 12th items. The loading values of these items in the factor vary between .60 – .79. This factor which explains 16.9% of the total variance was named "Recognition". The second factor in the scale consists of five items in total which are 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th and 14th items. The loading values of these items in the second factor vary between 0.50 – 0.73. This factor which explains 16.31% of the total variance was named "Internalization". The third factor in the scale consists of six items in total which are 4th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 13th and 15th items. The loading values of these items in the third factor vary between .46– .75. This factor which explains 15.73% of the total variance was named "Practice". 1, 5, 8, 12. Items are scored as reverse items. Three factors in the scale explain 48.94% of the total variance.

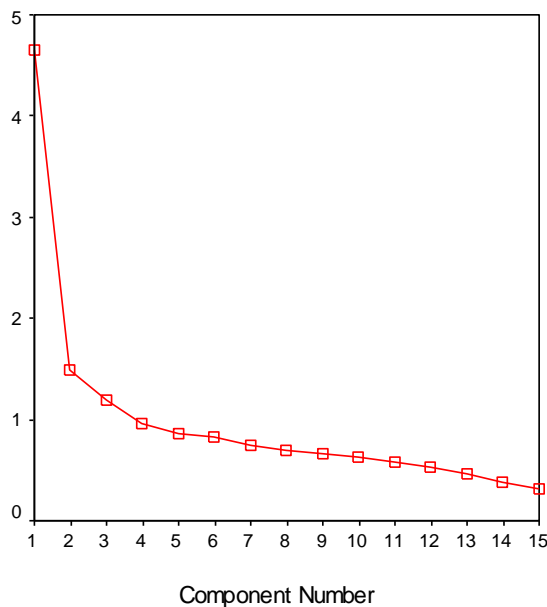


Figure 1. Scree-plot Graphic Factor Structure Shape

As a result of EFA, it was found that the structure consists of 15 items and three factors. The values indicate that the scale explains the "Forgiveness Flexibility" well. Model fit test of the obtained values and structure was checked with CFA.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

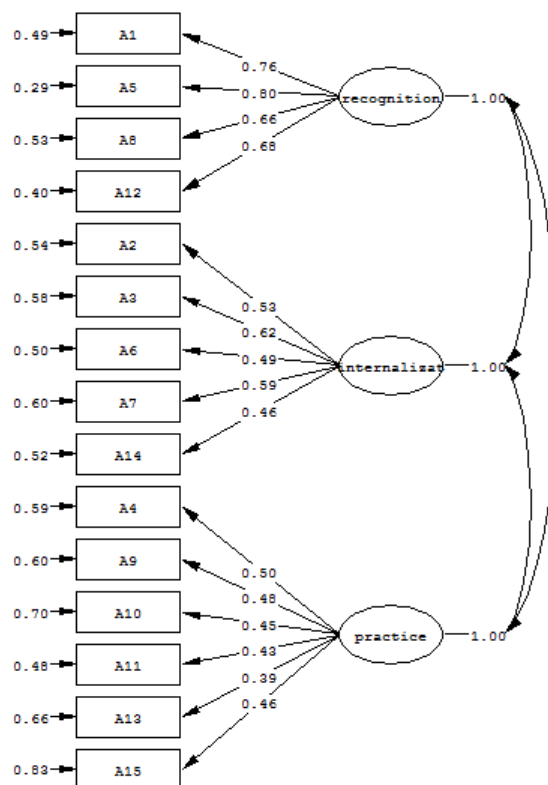
In the evaluation of the fit of the models established with CFA to the data, the evaluation is carried out by taking fit indexes such as χ^2 (chi-square), RMSEA, SRMR, GFI, AGFI, CFI, NNFI into consideration. In case that χ^2/df rate is 5 or less, model-data fit is accepted as good fit (Sümer, 2000; Kline, 2011). Hu and Bentler (1999) suggests cutoff value lower than .08 for SRMR and .06 for RMSEA to conclude goodness of model. GFI and AGFI indexes are higher than .90 show that model-data fit is good. .90 and higher for CFI and NNFI shows that model-data fit is good (Anderson & Gerbing, 1984; Sümer, 2000; Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen, 2008).

Table 1: Goodness of fit statistics for FFS

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	NFI	NNFI	GFI	AGFI
FFS	203.30	87	2.33	.046	.03	.95	.92	.94	.96	.94

Note: χ^2 = Chi-square; df = degrees of freedom; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; CFI = comparative fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index; GFI = goodness of fit index.

When the fit indexes of the scale were examined, it was seen the fit indexes showed good fit (see Table 1). It can be stated that the structure validity of the scale was confirmed based on these findings. For the reliability studies of the scale, internal consistency coefficients (alpha) were calculated. As a result of CFA, the model consisting of 15 items and three factors was found to theoretically and statistically fit (see Figure 2).



Chi-Square=203.30, df=87, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.046

Figure 2. Forgiveness Flexibility CFA Explanation Rates and Error Variances

The relationship between total score and sub scale scores of forgiveness flexibility was examined (see Table 2). A significant, positive and high relationship was found between subscale score and total score in a level of .01. There is a significant and positive relationship between subscale scores in a level of .01. It means that

adequacy level of a subscale positively affects the adequacy level of other subscale. This may positively affect the cognitive efficacy, affective quality and behavioral skills of the individual regarding forgiveness flexibility.

Table 2: *The Relationship Between Forgiveness Flexibility Sub Scales*

		Correlations	
		Recognition	Internalization
Internalization	Pearson Correlation	0,449**	
	Sig. (2- tailed)	,000	
Practice	Pearson Correlation	0,356**	0,62**
N=639	Sig. (2- tailed)	,000	,000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the findings, three sub-dimensions form a single forgiveness flexibility general structure. The factors affecting the general forgiveness flexibility structure are respectively; internalization ($r=1.03$), practice ($r=.87$) and recognition ($r=.64$). In order to identify the discriminant validity based on the internal criteria, the difference between the subscale and total scale scores to the score average, based on a 27% subgroup and supergroup were analyzed.

Item-total correlations- Each item was compared with the score obtained from the general of the scale (see Table 3). Item test correlation coefficients vary between .43 and .66 and each scale has a significant level ($p<.001$). These coefficients are the validity coefficients of that item and show the consistence with the entire of the scale. These values indicate that item-test correlations of the each of the items in the scale are in an acceptable level.

Table 3: Item-Test Scores Correlation and Independent Groups t-Test Results Regarding the Item Distinctiveness of Forgiveness Flexibility Scale

		Total	Group Statistics		
		N=639	Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation
A1	Pearson Correlation	,59**	Subgroup	4,72**	,56
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	2,97	1,42
A2	Pearson Correlation	,58**	Subgroup	4,31**	,68
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	3,09	1,02
A3	Pearson Correlation	,65**	Subgroup	4,39**	,64
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	2,90	1,02
A4	Pearson Correlation	,55**	Subgroup	4,23**	,69
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	3,03	1,02
A5	Pearson Correlation	,66**	Subgroup	4,76**	,45
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	3,00	1,37
A6	Pearson Correlation	,56**	Subgroup	4,40**	,65
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	3,23	1,04
A7	Pearson Correlation	,59**	Subgroup	4,09**	,84
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	2,80	,97
A8	Pearson Correlation	,61**	Subgroup	4,72**	,53
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	3,05	1,42
A9	Pearson Correlation	,52**	Subgroup	4,27**	,70
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	3,08	1,02
A10	Pearson Correlation	,49	Subgroup	3,86**	,75
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	2,73	,98
A11	Pearson Correlation	,53	Subgroup	4,49**	,59
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	3,44	1,00
A12	Pearson Correlation	,62**	Subgroup	4,78**	,57
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	3,24	1,30
A13	Pearson Correlation	,43**	Subgroup	4,06**	,85
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	3,14	,97
A14	Pearson Correlation	,52**	Subgroup	4,45**	,71
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	3,45	,97
A15	Pearson Correlation	,47**	Subgroup	4,16**	,78
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00	Top group	2,96	1,10

** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level

N= 346 $p>.001$

Concurrent Validity

Concurrent validity is studying the correlation between the scores obtained by the participants from a test to be developed and a) a previous test measuring the same behavior, b) a test measuring another related behavior (Büyüköztürk, 2010). In the study, 7-point Likert type, 18-item Heartland Forgiveness Scale which was developed by Thompson et.al. (2005) and which was adapted into Turkish by Bugay and Demir (2010) was used to measure forgiveness level of university students to ensure the Concurrent Validity. The scale has three sub-dimensions which are forgiving oneself, forgiving others and forgiving the situation. As a result of validity and reliability studies, test-retest coefficient was found as .83 for self-forgiving, .72 for forgiving others, .73 for forgiving the situation and .77 for total score. Cronbach's α coefficients are .75, .78, .79 respectively and .86 for total score (Thompson et al., 2005). The correlation between Heartland Forgiveness Scale and FFS was found as .60.

Distinctiveness Attributes of the Items

In order to determine the distinctiveness of each of the 15 items in the scale, item analysis was performed and t test was used for independent groups (Balci, 2009). To this end, raw scores obtained by each student from the scale were calculated firstly and then raw scores of 639 students were listed in decreasing order. Afterwards, groups of %27 from the bottom (173 participants) and 27% from the top (173 participants) were determined. Independent groups' t-test values were determined on the score averages of the students in bottom and top group (see Table 3).

It was found that the difference between the scores of the participants in bottom and top groups were significant in ($t(344)$, $p < .001$) level for each item. This result indicates that each item in the scale is distinctive in the required level, in other words, it can measure the behavior it was designed to measure without intermingling with other behaviors.

Internal Consistency Coefficients for FFS

Reliability analysis of FFS consisting of 15 items was calculated using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, correlation value between split-half, Spearman-Brown formula and Guttman split-half reliability formula.

Total internal coefficient for 15 items of FFS was found as .83. Internal consistency coefficients for subscales of the scale are as follows: .76 for "Recognition", .70 for "Internalization" and .70 for "Practice". These obtained values are acceptable values for reliability level of FFS. The values obtained as a result of validity reliability studies indicate that the scale is a useable one in terms of psychometric properties.

Discussion and Conclusion

Forgiveness is very important concept in forming of dynamics such as trust, respect, cooperation, sharing, responsibility and communication which are necessary for social life. The fact that the individuals currently exhibit behaviors which may harm both others and themselves indicates that forgiveness tolerance threshold is decreased highly in the society. Besides exhibiting forgiving attitude for a mistake, it is also important to make correct choices in forgiveness process. Forgiveness is a process which includes explanation the hurting event in right way, acceptance past as it is and determination new attitude for future. All these basements of forgiveness need a skill which people should gain. This skill can be defined as "forgiveness flexibility". In this context, "FFS" was developed in order to determine whether individuals have forgiveness flexibility or not and psychometric properties of the scale was examined.

Firstly, a three-factor structure was obtained for FFS with EFA. Model fit of the structure obtained with EFA was tested with CFA. As a result of EFA and CFA, the model consisting of 15 items and three factors was found to theoretically and statistically fit. As a result of CFA of FFS, fit indexes was found as $\chi^2 = 203.30$ ($df=87$ $p = .00$), $\chi^2/df = 2.33$, $RMSEA = .046$, $GFI = .96$, $AGFI = .94$, $CFI = .95$, $NFI = .92$, and $NNFI = .94$ (see figure 2). In addition, it can be said that the results indicate the scale has structure validity. When internal consistency coefficients, it was found for entire items .83 that means the scale can be used in a reliable way.

Valid and reliable scale which was developed can be used as a scale to measure the forgiveness flexibility behaviors in the literature. It is considered that the scale can be used to reveal the personalities exhibiting forgiveness flexibility in adolescents and adults and to examine whether forgiveness flexibility behaviors differ or not in terms of demographic factors.

Study 2

The correlation between the FFS total scale score and similar scales were identified in order to test the FFS structural validity.

Method

Participants

The data were obtained from a total of 625 students (234 male and 391 female) studying in different fields of the Sakarya University in the academic year 2014-2015. 20.8% of the participants are freshmen, 21% of them are sophomores, 35.2% of them juniors and 23% of them are senior students.

Instruments

Forgiveness Flexibility Scale: Is a scale which was developed in order to measure forgiveness flexibility. The scale consists of recognition, internalization and practice sub-dimensions. Cronbach alpha internal coefficient of the scale is .83.

Personal Meaning Profile (PMP): The scale consists of 57 items and 7 sub-scales. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .93 (Wong, 1998). Structure of the scale affirmed and fit indexes of the scale's adaptation version is $\chi^2=2879.32$, $df=1536$, $p<.000$, $RMSEA=.054$, $CFI=.90$, $IFI=.90$. Factor loadings of Turkish version of PMP ranged from .30 to .69 (Akın, Düşünceli & Çolak, 2012).

Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ): MLQ, was developed by Steger et al. in 2006, consists 10 items and 2 sub-scales (presence of Meaning in Life, and the Search for Meaning in Life). Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the MLQ's Turkish version is .86 for entire scale and .87, .88 for sub-scales subsequently (Demirbaş, 2010).

Results

Table 4: Correlation coefficients between FFS and PMP, MLQ

	Achievement	Relationship	Religion	Self-transcendence	Self-acceptance	Intimacy	Fair treatment or perceived injustice	PMP total score	Presence of meaning in life	Search of meaning in life	MLQ total score
Recognition	.08*	.07	.11**	.08*	.14**	.14**	.11**	.14**	.12**	.58**	.43**
Internalization	.12**	.13**	.12**	.15**	.15**	.14**	.14**	.17**	.10**	.88**	.61**
Practice	.18**	.18**	.09*	.17**	.20**	.16**	.11**	.18**	.09*	.69**	.48**
FFS								.17**			.61**

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

The Personal Meaning Profile and Meaning in Life Questionnaire were taken as measurements in order to test the structural validity of the forgiveness flexibility scale. The correlation factors between these measurements and the total score and subscale score are given on Table 4. Except the recognition sub-dimension and the PMP's relationship sub-dimensions, all relationships between MLQ's two sub-dimensions and total scale scores were found significant. It was also found that there is a significant relationship between the internalization and practice sub-dimensions and all the sub-dimensions of PMP and MLQ and their total scale scores.

Discussion

According to the findings obtained from the study, the relationship between MLQ and FFS measurements have a significant relationship to all sub-dimensions and total scale scores, which supports the data found in the literature. The ability to forgive plays a key role in giving life a new meaning for the individual (Hantman & Cohen, 2010). The findings clearly show that finding meaning despite all adversities eases the harmonization and forgiveness process of the individual (Boyras, Horne & Sayger, 2010; Burger, Crous & Rodt, 2013; Mason & Nel 2012). The fact that pain has a meaning is significant in the healing process and makes forgiveness easier (Coleman, 1998). Under the light of this knowledge, we can say that there is a significant relationship between forgiveness flexibility and the ability to find meaning in life. So we can say that having forgiveness flexibility is a factor that will contribute to the individual in living a meaningful life.

To actualize forgiveness helps the individual recover from the negative effects of the past and prevents that the past affects the present negatively. It is known that the extension of past experiences affects new relationships (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2012). Individuals that have unfinished work show ulterior emotions such as resentment, anger, hate and pain. If these emotions remain unresolved, they will stay in the background and affect the individual's present relationships negatively (Corey, 2005). If conflicts or problems remain unsolved, this negative effect will continue. The actualization of forgiveness helps the focus to shift from him/herself or the experienced offense to the relationship and to the values the individual naturally carries (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1996). That the individual fronts a being other than him/herself could be explained as transcendence oneself. Whereas transcend the self can be defined as the individual using its inner potential in a way it pleases the self (Frankl, 2004); Marshall (2009) defined forgiveness as one of human spirit sources like self-transcend and self-distancing. Forgiveness flexibility causes awareness that there are still valuable things beyond the individual's personal disappointment. Findings obtained from the study show that there is a significant relationship between the subscales of PMP; namely Achievement, Religion, Self-transcendence, Self-acceptance, Intimacy, Fair treatment or perceived justice; and the subscales of forgiveness flexibility, recognition, internalization and practice. Even though a significant relationship between the relationship and recognition sub-dimensions could not be found, a significant relationship between the relationship and internalization and practice was found, which shows that recognition of the concept of forgiveness itself is not enough to create effective results in a relationship.

Study 3

The literature on the concept of forgiveness shows that it includes cognitive, emotional and behavioral components as put forth by many researchers (for example: Enright & Coyle, 1998; Enright & The Human Development Group, 1996; Kearns & Fincham, 2004). The term forgiveness flexibility has been constructed based on this information.

Many forgiveness models in our day are actually cognitive (Worthington, 1998a). When analyzing Worthington (1998b)'s decision based model and Enright & The Human Development Group (1996)'s progress based model, we see that following the cognitive questioning and emotional discovery phases, that forgiveness manifests as a behavior. Worthington (1998b) argues that forgiveness could happen by itself or unconsciously. DiBlasio (2000) argues that emotional readiness is not a factor in decision based processes, and that there is a distinction between the rational mind and emotions. He argues that the individual's readiness for forgiveness is a necessity, and that only deciding to forgive is enough. Even though forgiveness flexibility approximately includes these views, it holds the opinion that cognitive, emotional and behavioral

steps occur in this order and real forgiveness can only occur if it is a conscious process. The following model has been suggested in order to test this hypothesis (Figure 3).

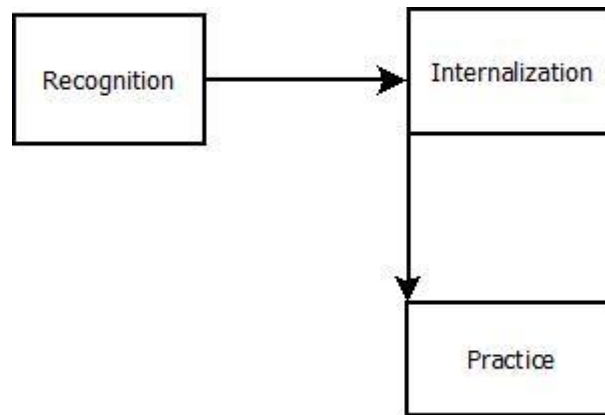


Figure 3. Structure of Forgiveness Flexibility model

Method

Participants

The participants consist of 318 female and 305 male participants, being 623 people in total. 98 of the participants (16%) is in the 18-20 age group, 110 of the participants (18%) in the 21-25 age group, 91 of the participants (14%) in the 26-30 age group, 112 of the participants (18%) in the 31-35 age group, 120 of the participants (19%) in the 36-40 age group and 92 of the participants (15%) are older than 41.

Procedure

Structural equation modeling (SEM) utilized for hypothesis testing. Researchers hypothesized about forgiveness flexibility occur if the individual accomplishes the phases of recognition, internalization and practice subsequently.

Results

Table 5: Goodness of fit statistics for Hypothesis model

X^2	df	X^2/df	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	NFI	NNFI	GFI	AGFI
209.16	88	2.37	.047	.03	.95	.92	.94	.96	.94

The result of SEM has shown that the model's fit indexes show "good fit" (see Table 5). In accordance with the obtained data we see that forgiveness flexibility structure occurs after following the steps recognition, internalization and practice in the respective order (Figure 4).

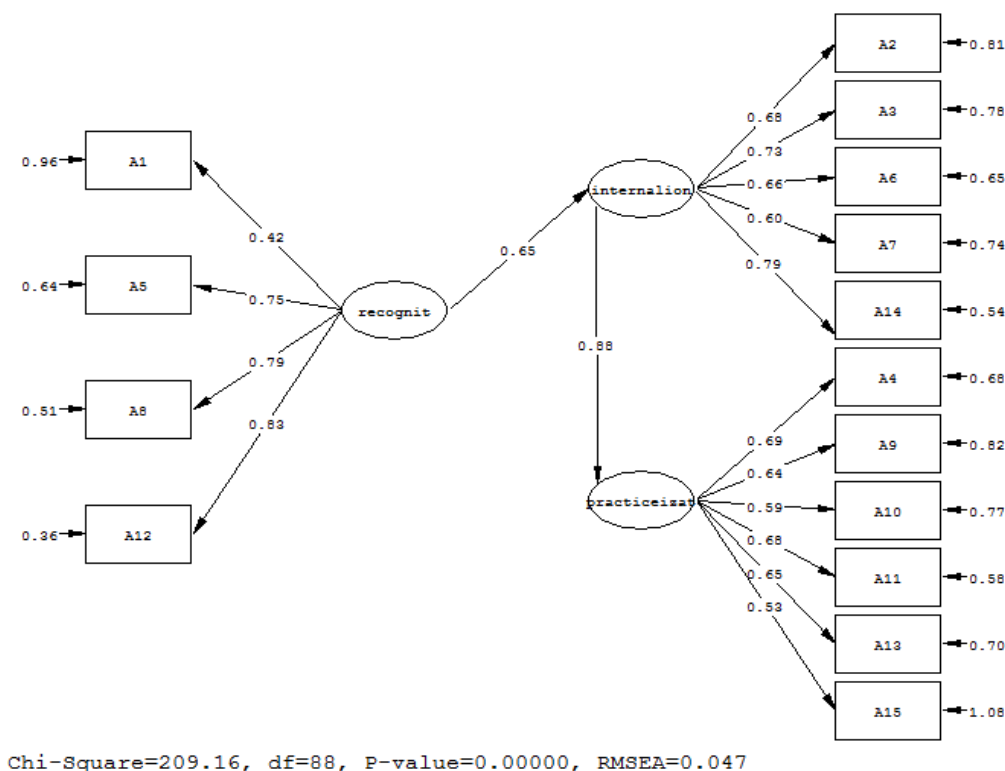


Figure 4. Forgiveness Flexibility Model

Discussion

There are basic two forgiveness models as decision based and process based forgiveness models. These models include decisional and emotional components. This study combines all components about forgiveness under a single roof. The study hypothesized that decisional, emotional and behavioral components of forgiveness must be handled as an entire structure and a process, and these components put into practice subsequently.

Since forgiveness is a term used in the resolution of past experiences and conflicts, it has a therapeutic purpose. However previous studies done in the field show a difference between how individuals define forgiveness and how the literature on the subject defines forgiveness, which prevents forgiveness to be used as a therapeutic tool (Kearns & Fincham, 2004). Wade and Worthington (2005) commented that defining forgiveness wrongly may cause terms such as compromise and forgetting to be confused with forgiveness. The findings of this study also support the findings found in literature. Worthington (1998b) commented that in order to true forgiveness to occur, the individual has to gain some insight. Only after the real definition of forgiveness and the individual’s gaining of insight can the true process of forgiveness begin. This process is concluded when it turns into behavioral practice. The findings of this study verify this structure.

Overall Discussion

The research is consistent of a range of works to verify the forgiveness flexibility structure. As a first step, the notion is presented describing the functional and conceptual characteristics of forgiveness flexibility. The notion of forgiveness can be described as an individual’s ability to recover with minimum damage after offensive situations, using their cognitive, affective and behavioral skills. Forgiveness is a behavior that an individual has the freedom of choosing and forgiveness flexibility can be improved in time (Çolak, 2014). The future studies will result in the better recognition of the forgiveness flexibility.

While pain, crime and death are inescapable in human life (Graber, 2004); recovery, forgiveness and finding meaning can be described as road maps to use overcoming these notions (Gloud, 1986). An individual’s ability to cope with offensive events is a factor that affects life quality positively. Creating emotional

maturity and improving coping strategies are sub outputs of forgiveness process for individuals. Aside from that, forgiveness is not a process that emerges automatically but a behavior that individuals must decide and work on. Karremans, et al. (2011) stated that without the ability to forgive, continuing a long relationship is not possible. In the literature, the negative effects in the individual's life caused by lack of forgiveness has been stated. Few examples to that are the emergence of negative feelings such as grudge, hate; the continuing increase of negative thoughts in the individual's mind; past problems effecting the daily relationships. Under the light of this information, it is crucial to develop forgiveness flexibility in an individual to implement the notion of forgiveness actively in their life. FFS, which was developed within this context, was added to the literature as a valid and credible measurement device to determine forgiveness flexibility structure.

Individuals that can find meaning in life have more fulfilling lives. The forgiving process helps individuals to find a meaning in their life by providing an ability to continuing interactions with other individuals and developing coping behaviors in face of an inescapable pain, which are the offensive past experiences. The researches support the relationship between spirituality and forgiveness (Younger, Piferi, Jobe & Lawler, 2004). It has been determined that the spirituality has a positive effect on quality of life and forgiveness is a factor to create this connection (Currier, Drescher, Holland, Lisman & Foy, 2015). The actual research results support the literature results revealing the positive relationship between forgiveness flexibility and finding meaning in life.

Forgiveness caused by expectations does not overlap with real forgiveness. According to research conclusions, forgiveness is a notion that reasons change according to the culture. It was discovered that especially in collectivist countries, individual's reasons to forgive are caused by the expectations of the society rather than individuals forgiving in response to their emotions (Karremans, et al., 2011). It was found that individuals who emotionally forgive, forgets the features of the offender he/she attribute to the offender, however individuals who decisively forgive were unable to do that (Lichtenfeld, Buechner, Maier & Fernandez-Capo, 2015). The individual who has forgiveness flexibility will experience all the positive results of forgiveness, since he/she will actualize forgiveness with the insight he/she gained, instead of the necessities various expectations bring. As a result of the cognitive readiness to forgive and the awareness the individual has by objectively evaluating the process, the individual will determine the course of the relationship according to the change happening in the individual's emotional state and thus demonstrate the forgiving behavior at his/her subjectively most optimal time. It is not possible to forgive when not ready cognitively or ignoring the negative feelings that have been emerged emotionally. So we can say that the forgiveness flexibility notion is progress that follows cognitive readiness, emotional maturity and behavioral implementation steps respectively.

Conclusion

Forgiveness flexibility is a newborn notion which is ready to take part in the field. As a result of this research, a 15 item FFS was developed to measure forgiveness flexibility structure and test the measurement's psychometrical attributes . It is determined that FFS is a valid and reliable measurement. Correlation of similar measurements to test the validity of forgiveness flexibility structure was has been tried and between MLQ and PMP measurement devices total scores and sub-dimensions and FFS total scores and sub dimension correlation has related significantly. Forgiveness flexibility structure was supported. Finally, supported forgiveness flexibility structure was tested with a model and as a result it is determined that forgiveness flexibility structure is respectively consistent of recognition, internalization and practice dimensions.

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Barriers Experienced by Middle School Students in the Process of Learning English

Özlem Çelik¹, Orhan Kocaman²

¹Sakarya University, MA, Turkey, ²Sakarya University, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

English has gained a significant role in technological, business, economic or political areas and has been a part of educational policies in different countries. However, many learners of English have difficulties in learning and using the language effectively due to a number of reasons. Accordingly, a descriptive study was conducted in order to investigate what kind of foreign language (English) learning problems the middle school students experience in Turkey. A total of 164 (92 female and 72 male) middle school students (5th, 6th, 7th, 8th grade) in 4 public schools in Sakarya, Turkey participated in the study. The data were collected through an open-ended question and semi-structured interviews. The collected data were analyzed and coded thematically. The results have indicated that middle school students mostly face linguistic, instructional, affective barriers as well as lack of assistance and useful resource. Considering the findings, some possible reasons and suggestions were also provided to help teachers and learners overcome the relevant barriers in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in Turkey

Keywords:

Language learning barriers, Middle school, Teaching and learning English

1.Introduction

The role of English as a lingua franca on the developments of economic, political, cultural and technological areas has led the acceptance of English in the education system of Turkey as in many different countries (Kırkgöz, 2014). Accordingly, English instruction has become compulsory starting in primary school in Turkey as an EFL country with the aim of equipping learners with communicative competence (Kırkgöz, 2009). Even though Turkish students have some negative attitudes towards learning English, they are all aware of the importance of English (Çetinkaya, 2009; Karahan, 2007) as well as the parents (Ahmad, 1993, cited in Başıbek, et al. 2013). However, although a number of changes and revisions have been made on the language teaching curriculum and policies, Turkish learners' level of English proficiency is still not satisfactory to use the language as communicatively as necessary on an international level (Dinçer, Takkaç & Akalın, 2010; Işık, 2008; Demirel, 2003, cited in Haznedar, 2010). Learners experience various difficulties while learning English in different contexts in terms of using some language skills or different linguistic aspects such as grammar and vocabulary. Khan (2011) classifies several barriers underlying such inadequacy as deriving from pedagogical, socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, affective or parental issues. One of the best ways to find out English learning barriers that learners encounter is to investigate their perceptions on the difficulties they face while learning English.

¹Corresponding author's address:Sakarya University, MA, Turkey

e-mail: celik_ozlem90@hotmail.com

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1.1.Literature review

There is little research on the language barriers of middle school students while learning English in Turkey as well as in different countries. Most of the relevant research is conducted on undergraduate or secondary school students. A number of factors have been asserted to affect the success of learning English in various contexts. Soner (2007) claimed that “limited number of teachers, teachers’ inadequate foreign language knowledge and methods, teachers’ using old fashioned language approaches, students’ not giving importance because of the heavy burdens of other courses in school, insufficient language equipments in schools, students' lack of motivation and interest about foreign language, and students' not having a chance of using the language outside the class”(p.236) are the main difficulties that bring out the failure in learning and teaching English (cited in Dinçer, et al., 2010). Ghrib (2004) found out that many of the difficulties that Tunisian secondary school students have encountered emerge due to their inefficacy on the linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar and phonology knowledge. Akbari (2015) made a comprehensive analysis on existing research on junior high school students and regarded the lack of English speaking environment and heavy emphasis on grammar teaching as the most important barriers to use language successfully in Iran. The detailed literature for English learning barriers is classified as below.

1.2. Difficulties with the Grammar

Crivos and Luchini (2012) define grammar as “a device for constructing and conveying meaning without which, effective communication would be impossible” (p.1). However, the pedagogical developments in recent years on grammar teaching area have not been sufficient to answer the needs of language teachers to enable learners to gain grammatical knowledge (Ellis 2002, 2006; cited in Richards & Reppen, 2014). There are many barriers to learning and using linguistic forms accurately as well as fluently. Larsen-Freeman (2001) implies that learning linguistic forms correctly depends on not only the type of instruction (e.g. teaching grammar structures in isolated sentences) but also the lack of exposure in EFL contexts (cited in Gürata, 2008). EFL contexts inhibit the use of language fluently as well as accurately as students do not feel any obligation of learning English (Akbari, 2015). Also, the literature indicates that first language (L1) interference is one of the most common barriers to learning the structures of language for both Turkish and other learners from different contexts. As introduced by Lado (1957), contrastive analysis examines two languages to reveal the differences in terms of phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical features to estimate what type of difficulties the students may encounter in the second or foreign language (L2) learning process (cited in Abushibab, 2014). Kesmez (2015) examined 120 compositions of prep-class university students and found that Turkish learners made a number of L1 interference errors categorized as morphological (e.g. tense and subject-verb agreement), syntactic (e.g. word order and prepositions), lexical (e.g. punctuation and capitalization) and orthographic (e.g. word for word translations) aspects. Mede, Tural, Ayaz, Çalışır and Akın (2014) indicated that the study they conducted with Turkish university prep-class students revealed L1 interference such as ‘slowly speak’ as causing difficulty (p. 79) and the researchers discussed the result with respect to word order differences between the languages as Turkish has a SOV (subject-object-verb) word order whereas English has a SVO order. Sawir (2005) explains that grammar is regarded as difficult by many international students due to the differences between their first languages and English and their experience on grammar-based instruction in previous classroom practices that result in thinking in L1 during speaking and writing; thus focusing on grammar structures impedes successful interaction.

1.3. Difficulties with the Vocabulary and Reading Skill

Orawiatnakul (2011, cited in Demir, 2013) states that knowledge of vocabulary is essential for learners to develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. There is a positive correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension as well as the success of foreign language learning just like in the first language learning (Lervåg & Aukrust, 2010; Plinscar & Brown, 1985, cited in Ahmadi, İsmail

& Abdullah, 2012; Sidek & Rahim, 2015). Despite the role of vocabulary in communicating effectively, learners experience many problems in learning vocabulary (Çelik & Toptaş, 2010). There are a number of barriers affecting learning vocabulary such as individual differences, the affective issues (motivation, attitudes towards vocabulary learning, fear of failure) or the language learning aptitude as Takač (2008) marked (p.17). In addition, the pronunciation or spelling of words can be another barrier for language learners. However, the most prevalent factor hindering vocabulary acquisition is that learners are not conscious or good at using effective vocabulary learning strategies (Kocaman & Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu, 2014). Demir (2013) investigated the effectiveness of in-class vocabulary teaching strategies instruction on the 8th graders' retention of the amount of vocabulary. As the outperformance of the experimental group implies, the traditional vocabulary instruction which includes writing definitions and memorization can be a barrier for successful vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, Schmitt (2000, cited in Edvardsto, 2010) believes that strategies such as simple memorization, repetition and taking notes for vocabulary learning are not useful enough for improving vocabulary knowledge. According to Oxford (1990, cited in Wu, 2013: 202), "the degree of awareness, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex, nationality, ethnicity, general learning styles, personality traits, motivation, and purpose for learning the language" can affect the use of learning strategies. In his study on Chinese learners' use of vocabulary learning strategies, Wu (2013) found motivation and family background as underlying factors of foreign language proficiency and vocabulary learning strategy. Accordingly, most of the researchers suggest teaching students to use strategies effectively (Çelik & Toptaş, 2010; Ahmadi, et al., 2012; Subaşı, 2014).

1.4. Difficulties with the Pronunciation

Pronunciation is one of the most important and problematic area faced by learners while learning English despite the amount of training in classes (Gilakjani, 2011). Fraser (2000a, cited in Gilakjani, 2011) states that pronunciation is one of the most important sub-skills of speaking and regardless of accuracy or poor pronunciation can make the comprehension really difficult. As a reason for failure, Zhang and Yin (2009) explained that Chinese students are not good at English pronunciation due to interference of mother tongue, learners' age, attitudes, psychological and instructional factors. Furthermore, Jahan (2011) made a study on Bangladesh university students and pointed at shyness, and classroom practices along with the teacher's proficiency and the interference of L1 as influential on the learners' pronunciation level.

As a barrier for learning English, Geylanioglu and Dikilitaş (2012) stated that Turkish learners face difficulty in the pronunciation of some English words and this issue has been an area of research recently. They also address teaching practices and ignorance of pronunciation practice in classroom activities as the most common barriers based on their research. Similarly, according to Demircioğlu (2013), the L1-L2 differences or lack of emphasis in teaching pronunciation at primary, secondary and university level causes barriers in language learning. Bayraktaroğlu (2008) examined the pronunciation difficulties of Turkish learners of English. He states that there is not one-to-one letter-sound correspondence in English orthographic system as in Turkish and such difference causes interference with the appropriate English pronunciation as a barrier to acquiring English. Besides the orthographic interference, Khalilzadeh (2014) also addresses the lack of being exposed to English in their daily life (in Iran, as an EFL context) as a barrier in acquiring pronunciation. Bekleyen (2011) also mentions that Turkish learners' attempt to over-generalize the pronunciation of words due to orthographic differences of two languages and the complexity of spelling of English may end up with failure.

1.5. Affective Factors (anxiety, self-confidence, attitude and motivation)

Affective factors including motivation, anxiety, self-confidence and attitude have great impact on the language acquisition process as both impeding and facilitating role in utilizing language input (Krashen, 1985, cited in Du, 2009). In their study with junior high school students, Zhu and Zhou (2012) found that the anxiety, boredom, hopelessness and low self-confidence are main factors that affect the success of foreign language

learning. Among others, considering the impact of anxiety on foreign language learning, Cui (2011) investigated the high school students' English learning anxiety in Chinese EFL classrooms and found that fear of negative evaluation (mostly by teachers) and test anxiety due to national examinations are major factors inhibiting Chinese learners' language learning achievement. Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014) explored the reasons of language speaking anxiety of 383 pre-intermediate university prep-class students. The results revealed that pronunciation, immediate questions by teachers, fear of making mistakes and negative evaluation influence the anxiety level and success of language learning. Kayaoğlu and Sağlamel (2013) categorized the causes of language anxiety in speaking classes as due to linguistic difficulties (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and sentence structure), cognitive challenges (fear of failure in front of others, fear of exams, fear of failure in communication, lack of self-esteem, fear of making mistakes), the role of the teachers, competitiveness and lack of information in learners' L1 (p. 149).

Attitudes and motivation are other affective factors in determining the success of foreign language learning. Gardner (1985) defines attitude as "an evaluative reaction to some referent or object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent" (p. 164, cited in Gardner, 2006). Çetinkaya (2009) conducted a study with 15 first year university students on their perceptions and attitudes towards English. She spotted that learners are aware of the importance of English in their future study and career but they have been reported to be against the dominance, in other words, the "imposed power" of English in the world (p.117). Ellis (1994, cited in Atchade, 2002) explains that the learners' attitudes both influence and are influenced by the learners' improvement in second language learning. Accordingly, the constant failures are most likely to lead learners to develop more negative attitudes towards the language learning. Also, Oxford (1994) says that learners with negative attitudes usually have inefficient learning strategies. Thus, Oxford (1994), Atchade (2002) and Kocaman and Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu (2014) hold the idea that teachers should train learners on learning strategies with the view of individual differences like attitude, beliefs and needs. Gardner (2006) claims that motivation and attitude are so important factors that complement each other to enhance language learning. Confirming that statement, Mustafa, Rashid, Atmowardoyo and Dollah (2015) made a study on Indonesian university students and revealed that the degree of learners' achievement is highly related to their motivation and attitude levels. The studies mentioned in the next section by Meshkat and Hassani (2012) students can reveal some demotivating factors for high school students, which hinder learners' development in second language acquisition and use.

Self-confidence has also a crucial role in second language learning and developing attitudes towards language learning. Zhu and Zhou (2012) explored some affective factors influencing Chinese EFL junior high school students and found that the learners have lack of confidence in learning English as constituting one of the major language learning problems. The authors categorized the increasing difficulty of vocabulary and grammar, getting low marks in the exams, poor performance, caring about peers, parents and teachers' criticisms on their success as leading to develop low self-confidence about their ability to learn English.

1.6. Instruction (Teacher, classroom management, methodology, coursebooks)

Teachers as individuals and their choice of methods and materials as well as coursebooks can affect the success of learners' improvement in second language learning. Çelik, Arıkan and Caner (2013) investigated the Turkish undergraduate learners' perceptions of an effective teacher. The learners reflected on teachers' pedagogy-specific knowledge, personality traits, professional skills and classroom behaviours. According to the learners, teachers should be fair, enthusiastic, friendly, loving, creative and experienced in terms of personality (p.292). Regarding pedagogy-specific knowledge, teachers should teach pronunciation and four language skills adequately and explain grammar rules well (p.293). Teachers should also be proficient in grammar and vocabulary, and be good at classroom management, reducing anxiety and use of technological and visual materials (p.293). Similarly, Baytur and Razi (2015) examined the 6th and 12th grade learners' perceptions of effective language teachers with respect to personal, professional and pedagogical aspects. The results of the study were reported as that learners appreciate the teachers who are good at pronunciation, classroom management, grammar teaching, use of technological devices and creating an

affective atmosphere in the classroom. Meshkat and Hassani (2012) analyzed the demotivating factors for Iran students. Learning content and materials, teachers' competence and teaching styles were found to be important demotivating factors for Iran learners. Lessons with too much grammar focus, accuracy based activities, long reading passages, least amount of communicative skills, coursebook and exercise books have been reported to be demotivating by the learners in the study. It is also clear that besides teachers as individuals, teaching methods and coursebooks have great impact on improving second language learning. Falout, Elwood and Hood (2009) investigated the demotivating factors for 900 EFL Japanese learners and found that the learners do not favour grammar translation method which is implemented due to national examinations and want communicative activities involved in the lessons to use English interactively with peers and teachers. Al-Khairi (2013) found that Arabian EFL university learners mostly complain about the teachers' behaviours, methods, use of mother tongue, difficult textbooks, peer pressure, lack of technological materials and the difficulty of vocabulary and grammar as demotivating factors in their context of learning English.

1.7. Family, Resource and Technological Support

Learners who live in rural areas can have difficulties in reaching some sources necessary for their second language improvement. There is little research on the effect of family support on the effect of learners' second language development. Salameh (2012) examined the perceptions of 1200 secondary school learners to reveal the effect of parents' socio-economic and educational levels' on learners' English learning. The results show that well-educated parents have been perceived to be more helpful in leading the learners' success of L2 development since they can provide support and be good models for their children. Alidoost, Paknejad, Toulabi, Mirchenari & Nokarizi (2014) investigated the effects of parental, socio-economic conditions on 7th, 8th and 9th grade learners' success of learning English. Parents' direct (namely, the parents' direct assistance in helping their children learn English, such as helping them with their English homework, providing them with private English lessons after school, etc.) and indirect behaviours (home literacy and language environment and the parents' English proficiency) described by (Wigfield, Essoles, Schiefele, Roeser & Davis-Kean, 2006), cited in Alidoost, et. al, 2014: 46) have been reported to influence learners' foreign language learning positively.

While studying English or any other language, learners need some resources to get help. Besides their families, the use of dictionaries and technology in today's world are good resources to provide necessary information and language learning practice. Stein (1989) believes that although the use of bilingual dictionaries may be helpful in the beginning stages of learning, they can mislead learners to choose the wrong equivalent of a word which has multiple meanings in the target language. Accordingly, Bensoussan, Sim and Weiss (1984) stated that "bilingual dictionaries often fail to give complete definitions or to include enough idioms." (p.269). Considering the effect of technology use in EFL learning, Çelik et al. (2012) investigated the role of ICT (Information Communication Technologies) for self-regulated learning as an out-of-class learning of English on prep-class university students. The results show that learners both utilize and have positive attitudes towards the use of ICT to support their learning out of the class on vocabulary learning and developing listening and writing skills.

The literature indicates some difficulties faced by EFL learners in the process of learning English regarding various language aspects. The following research question has been investigated in the present study to provide suggestions for the language learning barriers for middle school students in Turkey.

RQ: What are the English language learning barriers perceived by middle school learners in Turkey as an EFL context?

2.Method

2.1. Participants

A descriptive study was carried out with 164 students consisting of 92 female and 70 male students from 2 village schools and 2 schools in the town. 5th and 6th graders study English at least for 3 hours a week as compulsory and 7th and 8th graders study English at least for 4 hours a week as compulsory each year. Detailed information about the participants regarding number grade, age and gender is given in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. The number of participants from the village schools

Gender	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Female	15	14	15	12
Male	11	8	10	14
Total	26	22	25	26

Table 2. The number of participants from the city schools

Gender	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Female	3	6	23	4
Male	8	2	13	6
Total	11	8	36	10

2.2. Data collection

The data were collected through a survey with an open-ended question. The learners were asked to write about what kind of barriers they face while learning English. Besides, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 6 students who were chosen randomly from each school to get more specific examples and figure out the underlying reasons. The data were obtained by four teachers employed at data collection settings. The purpose of the research was explained in each class and the students were assured that their names would not be made public and the results would not affect their grades.

2.3. Data analysis

The data were analyzed through content analysis through which the students' responses were thematically coded. Each barrier was classified in the tables including themes, codes, sub-codes and the frequency of answers. Extracts from the students' answers and interviews were transcribed and presented so as to provide detailed analysis of the results.

3. Results

The findings revealed that middle school learners face a number of difficulties in learning English process. The relevant barriers are categorized in Tables 1-9.

Table 3. Students’ perceptions of the linguistic barriers: Vocabulary

Theme	Codes	Sub-codes	f	Students
Linguistic barriers 1	Vocabulary [Total f: 102]	Memorization - Retrieval	60	S4, S8, S18, S20, S21, S23, S24, S27, S29, S30, S32, S33, S38, S39, S43, S48, S52, S54, S55, S56, S62, S64, S65, S66, S69, S70, S72, S74, S75, S77, S89, S90, S92, S93, S95, S97, S99, S102, S104, S105, S109, S112, S113, S118, S120, S128, S130, S135, S137, S139, S140, S141, S143, S146, S152, S156, S157, S159, S160, S161
		Dictionary (absence or lack of quality)	15	S1, S3, S4, S8, S9, S14, S17, S19, S21, S22, S29, S31, S32, S53, S59
		Orthography (Spelling)	15	S3, S4, S11, S21, S24, S31, S62, S63, S69, S70, S99, S133, S140, S141, 164
		Numbers	4	S1, S6, S7, S15
		Practice / Revision	3	S31, S47, S136
		Days	2	S4, S15
		Antonyms	1	S138
		Multiple meanings	1	S91
		Finding irrelevant	1	S60

As seen in the Table 3, most of the students (f=60) have difficulty in the memorization and retention of the vocabulary. The problems about the use of dictionary (f=15) and the orthographic differences (f=15) are revealed as other important factors hindering the students’ English learning process. 8 of the students in total stated that they have difficulty in learning some specific lexis such as numbers, days, antonyms and words with multiple meanings. Some students (f=4) reflected that some of the words are not recycled and practised enough all through the units in the coursebook. Only one of the students claimed that the words in the unit are irrelevant for their age and interest. The detailed comments of the students are as;

S31. “... I have difficulty in both writing and pronouncing the words.... I see the words we have studied once or never in the second term.”

S69. “I can’t differ the *different* or *difficult*, they are similar.” (interview)

S99. “...Learning vocabulary is too difficult. Some words are too long so I can’t memorize and remember.”

S141. “...It would be easier to remember or memorize if the words are pronounced as they are written.”

S164. “...I misspell some words...for example, *beautiful*...because...written and pronounced differently.”(interview)

Table 4. Students’ perceptions of the linguistic barriers: Grammar

Theme	Codes	Sub-codes	f	Students
Linguistic barriers 2	Grammar [Total f: 79]	Sentence construction (Word order, negative, affirmative, interrogative sentences)	57	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S12, S13, S14, S17, S18, S19, S20, S22, S26, S29, S31, S32, S35, S38, S39, S40, S41, S43, S50, S51, S54, S55, S59, S62, S63, S64, S65, S66, S68, S69, S70, S71, S72, S73, S75, S77, S78, S79, S90, S91, S97, S99, S114, S135, S146, S152, 163
		Tenses (Subject-verb agreement, suffixes)	14	S5, S9, S13, S45, S61, S67, S68, S69, S76, S83, S110, S134, S137, 163
		Time telling	5	S6, S80, S82, S86, S87
		Preposition of movements (Giving directions)	2	S4, S80
		Quantifiers (A few, a little)	1	S27

The table 4 indicates that half of the participants face problems with English grammar. The students (f=57) mostly have difficulty in forming sentences in terms of word order and transformation. Also, 14 students find tenses requiring the use of suffix and subject verb agreement as challenging. As a part of the curriculum, 8 students in total see time telling (5th grade), giving directions (5th grade) and quantifiers (6th grade) as difficult to learn.

- S9. "...I misuse and have difficulty in 'don't and doesn't'."
- S40. "I sometimes disorder the words while making sentences and I think this as a big problem."
- S41. "I have too much difficulty in making sentences and forget *-es* and *-ing* suffixes."
- S70. "I have difficulty in transferring sentences from affirmative to interrogative or negative."
(interview)
- S86. "There is nothing difficult for me but just 'What time does your friend wake up?' and time telling."
- S114. "I can't unscramble the words (as an exercise)."
- S134. "I never understand how to use irregular verbs in past tense."
- S163. "...I sometimes misuse '*are-is*' ... while asking questions" (interview)

Table 5. Students’ perceptions of the linguistic barriers: Speaking skills and Pronunciation

Theme	Codes	Sub-codes	f	Students
Linguistic barrier 3	Pronunciation & Speaking Skill [Total f: 74]	Difficult	46	S2, S19, S21, S23, S24, S28, S29, S31, S32, S41, S45, S46, S49, S51, S59, S62, S70, S71, S73, S74, S78, S84, S94, S101, S102, S103, S104, S105, S107, S109, S115, S117, S121, S122, S123, S124, S126, S133, S135, S136, S139, S146, S154, S155, S158, S162
		Spelling / Letters	13	S15, S20, S22, S25, S27, S33, S47, S70, S88, S89, S93, S96, S98
		Anxiety (Peer pressure, Losing face, shyness)	8	S4, S6, S14, S18, S22, S26, S39, S45
		Fluency	7	S74, S101, S107, S122, S123, S124, S125

As another important linguistic aspect, the students pointed at pronunciation and accordingly the speaking skill as an important barrier in the learning process. 46 of the students referred English language as difficult to pronounce. Some of the students attributed the problem they face to the spelling system of the language (f=13) whereas 8 of the students explained that they feel anxious in pronouncing due to peer pressure, losing face and shyness.

S14. “I feel shy (hesitate) when I pronounce English words because I think my friends will laugh at me ... my teacher can get angry.”

S25. “We have difficulty because we can’t articulate English letters (sounds) well. I wish we could say the words well.”

S74. “I have difficulty in speaking fluently and making sentences.”

S69. “I mispronounce ‘who and how’ ...sounds similar.” (interview)

Table 6. Students’ perceptions of the linguistic barriers: Reading Skills

Theme	Codes	Sub-codes	f	Students
Linguistic barriers 4	Reading Skills [Total f: 39]	Comprehension	17	S8, S12, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30, S41, S46, S55, S57, S64, S65, S67, S89, S131, S139
		Translation	13	S26, S28, S29, S32, S55, S75, S70, S91, S93, S96, S98, S116, S153
		Question & Answer	9	S24, S41, S51, S57, S69, S76, S77, S85, S86

In table 6, it is revealed that some students have difficulty in comprehending (f=16) and translating (f=13) paragraphs or even sentences. Accordingly, 8 of the students say that they do not understand the questions and answer well. Some of the relevant extracts are given below.

S26. “I have difficulty in comprehending the dialogues.....translating the reading texts.”

S41. “I don’t understand what paragraph means...”

S69. “I sometimes have difficulty in answering questions...”

In fact, these problematic findings can be attributed to lack of vocabulary knowledge as well as reading skills or strategies as one of the students stated as;

S77. "... I have problems with question words..."

Table 7. Students’ perceptions of the instructional barriers

Theme	Codes	Sub-codes	f	Students
Instructional barriers	Teacher, Material, & Instruction [Total f: 82]	Classroom management	20	S12, S58, S87, S89, S93, S99, S100, S101, S102, S104, S106, S107, S109, S112, S113, S114, S116, S117, S118, S119
		Teaching skills, methods, techniques, activities	19	S2, S23, S93, S100, S101, S102, S103, S104, S105, S108, S109, S111, S116, S122, S124, S132, S133, S134, S139
		Tests	11	S1, S2, S4, S5, S14, S16, S17, S20, S23, S109, S162
		Homework	8	S5, S17, S20, S23, S26, S27, S28, S55
		Coursebook	8	S22, S26, S28, S32, S40, S54, S55, S60
		Teacher (behaviour, characteristics)	5	S102, S103, S107, S111, S113
		Background	5	S16, S26, S88, S127, S144
		Professional, field skills	3	S102, S103, S114
		Technology, visual aids	3	S142, S144, S145

Besides the linguistic problems, half of the students face difficulty in learning English due to instructional barriers. As seen in the Table 7, there are a number of factors encountered in the instructional process. Classroom management (f=20) and teaching methods and skills (f=19) were stated as the biggest problem by the students pointing to the noise and discipline problems as well as the effectiveness of the activities conducted in the lesson. Coursebook (f=8) and the use of technology (f=5) also have been reported to pose difficulty in learning English as material-based problems. Students explained that they cannot do the homework (f=8) and tests (f=11) well due to several reasons such as difficulty or lack of vocabulary. Some detailed comments of the students are provided below.

S23. "I wish the teacher prepared more enjoyable activities, taught better I want to learn jokes..."

S28. "The coursebook is difficult. I don't understand the homework."

S55. "I don't understand when the topics are nonsense."

S60. "...The cooking unit is too irrelevant (*for male students*)... Girls know better how to cook..."
(repeated in interview)

S99. "I can't understand the lesson because of the noise in the class."

S104. "We write too much.....We don't use the coursebook...She shouts at us."

S107. "The teacher never smiles..... I don't like English.... I get bored."

S127. "Since we didn't study English in the primary school, English is very difficult for us this year."

S142. " ..Lesson is very boring because we don't have computer and projector in class."

Table 8. Students’ perceptions of the affective barriers

Theme	Codes	Sub-codes	f	Students
Affective barriers	Affective factors [Total f: 59]	Anxiety (fear, excitement, losing face, peer pressure, shyness)	19	S1, S2, S3, S11, S12, S14, S15, S18, S19, S35, S36, S37, S39, S40, S41, S43, S66, S83, S94
		Attitude	17	S48, S52, S54, S60, S96, S98, S107, S106, S108, S127, S129, S145, S147, S148, S149, S150, S151
		Motivation	15	S23, S29, S30, S48, S52, S70, S71, S96, S102, S107, S108, S133, S134, S142, S145
		Self-confidence	8	S11, S17, S18, S30, S46, S59, S83, S129

One of the significant barriers for students in learning English is the affective factors that can be seen in the Table 8 (f=58). Anxiety (f=18) is attributed as an important factor affecting the learning process. 17 of the students have negative attitudes towards learning English and 15 students seem to be unmotivated. Additionally, 8 students show lack of self-confidence in attaining the learning. Some extracts can provide detailed understanding below.

S19. “I get excited when I talk to my teacher I get upset when I fail.”

S39. “I fear reading paragraphs because I think that my friends will make fun of me.”

S41. “I’m afraid of making mistakes and I don’t participate...”

S46. “I like English lesson...Our teacher teaches well but I just can’t get it. If I understood, I would be a professor.”

S48. “... I’m against learning English but I have to learn...because it is a must.”

S60. “I don’t want a foreign language to be spoken in my country. I just want our mother tongue to be used as the only language.”

S83. “I even can’t learn my mother tongue, how can I learn English?”

S96. “I don’t understand...Learning English does not make sense to me...”

S147. “I hate English.” (*stated as the only reason*)

Table 9. Students’ perceptions of the lack of assistance and resource

Theme	Codes	Sub-codes	f	Students
Lack of assistance	Lack of assistance & Resources [Total f: 42]	Computer-Internet	16	S5, S11, S16, S17, S19, S20, S22, S26, S31, S33, S40, S41, S43, S45, S46, S53
		Resource (dictionary)	15	S1, S3, S4, S8, S9, S14, S17, S19, S21, S22, S29, S31, S32, S53, S59
		Family assistance (EFL context)	11	S7, S12, S16, S17, S19, S22, S26, S27, S32, S69, S116

As demonstrated in the Table 9, 41 of the students complained about the lack of assistance and resource impeding their learning progress. Village school students referred the lack of computer and dictionary as important factors for their failure in learning vocabulary, comprehension, doing homework and tests. Some students (f=11) also mentioned the lack of parental assistance in doing homework and practising English.

S21. “... I can’t translate the paragraphs because I don’t have a dictionary.”

- S22. “ ... I have difficulties because my parents don’t know English and also my sister doesn’t help me...”
- S32. “... There is nobody to speak English.”
- S59. “... I don’t know some of the words in the paragraphs. I look up the dictionary but I can’t find so I don’t understand the paragraphs well.”
- S69. “... I think it is (English learning) due to the lack of practice” (interview)

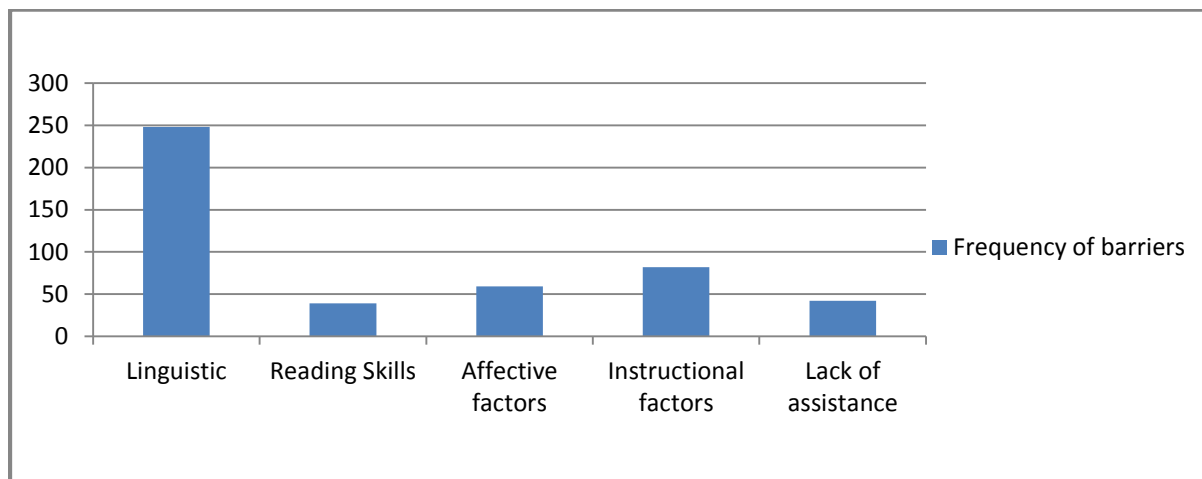


Figure 1. The total frequency of English learning barriers faced by middle school students

As seen in the bar chart, the major barrier for learning English is due to linguistic aspects including vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation respectively (see table 3, 4, 5). Instructional and affective factors constitute the other important barriers. The relevant discussion will be provided in the next section.

4. Discussion and Suggestions

The study aimed to find out what kind of barriers the middle school students face while learning English in Turkey. The findings revealed that linguistic (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, speaking and reading skills), instructional (classroom management, teaching skills and methodology, tests, homework, coursebook, teacher as an individual, technology and background), affective factors (attitude, motivation, anxiety and self-confidence) and lack of assistance and resource (EFL context, lack of technology, internet and dictionary) constitute major difficulties in the learning English process.

Some possible reasons can be considered to discuss the present results when the literature and some theories have been taken into account. First of all, the major barriers to learning English have been found as due to some features of English vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Especially, the failure in remembering words as stated by most of the students is most likely because of the lack of (effective) strategy use. However, most of them may not be aware of the range of strategies to learn vocabulary effectively because of their age. For example, S35 mentioned her strategy use as a successful solution to her vocabulary learning problems both in the interview and writing;

“... I overcame my difficulty by playing (designing) word games with my friends after each unit. This developed my lexicon and I can memorize words better now...”

What S44 reflected also implies the importance of using ICT or some software programmes for encouraging self regulating as Çelik et al. (2012), Kocaman and Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu (2014) highlighted this issue as a fun and facilitating tool in promoting L2 development;

“...If I had a computer and internet, I could play the online games my teacher mentioned...so that I believe I could learn English and vocabulary better...they (computer games) are enjoyable...”

Use of dictionary is also another problem causing difficulty and lack of vocabulary knowledge in learning English. Therefore, students should be provided with more efficient dictionaries. For example, S56 states her experience in a desperate way as below while using a dictionary;

“...I sometimes do tests...but I can't find the words in my dictionary...when there are so many unknown words, I really get stressed and have headache...”

Also, this statement may refer to the importance of affective factors as crucial for language learning in terms of the role and efficiency of dictionaries as necessary resources.

Grammar is another problematic issue for students regarding their inability to construct well-formed sentences and some of them focus on this feature as a major problem such as S40 (see table 4). This may result from the ineffective and heavy emphasis on grammar teaching in English courses. Yet, the L1 interference seems highly influential to pose problems for developing grammatical competence as nearly 57 students stated in the present study. Similarly, as claimed by Bayraktaroğlu (2008), the orthographic differences may have influenced the students' success and skills in pronunciation as S25 implied (see table 5). Also, Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014) refer to anxiety due to pronunciation as a barrier in developing speaking skill as S14 said (see table 5).

Secondly, the inefficiency of instructional factors such as teaching skills, techniques (e.g. grammar-based), classroom management and lack of consciousness on the learners' needs, proficiency and skills pose barriers to the English learning process. The noise, boring and traditional activities and lack of technological devices can demotivate students to further their interest in learning English.

Additionally, the lack of an English speaking atmosphere (Turkey as an EFL country) outside the class which results in the least amount of practice influences the improvement of the target language adversely. The little guidance by parents most probably due to socio-economic, educational background or attitude may make young learners feel alone and desperate to manage the complex stages of learning English as can be understood by the reflections of S22 and S69 (see table 9).

The affective factors such as negative attitudes towards English due to cultural (resistance to power of English) or instructional issues, anxiety, demotivation and lack of confidence may cause resistance to learn and improve English. S60 insisted that he favours Turkish as an only language (mother tongue) to speak and has opposition to English as a foreign language (see table 8). Most of the students uncovered their fear of losing face, hatred, incapability and anxiety during the tests. Accordingly, the constant failure or the difficulty level of the activities may have brought about the lack of confidence, language learning anxiety and negative attitudes. Also, boring activities or fear of teacher (e.g. punishment) may be other threatening factors impeding the learning process. Thus teachers are important factors in the learning process. As warm and indirect way to imply that issue, S81 wrote;

“I don't have much difficulty since the teacher teaches well, clearly and slowly. She is also very warm-hearted; ... I overcome the difficulties by getting help from her.”

Some suggestions can be put forward to help learners overcome those difficulties as below;

- Learners should be trained for language learning strategies especially on vocabulary and grammar. As Oxford (2002) and Griffiths (2015) suggest, the strategy training should be integrated into classroom practices bearing some variables in mind such as the learner characteristics, goals, learning styles and any other contextual differences.
- However, teachers should design their own methodology based on their context of teaching that may require taking learner needs, characteristics, socio-economic issues (e.g. village schools), stakeholders, national examinations, etc. into account (Ur, 2013).
- Considering the importance of affective factors in learning a language (Krashen, 1985), teachers should design classroom practices to enhance students' motivation, attitudes and self-confidence. Accordingly, the use of enjoyable activities (e.g. games), raising consciousness about the importance of English in today's world (e.g. career) and preparing activities with an eye to mixed abilities can serve those purposes.
- In-service trainings should be increased to lead teachers to update themselves on new techniques and trends in language teaching throughout the country. Also, teachers should be encouraged to carry out action research to keep themselves alert about their students' learning barriers and needs.
- Technology and use of visuals should be used more frequently for more effective teaching. For instance, teachers should implement more enjoyable and online games to motivate learners' for

learning English, especially vocabulary. Also, teachers should direct learners to use online learning English games as much as possible and integrate them into the classroom practice, as well since the technology is an indispensable part of our daily life and can be an effective way to help learners regulate their own learning.

The present study has some limitations. A limited number of 6th and 8th graders in city schools participated in the study due to the reluctance of learners or teachers. Also, the study included just a small scale of the target sample. Thus, the study should be replicated with a large number of participants involving schools in different regions of Turkey. A study investigating the views of teachers on the barriers faced by learners during the English learning process may also be beneficial to see the match or mismatch between the perceptions as well as the possible reasons for the learning barriers in a more reliable, valid and detailed way.

To conclude, the study explored the English learning barriers experienced by the middle school students. As a result of the descriptive analysis, the findings revealed that middle school students have difficulty in linguistic areas of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation respectively. Apart from linguistic features, the instructional factors such as teachers' choice of methodology, teaching and management skills, affective factors and the lack of assistance due to the contextual constraints of being an EFL country have adverse effects on the English learning and development. The findings and suggestions could be helpful for teachers, administrators as well as families to minimise the English learning problems by taking the value of English into account in the globalizing world. Besides, further research with a larger sample is really worthwhile to be conducted to get more comprehensive results considering the constraining variables in the present study because early experiences can really hinder the future attitudes, motivation and success of learning English and relevant results can lead to better changes in the foreign language learning curriculum in our country.

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