

The Effect of the Mentoring Service on the Resource Management Strategies of the Students Attending Yıldız Technical University School of Foreign Languages

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of mentoring service on the resource management strategies of the students. The research group consisted of 42 students, attending Yıldız Technical University School of Foreign Languages, on whom pre-test post-test control group experimental design was used. The experimental group was provided with the mentoring service in addition to the foreign language instruction while the control group was not. Data collection tool, "Resource Management Strategies" dimension of the "Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSQL)", was applied to both groups before and after the experiment, and the results were analyzed via the analysis of covariance. Findings of the study indicated that the mentoring service had a significant effect on resource management strategies of the students.

Key Words: Mentoring, self-regulation, resource management strategies, foreign language instruction.

Introduction

It has become impossible for the individuals to communicate or to reach sources of information by solely their mother tongues due to the globalization of the world and the increase in international affairs. It has become compulsory to know at least one foreign language as a consequence of the removal of borders in many areas such as science, technology and culture.

Many studies are carried out about this issue in countries believing in the significance of foreign language instruction. Turkey is one of these countries and in Turkey the focus is on English. Language instruction should be optimized in order to keep up with the times and build technological, financial and cultural relationships with other countries. As a

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result of this very situation, the individuals have been obliged to learn a foreign language during either their educational or occupational lives. For a person, not being capable of using a language efficiently means concomitant communicational problems not only in national or intercultural dimensions, but also in interpersonal relationships (Aliş, 2008). Learning difficulties faced in language instruction caused an increase in studies researching variables affecting the foreign language instruction positively. One of the variables coming to the foreground is self-regulation.

Self-Regulatory Resource Management Strategies

Self-regulation is a process in which learners learn in an active and constructive way. In this process, learners actively construct their goals and strategies by using the information available in the external environment in addition to the information in their own minds (Pintrich, 2000). "Resource management strategies" connected to self-regulatory strategies are among the concepts which are thought to affect the progress of academic achievement. Pintrich (1999) defines resource management strategies as strategies which students use to manage and control the environment.

Resource management strategies consist of sub-strategies such as managing time and environment, effort regulation, peer learning and help seeking. Managing time strategy involves scheduling, planning and managing one's study time. This strategy requires not only allocating blocks of time to study, but also using time effectively and setting realistic goals. Managing study environment refers to the setting where the student deals with the class work and it should ideally be organized, quiet and free of visual and auditory distractions (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991). Managing effort regulation strategy reflects a commitment to complete a study goal by directing and controlling the energy toward it. By using this strategy effectively, a student builds learning skills gradually and handles distractions in and outside of the school (Chen, 2002). Peer learning strategy indicates the learner's eagerness to collaborate with peers to get the drift of what she cannot comprehend on her own by getting help from friends (Marcou & Lerman, 2006). Effective use of this strategy increases motivation and encourages the learner to ask and answer questions by turns. In this way, the likelihood of better learning can be

improved (Johnson et al., 1991). Help seeking strategy implies providing assistance both from peers and instructors. Good learners have good senses of ability to predict from whom and when they can get help best (Pintrich et al., 1991). Using help seeking strategy effectively enables the learners to recognize the time when they are unable to proceed further and find the most convenient source of help (Marcou & Lerman, 2006).

All in all, efficient use of resource management strategies is significant for the learners to adapt to their environment and regulate it according to their goals and needs (Pintrich, 1999). In this context, these strategies are also crucial in foreign language instruction where interaction and internalization have a vital meaning. However, there is a growing need for experienced people to raise the awareness of learners about these strategies and the question of how to do it makes the concept of mentoring a current issue.

Mentoring

Mentoring, about which there are numerous researches (Luna & Prieto, 2009; Maxwell, 2009; Carter, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Hughes & Dykstra, 2008; Karcher, 2008; Morales, 2007; Allen, Eby & Lentz, 2006; White, 2006; Simmons, 2006; Wolfe, 2006; Bernier, Larose & Soucy, 2005; Karcher, 2005; Karcher, Davis & Powell, 2002; Beyene, Sanchez & Ballou, 2002) in the literature, has become a frequently mentioned educational application, and is thought to have a vital role in academic achievement. Galbraith and Maslin-Ostrowski (2000) defines a mentor as a person who monitors the development of a younger individual and provides psychological support by having the role of a teacher and consultant. Mentoring is a relationship between an older, more experienced adult and a less experienced, younger person. In this relationship, the adult provides assistance, instruction and encouragement to the younger person to improve her competence and character (Rhodes, 2002). There are three common features in mentor and mentoring definitions. Firstly, the mentor has greater experience and wisdom. Secondly, the mentor offers guidance and instruction in an attempt to facilitate the growth of the mentee. Thirdly, there is an emotional bond between the mentor and mentee, which is the indicator of a sense of trust (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

Since mentoring is a new term for the education world, the concepts of mentoring and guidance sometimes overlap. Mentoring has a more complex and long-term process. As Hamilton and Hamilton (2004) state, mentoring has mentor and mentee dimensions where a mentor seeks to further the development of character and competence in a mentee by leading in acquiring mastery of progressively more complex skills and tasks. The mentor uses his/her expertise in areas such as demonstration, instruction, challenge and encouragement on a regular basis over an extended period of time. In this process, the relationship between the mentor and mentee takes on an emotional character of respect, loyalty, and identification.

At the end of the literature review based on this information, it has been determined that mentoring service is used as a device in some groups needing the service. Students with low academic achievement is among these groups. Larose and Tarabulsy (2005) state that low academic achievement may be the result of low levels of perceived school competence; negative representations of school and teachers; extrinsic motivation in relation to school; lack of interest in school-based and extracurricular activities; difficulty in seeking help when exposed to failure and problems with time management, attention in class and preparation for examinations.

Mentoring students with low academic achievement has become a requirement for both administrators and teachers in the last years. Larose and Tarabulsy (2005) point out that extending mentoring to this group is based on the assumption that mentoring relationships have the potential to improve cognitive and socioemotional development, to enhance positive school behaviors and to prevent school dropout, failure and maladjustment.

Sociomotivational model of mentoring is a model used to establish supportive relationships between mentors and mentees. This model proposes that academic achievement can be obtained through appropriate mentoring interventions named structure, involvement and autonomy support. According to this model, the positive impacts of mentioned mentoring interventions can be observed through improvements in

feelings of competence, relatedness and autonomy in connection with the mentor (Larose & Tarabulsky, 2005).

Yıldız Technical University School of Foreign Languages is one of the institutions where foreign language instruction is carried out. Approximately, 2500 students are registered every year, 25 students receive education in each classroom and at least 5-6 instructors lecture in these classes. In such kind of ambient conditions where students are not provided with a mentoring service or any kind of monitoring system, it can be said that the success or failure of the students are highly related with their own efforts or willpower. It can also be added that the main reasons of academic failure is not being able to teach certain strategies and leaving the students alone throughout the year because of being a highly crowded department.

The excessive number of students with low academic success brings about a search for an alternative which will be implemented in School of Foreign Languages and increase academic achievement. In this context, mentoring the students at Yıldız Technical University School of Foreign Languages and improving their resource management strategies in this way is the starting point of the research.

This research is expected to contribute to the literature in two points. Initially, the implementation of mentoring will bring a breath of fresh air to the implementations in foreign language instruction. Furthermore, teaching how to use resource management strategies during learning a foreign language will raise the awareness of the students about using the appropriate strategy and help them to cope with learning a new language.

In the light of this information, the aim of this research is to examine the effect of a mentoring service on students' resource management strategies.

Problem Statement

The problem of this research is to determine the effect of mentoring service on resource management strategies of the students attending School of Foreign Languages.

Sub-Problems

1. When managing time and environment strategy pre-test scores of the treatment group receiving mentoring service and of the control group not receiving mentoring service are taken under control, there is a significant difference between the final test scores in favor of the treatment group.
2. When managing effort regulation strategy pre-test scores of the treatment group receiving mentoring service and of the control group not receiving mentoring service are taken under control, there is a significant difference between the final test scores in favor of the treatment group.
3. When peer learning strategy pre-test scores of the treatment group receiving mentoring service and of the control group not receiving mentoring service are taken under control, there is a significant difference between the final test scores in favor of the treatment group.
4. When help seeking strategy pre-test scores of the treatment group receiving mentoring service and of the control group not receiving mentoring service are taken under control, there is a significant difference between the final test scores in favor of the treatment group.

Method

The research was carried out via experimental research design. According to Karasar (2007, 87), experimental research design aims at identifying cause-effect relations and the research is carried out directly under the control of the researcher.

Participants

This research was carried out with 42 students receiving education at Yıldız Technical University, School of Foreign Languages' Basic English Department. The frequencies of the study group are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequencies of the study group

Groups	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Treatment	9	45	11	55	20	100
Control	8	36.36	14	63.63	22	100
Total	17	40.47	25	59.52	42	100

While selecting the research group, the fact that the treatment group and the control group were at equal levels in terms of academic achievement was taken into consideration. Independent groups t-test was applied in order to find out whether this condition was fulfilled. According to the results of the analysis, there is no statistically significant difference between academic achievement averages of the treatment and control groups ($t=.55$; $p > .05$).

The research group was chosen because of three reasons. Firstly, it had lower academic success when compared to A and B level students. Secondly, the treatment and control group had similar features. Thirdly, the researcher was an instructor who had lessons with both groups.

Data Collection

As a source of data collection, "Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire", which was improved by Pintrich et al. (1991) and adapted to Turkish by Altun and Erden (2006) was used to obtain research management strategies scores. Resource management strategies is one of the 3 dimensions in the questionnaire and 4 sub-dimensions of this dimension were applied to students in the research. These sub-dimensions are "Managing Time and Environment", "Managing Effort Regulation", "Peer Learning" and "Help Seeking".

The questionnaire was applied to all students as pre-test and post-test at the same time.

Implementation of the Mentoring Service

Mentoring service was primarily born with implementation of the learning style inventory to ensure students to learn more about themselves. The results obtained from this inventory were shared with the students in the introductory meeting and positive

feedbacks were received from the students. Additionally, issues such as definition of mentoring, the objective of such research, and benefits of mentoring for improvement of students were discussed during the introductory meeting; the course of practice was outlined and the questions of students were clarified. With individual conversations held with the students during the week following the meeting, an opportunity was obtained to learn more about them. Throughout these conversations, it was also found out whether the students volunteered to participate to this practice, and almost all of them gave affirmative answers. Two different seminars were organized during the weeks following the week of individual meeting by taking needs of the students into consideration. At the end of these seminars, students were requested to write reflections and it was observed whether the messages were perceived correctly or there was any progress in students. Additionally, individual academic curricula were prepared for the students in line with their needs in the weeks before exams; study programs were organized by identifying the subjects to be studied, and extra materials were provided. The students' level of relatedness to the practice was increased through not only class activities but also in and off school activities; and, the period of implementation was finalized through preparatory studies for the final exam and concentration-enhancing studies.

Findings

Findings of the first sub-problem

This sub-problem was tested via the analysis of covariance. The assumptions required for the analysis of covariance were analyzed through Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, Levene's Test, and Test for Equality of Regression; where it was concluded that these assumptions were met. The descriptive statistics are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of managing time and environment strategy of groups

Groups	N	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Treatment	20	23.2	5.08	27.5	6.34
Control	20	19.85	5.65	20.4	4.96

In Table 2, descriptive statistics of managing time and environment strategy of groups are displayed. The results of the analysis of covariance which was carried out to see whether the average differences are significant are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Analysis of covariance on managing time and environment strategy final test scores when pre-test scores are taken under control

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p
Contrast	324.51	1	324.51	10.88	.00
Error	1073.75	36	29.82		

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the results of the analysis of covariance are ($F=10.88$ and $p < .05$).

Findings of the second sub-problem

This sub-problem was tested via the analysis of covariance. The assumptions required for the analysis of covariance were analyzed through Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, Levene's Test, and Test for Equality of Regression; where it was concluded that these assumptions were met. The descriptive statistics are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of managing effort regulation strategy of groups

Groups	N	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Treatment	20	12.35	4.02	17.7	5.17
Control	20	15	3.92	15.85	4.27

In Table 4, descriptive statistics of managing effort regulation strategy of groups are displayed. The results of the analysis of covariance which was carried out to see whether the average differences are significant are given in Table 5.

Table 5: Analysis of covariance on managing effort regulation strategy final test scores when pre-test scores are taken under control

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p
Contrast	93.57	1	93.57	5.27	.02
Error	638.47	36	17.73		

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that the results of the analysis of covariance are (F= 5.27 and $p < .05$).

Findings of the third sub-problem

This sub-problem was tested via the analysis of covariance. The assumptions required for the analysis of covariance were analyzed through Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, Levene’s Test, and Test for Equality of Regression; where it was concluded that these assumptions were met. The descriptive statistics are given in Table 6.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of peer learning strategy of groups

Groups	N	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Treatment	20	9.35	3.21	12.45	3.31
Control	20	8.5	1.90	9.5	2.18

In Table 6, descriptive statistics of peer learning strategy of groups are displayed. The results of the analysis of covariance which was carried out to see whether the average differences are significant are given in Table 7.

Table 7: Analysis of covariance on peer learning strategy final test scores when pre-test scores are taken under control

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p
Contrast	70.19	1	70.19	9.87	.00
Error	255.85	36	7.10		

When Table 7 is examined, it is seen that the results of the analysis of covariance are (F= 9.87 and $p < .05$).

Findings of the fourth sub-problem

This sub-problem was tested via the analysis of covariance. The assumptions required for the analysis of covariance were analyzed through Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, Levene's Test, and Test for Equality of Regression; where it was concluded that these assumptions were met. The descriptive statistics are given in Table 8.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics of help seeking strategy of groups

Groups	N	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Treatment	20	17.5	3.85	20.85	3.73
Control	20	17.6	3.03	17.85	3.48

In Table 8, descriptive statistics of help seeking strategy of groups are displayed. The results of the analysis of covariance which was carried out to see whether the average differences are significant are given in Table 9.

Table 9: Analysis of covariance on help seeking strategy final test scores when pre-test scores are taken under control

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p
Contrast	93.73	1	93.73	10.59	.00
Error	318.54	36	8.84		

When Table 9 is examined, it is seen that the results of the analysis of covariance are ($F=10.59$ and $p < .05$).

Conclusion and Discussion

At the end of the study, it was concluded that:

1. There is a significant difference between the final test scores in favor of the treatment group when managing time and study environment strategy pre-test scores of treatment and control groups are taken under control.
2. There is a significant difference between the final test scores in favor of the treatment group when managing effort regulation strategy pre-test scores of treatment and control groups are taken under control.
3. There is a significant difference between the final test scores in favor of the treatment group when peer learning strategy pre-test scores of treatment and control groups are taken under control.
4. There is a significant difference between the final test scores in favor of the treatment group when help seeking strategy pre-test scores of treatment and control groups are taken under control.

One of the reasons for the fact that mentoring service creates a significant difference on managing time and study environment strategies of the treatment group might be because of mentoring interventions of sociomotivational model of mentoring, named structure, involvement and autonomy support. Structure is associated with the extent to which mentors provide the guidance and information necessary for the students to create intrinsic motivation. Involvement can be defined as emotional resources provided by the mentor and is essential to help the students to cope with negative circumstances such as stress and failure. Autonomy support refers to the affirmation of the students as unique, active and volitional individuals by the mentor (Larose & Tarabulsy, 2005; Drouin et al., 2006). These components taken into consideration during the implementation of mentoring created a commitment to the service and this had a positive impact on students' learning processes and managing time and study environment strategies. In a similar research, MacDonald ve Sherman (2007) carried out a study aiming to reflect the effect of mentoring on students from their own perspective. At the end of the study it was concluded that the students improved their self-confidence and problem solving skills

with the help of their mentor who they perceived as a motivating and encouraging person and that they benefited from the resources around them in an effective way.

One of the most significant objectives of mentoring programs is to encourage mentees to make autonomous decisions and take responsibility about life choices. For the mentee, mentoring relationship serves as a kind of transition for greater autonomous decisions about seeking help from significant members of the support network (Britner et al., 2006). The fact that mentoring service creates a significant difference on effort regulation strategies of the treatment group might be because of its being encouraging for the students to make their own decisions and to choose the right actions beneficial for their situation. The ongoing meetings with the mentor enhanced setting certain targets and taking responsibility to fulfill them. Taking responsibility autonomously gave them the opportunity to edge towards the resources, make use of them in an efficient way and eventually to become successful.

Zone of proximal development, which was described by Vygotsky, is a psychological stretch which is beyond what a young person can do alone, but within the range of what she can do while working with adults or more capable peers. Interacting with mentor and peers makes it possible for the youth to stretch into this zone and their mental and emotional capacities improve by this way. What is today a stretch provided by interacting with others can become part of an individual's own ability (Rhodes, 2002). The rationale behind the fact that the mentoring service creates a significant difference on peer learning strategies of the treatment group might be students' observing and comparing their capabilities with others' and having the chance to reconsider the necessary skills to be improved.

Another reality that mentoring service creates a significant difference on help seeking strategies of the treatment group might be because the researcher, who was both a mentor and instructor, helped the students to gain a vision about using all the resources at the utmost level. She encouraged them for critical and reflective thinking and demanded regular reflections. In the reflections, she wanted the students to write their strengths and weaknesses, to evaluate the facilities and to express their expectations about examinations

and their marks. The students came out of their shells about seeking help as the resources were served without any constraints and they were encouraged to determine their weaknesses and make use of them accordingly. In a similar research, White (2006) carried out a study examining the effect of mentoring on doctorate students. At the end of the study, it was concluded students had positive attitudes towards mentoring and they needed programs like this.

In conclusion, the mentoring service gave an opportunity to students on gaining insights about how to use resource management strategies during language learning process.

Recommendations

1. Mentoring can be used as a facilitating tool to improve students' resource management strategies.
2. Mentoring can be implemented in higher education institutions to increase academic achievement and to promote student monitoring.
3. This research was carried out to examine the effect of mentoring on students attending university preparatory classes. New researches can be done with other research groups to see the effect of mentoring on students with different profiles.

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