THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRITICAL THINKING DISPOSITIONS AND AUTONOMY LEVELS OF EFL PREP SCHOOL TEACHERS IN TURKEY

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MASTER'S DEGREE THESIS

Department of Foreign Language Education
English Language Education Master's Program with Thesis
Advisor: Prof. Dr. Aysu ARYEL ERDEN

İstanbul
T.C. Maltepe University
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JÜRİ ve ENSTİTÜ ONAYI

Bu belge, Yükseköğretim Kurulu tarafından 19.01.2021 tarihli "Lisansüstü Tezlerin Elektronik Ortamda Toplanması, Düzenlenmesi ve Erişime Açılmasına İlişkin Yönerge" ile bildirilen 6698 Sayılı Kişisel Verilerin Korunması Kanunu kapsamında gizlenmiştir.

ETİK İLKE ve KURALLARA UYUM BEYANI

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to my thesis advisor Prof. Aysu Aryel Erden, for all the understanding and support they has provided me with throughout this journey.

I would also like to share my appreciation with the whole team of T.C. Maltepe University Foreign Languages School instructors for all the support and encouragement they have shown during this period.

I am also deeply grateful for all my teachers from the T.C. Maltepe University Faculty of Education who have helped me grow professionally through their teachings and support.

I would also like to share my thanks with Nuray Sarp Kulkara and Elif Nazli Karakas Akbas, for all the support and growth they have equipped me with.

I would also like to thank dear Altan Ulger. You have no idea how deeply I appreciate all your support and encouragement. Thank you for believing in me and always being there for me. I am so lucky to have such a partner like you.

I would also like to share my sincerest thanks with my dear family, my father Ahmet Cantez, my mother Sadiman Cantez, my brother Alper Cantez and my grandmother Sabiha Cantez for their forever love and support. I couldn`t be here without you.

And finally, I would like to thank my beloved brother, Alpaslan Cantez with all my heart. You are always with me and in all the good things that I have done and will do in my life. I love you eternally.

Serra CANTEZ

September, 2023

ÖZET

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ İNGİLİZCE HAZIRLIK OKULU ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ELEŞTİREL DÜŞÜNME YÖNELİMLERİ İLE ÖZERKLİK DÜZEYLERİ ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ

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Bu araştırma, Türkiye'deki üniversitelerin hazırlık okullarında görev yapan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğretmen özerkliği ve eleştirel düşünme yönelimlerinin düzeylerini ve bu iki nitelik arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamıştır. Ayrıca mesleki deneyim ve eğitim düzeyinin katılımcıların eleştirel düşünme yönelimlerine ve özerklik düzeylerine etkisi de araştırılmıştır. İlgili nicel veriler Pearson ve Hall (1993) tarafından geliştirilen Öğretme Özerkliği Ölçeği ve Sosu (2013) tarafından geliştirilen Eleştirel Düşünme Yönelimi Ölçeği uygulanarak toplanmıştır. 92 farklı katılımcıdan veri toplanarak elde edilen sonuçlar, Türkiye'deki hem vakıf hem de kamu kökenli dört farklı üniversitenin hazırlık okullarında görev yapan yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin orta düzeyde özerklik ve eleştirel düşünme eğilimlerine sahip olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca özerklik düzeyi ile mesleki kariyer süresi arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmazken, eğitim düzeyi ile özerklik düzeyi değişkenleri arasında özellikle doktora sahibi katılımcılar için pozitif yönde bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Son olarak, katılımcıların özerklik düzeyi ve eleştirel düşünme yönelimleri de dahil olmak üzere araştırmada incelenen diğer değişkenler arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunamamıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi, Özerklik, Öğretmen Özerkliği, Eleştirel Düşünme, Eleştirel Düşünme Yönelimi

ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRITICAL THINKING DISPOSITIONS AND AUTONOMY LEVELS OF EFL PREP SCHOOL TEACHERS IN TURKEY

Serra Cantez
Master's Thesis
Department of Foreign Language Education
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Thesis Advisor: Prof. Dr. Aysu Aryel Erden
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This study aimed to find out the levels of teacher autonomy and critical thinking dispositions of EFL teachers working in prep-schools of universities in Turkey, as well as the correlation between these two qualities. Furthermore, the impact of professional experience and level of education on critical thinking dispositions and autonomy levels of participants were also investigated. The respective quantitative data was collected through the application of Teaching Autonomy Scale by Pearson & Hall (1993) and Critical Thinking Disposition Scale by Sosu (2013). Having gathered data from 92 different participants, the obtained results suggested a moderate level of autonomy and critical thinking dispositions of EFL teachers working in prep-schools of four different universities in Turkey, from both foundation and public backgrounds. Furthermore, while no significant correlation between the autonomy levels and duration of professional career was found, between the variables of education level and level of autonomy, there existed a positive correlation, especially for those participants who held a PhD. Finally, in between the rest of the variables examined in the research, including the level of autonomy and critical thinking dispositions of the participants, no significant correlation was found.

Keywords: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Autonomy, Teacher Autonomy, Critical Thinking, Critical Thinking Disposition

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ TÜRKÇE ÖZET

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ İNGİLİZCE HAZIRLIK OKULU ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ELEŞTİREL DÜŞÜNME YÖNELİMLERİ İLE ÖZERKLİK DÜZEYLERİ ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ

İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretimini de kapsamı altına alan yabancı dil öğrenimi ve öğretimi tarih boyunca insanların farklı kültürleri anlamalarını ve iletişim kurabilmelerini sağlayan önemli bir süreç olmuştur. Bu süreç, geçmişte genellikle daha katı çerçevelere oturtulmuş ve öğretmenler öğrencilere sadece dilbilgisi ve kuralları öğreten figürler olarak görülmüştür. Ancak zaman içerisinde dil öğrenme anlayışı ve yöntemleri evrildikçe öğretmenlerin rolü de değişime uğramıştır. Öğretmenler artık sadece kuralları öğretmekle kalmayıp öğrencilerinin dilin kullanımını anlamalarına ve eleştirel düşünme becerilerini geliştirmelerine yardımcı olan rehberler olarak görülmektedir.

Ancak bu hedefi gerçekleştirebilmek için, öğrencilere rehberlik edecek olan bu öğretmenlerin modern eğitim paradigmalarının gereklilikleri çerçevesinde uygun ve gerekli soruları soran, ilgili ve geçerli bilgileri toplayan, bu bilgileri verimli ve yaratıcı bir şekilde sıralayan, bu bilgiler üzerinden mantıklı bir şekilde akıl yürüten ve bulundukları dünya içerisinde başarılı bir şekilde yaşamasını, hareket etmesini ve ilerlemesini sağlayan güvenilir ve geçerli sonuçlara varan, bununla birlikte hem öğretme hem de öğrenmenin kontrolünü ele alma konusunda istekli, yetenekli ve özgür bireyler olarak var olmaları gerekmektedir. Fakat bu becerileri öğretmenlere kazandıracak iki özellik olan öğretmen özerkliği ile eleştirel düşünme yöneliminin arasındaki ilişki üzerine tüm dünyada olduğu gibi Türkiye özelinde de yeterince araştırma yapılmadığı saptanmıştır.

İşte bu sebeple bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki üniversitelerin hazırlık okullarında görev yapan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğretmen özerkliği ve eleştirel düşünme yönelimlerini ve bu iki özelliğin birbiri ile olan ilişkisini araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin eğitim seviyelerinin ve tecrübe sürelerinin bu iki özellik üzerinde olan etkisi de incelenmiştir. Öğretmen özerkliği, öğretmenlerin sınıf içinde ve mesleki gelişimlerinde daha fazla karar

alma yetkisine sahip olmalarını ifade ederken, eleştirel düşünme ise öğretmenlerin sorgulama, analiz etme ve bağımsız düşünme becerilerini içerir. Bu iki kavram, modern dil öğretiminin vazgeçilmez unsurları olarak kabul edilmektedir.

Nicel bir araştırma olarak tasarlanan bu çalışma, Pearson ve Hall (1993) tarafından hazırlanan ve 18 sorudan oluşan Teacher Autonomy Scale ile Sosu (2013) tarafından hazırlanan ve 11 sorudan oluşan Critical Thinking Disposition Scale kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. 92 farklı İngilizce öğretmeninden çevrimiçi bir şekilde Google Forms üzerinden toplanan veriler, SPSS v26.0 sürümü kullanılarak analiz edilmiş ve öğretmenlerin özerklik düzeyi ile birlikte eleştirel düşünme yönelimleri tanımlayıcı istatistikler kullanılarak ölçülmüştür. Katılımcıların mesleki deneyimi ve eğitim düzeyi gibi faktörler de yine aynı şekilde tanımlanmıştır. Katılımcıların eğitim düzeyleri ve mesleki tecrübelerinin özerklik seviyeleri üzerindeki etkisi tek yönlü ANOVA testi ile hesaplanmış ve yine aynı etkenlerin eleştirel düşünme yönelimleri üzerindeki etkisi de tek yönlü ANOVA testi ile hesaplanmıştır. Son olarak katılımcıların özerklik seviyesi ile eleştirel düşünme yönelimi arasındaki ilişki, Pearson korelasyon testi ile hesaplanmıştır.

Elde edilen verilere göre, Türkiye'deki dört farklı üniversitenin hazırlık okullarında görev yapan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğretmen özerkliğinin orta düzeyde olduğu ancak katılımcıların değerlendirme prosedürleri, hedef belirleme, içerik seçimi ile müfredat kararları alanlarında kendilerini daha az özerk hissettikleri saptanmıştır. Yine elde edilen verilere göre katılımcıların eleştirel düşünme yönelimlerinin orta düzeyde olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu sonucun elde edilmesinde etken olabilecek faktörlerin takip edilmesi gereken değerlendirme süreçleri, katılımcıların kişisel özellikleri ve farkındalık düzeyleri, bir öğretmen ve öğrenci olarak kendi deneyimleri, kurumsal esneklikler ile birlikte katılımcıların epistemolojik perspektifleri olduğu öne sürülmüştür. Veriler özerinden yola çıkıldığında özerklik düzeyi ile mesleki kariyer süresi arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmazken, eğitim düzeyi ile özerklik düzeyi arasında ise özellikle doktora sahibi öğretmenler için pozitif yönde bir ilişki tespit edilmiştir. Bu bulgu geçmişte konu üzerine yapılan araştırmaların sonuçları ile örtüşmektedir. Ancak yine bu başlık altında yüksek lisansı olan katılımcıların müfredat özerkliği lisans diploması olan katılımcılardan daha yüksek bulunmuşken, bu grubun genel öğretim özerkliklerinin nispeten daha düşük olduğu da saptanmıştır. Elde edilen bulgunun sebebi olarak lisans üstü eğitim alan

öğretmenlerin kurumsal alanda karar verme yetilerinin gelişmesi ancak henüz öğretmenler arasındaki iş birliği, kurumsal ve sistematik kısıtlamalar ve bireysel farklılıkların tam olarak çözümlenememesi savı savunulmuştur. Katılımcıların eğitim düzeyleri ile mesleki tecrübelerinin ise eleştirel düşünme yönelimleri üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisi olmadığı saptanmıştır. Son olarak, elde edilen verilere göre katılımcıların özerklik seviyesi ile eleştirel düşünme yönelimleri arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunamamıştır. Bu bulguya ulaşılmasında etken olan faktörlerin öğretim deneyimleri, kurumsal kısıtlamalar, öğretim metodolojileri, öğretmen eğitimi, konu alanı, ölçüm sınırlamaları ve bireysel farklılıklar olduğu öne sürülmüştür.

Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, yabancı dil öğretimi alanında öğretmenlerin rolünün nasıl evrildiğini ve öğrencilere daha etkili bir şekilde nasıl rehberlik edebileceklerini oldukça önemli kabul edilen öğretmen özerkliği ile eleştirel düşünme yönelimi özellikleri üzerinden yola çıkarak açıklayan önemli bir araştırmadır.

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.

ABBREVIATIONS

CTD **:** Critical Thinking Disposition

CTDS **:** Critical Thinking Disposition Scale

EFL **:** English as a Foreign Language

TAS **:** Teaching Autonomy Scale

4C Model **:** Critical Thinking, Communication, Cooperation, and Creativity

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Being an ancient field of study, teaching and learning a foreign language has been redefined as a process a number of times for numerous reasons, mostly to settle the whole process to a set, all applicable and practical list of rules. Yet, these definitions which were created by a specific group of professionals were mostly prepared for certain contexts, and even though they proved to be efficient in a number of their aspects, they couldn't really apply to all the various foreign language teaching environments out there on their own. Furthermore, although this structurization was constructed with good intentions, it couldn't comply with all contexts mentioned previously when the flexibility, variability and the realities of the multitude of genuine environment of foreign language teaching globally were observed. Thus, an inevitable shift from the sole application of the structures devised by the specific group mentioned above, the theorists, had to take place. The era within the field of foreign language teaching constructed with these structures known as methodologies transformed. Consequently, within the last decades, while the shift towards a more context specific process of foreign language teaching occurred, the teaching and learning of one of the 21st century's most widely utilized lingua francas with 1.5 billion learners across the globe (Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; Vettorel, 2013) also got influenced by this shift. In other words, teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) along with the individuals within, their roles together with beliefs and understandings towards the field were also affected by this change.

Yet, before explaining the restructuralization that occurred in this field, it is necessary to analyze the situation of TEFL in Turkey, the country which is the setting of the study at hand. Dating further back from the republic itself, TEFL in Turkey has undergone several changes and improvements over the decades. It also has faced certain challenges like the utilization of conventional teaching techniques, packed classrooms, and insufficient hours of language teaching (Yavuz, 2017). Still, together with the rest of the world, in order to better the overall process certain steps have also been taken. Pressures of globalization, economic and political events, and educational reforms have all had an impact on TEFL in Turkey (Demircan, 1988; Kırkgöz, 2007; Kırkgöz, 2008). Through legislative changes, curriculum assessment, and the training of qualified instructors, efforts have been made

to enhance the teaching of English language (Demircan, 1988; Özmat & Senemoğlu, 2021; Öztürk & Aydın, 2019). Thus, even though it differs by means of certain challenges, together with the rest of the world where English is being taught as a foreign language, TEFL in Turkey has been going through a similar shift with all the components and individuals involved in it.

When retrieved to the wider perspective, as a member of the most vital individuals within the TEFL process, one of the changing roles belonged to the English as a foreign language (EFL) instructors. Therefore, after this gradual shift, instructors of EFL served as reflective practitioners and transformative intellectuals according to the basis of latest developments in the field, such as those promoted by the Postmethod Approach (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). This means, the redefined role of the EFL teacher allows them to be more than just a mere reflector and applier of certain set of rules within their classrooms, and allows them to be an active participant within the process' shaping, decision making, professional development of self as a practitioner and an associate as well as a guide of yet another vital individual of the same process at hand, the learners. Hence, the traditional ideas, which regard the duty of EFL instructors to be transmitting information found in the curriculum to the students, appear to be at odds with this new approach (Bell, 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 2001) and teachers are now identified as individuals who play a crucial part in structuring classroom events as active, thoughtful decision-makers, making them essential components of the system that promotes educational achievement (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Suwandee, 1995).

Together with the redefinition of the roles of EFL teachers, there also came a series of characteristics viewed as indispensable if the foreign language teaching process was to run efficiently. It is now known that the behaviors and actions teachers display throughout this process are influenced by their state of motivation, perceptions, beliefs and assumptions (Chacon, 2005) therefore, it is understood better now that there is a greater influence of the instructor's state of mind and perceptions on EFL teaching and learning than what was assumed before. The EFL teacher today needs to be capable of analyzing the environment they work in, the learners they works with, the cultural and socio-economic background of the environment they work at together with facilities, learners' needs, their own beliefs and experiences. Moreover, there is a need to act upon these

analyses they gain while reflecting upon their teaching. Thus, it would be vital to highlight that within this process, a critical examination of the attitudes and practices associated with teaching and learning will enable teachers to operate more independently and responsibly by enabling them to assume the role of reflective educators and use their intellectual capacity to reflect critically on the practice of teaching (Farrell, 2012). It can be easily comprehended that this process openly opposes the nature of unquestioned acceptance of any form of information and requires a more filtered acceptance and restructured application of it according to the points mentioned above. Therefore, in order to make this happen, the two characteristics the EFL teacher needs to equip themselves with now could be named as autonomy and critical thinking.

As the former of the two characteristics mentioned above, autonomy, in other words, teacher autonomy has been defined by many, yet a common definition could be briefly explained as the independence and influence instructors have in their own actions within the classroom (Street & Licata, 1989; Friedman, 1999; Öztürk, 2012). Also, another description of this concept can be stated as the ability to take charge of one's own teaching and the independence from expectations and pressure from other instructors and management (Çakır & Balcıkanlı, 2012; Shaw, 2002). This means autonomous teachers are allowed to design and execute their own lesson plans. Additionally, they play a significant part in making decisions regarding crucial matters in relevance to their jobs.

Yet, it would be unwise to state that autonomy is a characteristic solely aimed for instructors since learner autonomy is one of the most desired outcomes of any form of instruction. However, in order to foster this concept in learners there is a need for autonomous teachers who are able to make informed decisions within their own teaching. Therefore, known as a constructivist individual who is aware of which actions to be carried out and why (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987) an autonomous teacher guides and sets an example to their learners to take more responsibility in their own learning which reveals the direct connection between the concepts of teacher and learner autonomy (Eren, 2020).

Apart from its necessity and importance in fostering learner autonomy, teacher autonomy is also crucial if professionalism is to be reached within this field. The reason behind this

is that if any EFL teacher wants to reach this position they ought to hold some kind of influence and independence in their career and have a say in their actions (Öztürk, 2012; Deci & Ryans, 1994) including their professional growth. So, if teachers are expected to perform their jobs well, they need to be provided with some independence from internal as well as organizational limitations, which are related at core, in the school setting. This would result in professional instructors of EFL with developed internal abilities.

Moving on from teacher autonomy towards the other characteristic that an EFL teacher should possess, we come to critical thinking. Although a number of different explanations have been made for this concept, there will only be a few observed in this certain part of the paper at hand, leaving a more thorough observation to the following chapters. Known as the synthesis of abilities a thinker deliberately uses to assess a set of material (Taylor & MacKenney, 2008) or as a cognitive method that relies on rationality, encompassing elements such as logical reasoning, analysis, problem-solving, creativity, and accurate assessment (Sarıgöz, 2012); critical thinking is a vital part of the foreign language teaching, therefore the TEFL process.

As could be understood from its sole definition, any form of education would want an end result of learners capable of this kind of thinking since it would create an effective problem solver who is able to view the world from a perspective made up of multiple dimensions and act as a logical decision maker. Thus, it can be expressed that any selected effective education curriculum attempts to foster critical thinking skills (Baysal, Arkan & Yıldırım, 2010). Yet, it would not be possible to think of a scenario in which the learners can be active critical thinkers when the practitioners in this same scenario are not. It would simply be far from just to expect students to achieve this goal if there are no teachers who have already developed the capacity for critical thinking (Khodabakhshzadeh, Garmabi & Fayendari, 2017). Hence, it would be most sensible to state that critical thinking abilities of a teacher is firstly crucial to foster learners' abilities to think critically as well. Another reason why this ability is crucial is that, educators who can think critically about previously learned material are of need, since they can handle the difficulties in the teaching profession with the aid of this ability (Tuncer & Özeren, 2012). Lastly, it should be stated that the ability to think critically is also one of a teacher's core competencies

since it influences the success rate of the teaching process (Birjandi & Bagherkazemi, 2010).

After understanding what critical thinking is, reviewing the characteristics of an individual who can think critically and its place in TEFL, it is also necessary to understand what critical thinking disposition (CTD) is. The term has many working definitions and being one of them Abrami et al. (2008) defined the term critical thinking disposition as a person's propensity and capacity for self-reflective, deliberate judgment. Hence, it could be stated that CTD incorporates the abilities and inclinations required for critical thinking including interpretation, analysis, assessment, inference, and explanation (Abrami et al., 2015). Therefore, because having the capacity to employ critical thinking involves having the motivation to do so, critical thinking disposition is seen as a viable criterion for measuring critical thinking abilities (Christodoulakis et al., 2023) and was taken as a parameter to measure this skill in the study.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There is a growing body of research globally as well as in Turkey on the two characteristics that an EFL teacher ought to have, autonomy and critical thinking, individually. Yet, even though these characteristics of an EFL teacher are being researched more thoroughly recently, in the context of Turkey where strong hierarchical relationships in institutions are present and summative assessments are prevalent, there seems to be a requirement for further studies concerning these two concepts due to the aforementioned aspects.

What is more, it has been acknowledged that instructors who display the traits of autonomy try to carry out approaches to encourage a constructivist culture in their teachings for their learners. Hence, the curriculum provided by specialists can be criticized by these instructors and they may take ownership of learners' education and concur or disagree with certain topics (Eren, 2020). Thus, at the core, teachers who carry the characteristic of autonomy ought to be expected to carry out a certain level of critical thinking and its disposition. Still, regardless of this notion, it was found that there is a scarcity of research on the relationship of the aforementioned characteristics, autonomy

and critical thinking dispositions, both globally as well as in Turkey and specifically in the case of universities' EFL teachers working in prep-schools.

All in all, the fact that a gap in literature concerning teacher autonomy and critical thinking disposition of EFL teachers together with the relationship between these two characteristics exists even though these two characteristics hold a very crucial place for EFL teachers and gain a growing space as well as topicality in the field of TEFL, poses the problem of this study.

1.2 Aim of the Study

Over the years, the roles of individuals involved in foreign language teaching and learning have evolved significantly, granting them more freedom in their actions and development. However, this increased freedom also brought about greater responsibility, especially for teachers, who play a pivotal role in language education since teaching, in general, is a multifaceted interaction encompassing subject matter, teacher and student characteristics, pedagogical methods, available resources, and the learning environment (Campbell, 2000, p.50). As a consequence of their increased responsibilities, EFL instructors have been expected to demonstrate a certain level of critical thinking and independence in their teaching approaches.

Hence, in accordance with the problem of the study stated previously, this study aimed to figure out the levels of autonomy and critical thinking dispositions of university level EFL teachers working in prep-schools in Turkey, where English is the most commonly taught and learned foreign language. Also, it aimed to portray the relationship between these two characteristics and further investigated how teacher autonomy and critical thinking dispositions were impacted by the level of education as well as teaching experience of the participants.

1.3 Significance of the Study

As additional language teaching is a complex and inclusive matter, downgrading it to specific procedures and prescribing the exact same roles to the additional language teachers instructing to a variety of different learners in a range of backgrounds proved to be inefficient (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Hence, a more context and learner specific

understanding of additional language teaching process, keeping up with the various requirements of each additional language teaching background was of need. This situation, in return, required teachers to acquire certain skills and responsibilities of their actions within their environment. Linked with the success of teaching and the realities of teaching context, the additional language teacher ought to be a critical thinker and autonomous (Birjandi & Bagherkazemi, 2010; Ghaemi & Taherian, 2011; Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Resulting in teachers who can *"(...) ask appropriate questions, gather relevant information, efficiently and creatively sort through this information, reason logically from this information, and come to reliable and trustworthy conclusions about the world that enable him to live and act successfully in it"* (Center for Critical Thinking, 1996a as cited in Ghaemi &Taherian, 2011, p.11) and teachers who are willing, capable and free in taking control of both their teaching and learning (Huang, 2005), critical thinking and autonomy are crucial characteristics that additional language teachers should possess especially in the 21st century where a flow of information and a variety of learner types are encountered by them.

Yet, in the international domain and consequently in the Turkish background, there appears to be a lack of research on the relationship between the two crucial aspects of the teachers of the most commonly taught and learnt foreign language, English. Hence, by conducting this research, light will be shed on the autonomy levels and critical thinking dispositions of Turkish prep-school EFL teachers working in universities and the correlation between these two aspects will be displayed.

The results obtained can be further used in future studies and are utilizable for teacher training programs since both critical thinking and autonomy are highly desired teacher characteristics, also in the field of TEFL. Furthermore, as stated before, for learner autonomy and critical thinking to be fostered, there is a need for EFL teachers who can carry out these characteristics in their teaching and professional development. Thus, findings of this study will also be useful when raising awareness of teachers and help them develop the right environment to raise EFL learners who are responsible of their

own learning, who ask useful as well as meaningful questions and who are effective decision makers that make informed calls both in their learning and further on in life.

1.4 Limitations

The first limitation is the geographical sampling bias inherent in focusing solely on Istanbul. While Istanbul is a major urban center with diverse educational institutions, it may not reflect the full spectrum of practices and challenges faced by TEFL instructors in smaller cities or regions across Turkey. These smaller centers might have unique contextual factors, student demographics, and resource constraints that significantly impact how critical thinking and autonomy are implemented in English language teaching. By concentrating solely on Istanbul, the study may miss out on valuable insights from educators in less urbanized areas, potentially limiting the generalizability of its findings to the broader Turkish context.

Another significant limitation of this study could be that some English prep-school teachers may not have a clear understanding of the concepts of critical thinking and autonomy in the context of language education. This lack of familiarity could potentially affect the quality and depth of their responses during data collection. Without a clear understanding of these concepts, teachers might not accurately articulate their perspectives and practices related to critical thinking and autonomy in the classroom. This limitation could lead to a biased or incomplete representation of the true landscape of TEFL practices in the study.

Lastly, because the data for the research has been gathered over a longitude of time the impact of Covid-19 pandemic period was still prominent in certain aspects of participants` lives. Therefore, the residuary change in the education system (online education), hybrid systems and lockdowns could have an impact on the answers and perspectives of participants.

1.5 Keywords and Definitions

In order to better achieve maximum comprehension of this study, some key words, listed below, ought to be further defined:

Autonomy in itself is defined as; *"the right of an organization, country, or region to be independent and govern itself"* and in a more individualistic context it is defined as "the ability to make your own decisions without being controlled by anyone else" (Cambridge Dictionary, 1999).

Learner autonomy is defined as *"the ability to take charge of one's own learning"* (Holec, 1981, p.3) as well as *"(...) a capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action"* (Little, 1991, p.4) and *"(...) learners' ability and willingness to make choices independently"* (Littlewood, 1996, p.427).

The characteristics of an autonomous teacher is defined by Little as *"(...) having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising via continuous reflection and analysis the highest possible degree of affective and cognitive control of the teaching process, and exploiting the freedom that this confers"* (1995, p.179). Also, with a more inclusive manner, Huang explained teacher autonomy as *"(...) teachers' willingness, capacity and freedom to take control of their own teaching and learning"* (2005, p.206).

Critical thinking *"(...) is learning how to ask and answer questions of analysis, synthesize and evaluation"* (Paul, 1985, p.37), also it *"(...) enables individuals to develop appropriate criteria and standards for analyzing their own thinking"* (Elder & Paul, 1994) and it *"(...) is the mental processes, strategies, and representations people use to solve problems, make decisions, and learn new concepts"* (Sternberg, 1986, p.3).

The term critical thinking disposition is used frequently in the literature to refer to a set of attitudes and behaviors that include ongoing study, constant questioning and reasoning, being open to new ideas, making fair judgements, and being critical of one's own thought process (Şahin et al., 2015).

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 English as a Foreign Language

As a species, humanity has crafted a diverse array of tools, ranging from utensils that simplify labor to art forms that express emotions and engage our senses. Yet, apart from these inventions, they have devised perhaps one of the most unique ways of communication that went hand in hand with their inherited talent of conveying messages, language. Humankind developed not a single but a variety of different languages and through the emergence of different civilizations these spread through the world together with the people who utilized them. As these civilizations rose, collided, and coexisted, they improved, and along with them, so did the languages. Through this journey, a variety of civilizations and thus, different languages encountered with one another, and thus, an enrichment for both occurred. Still, alongside this enrichment there also appeared a need to communicate between them. As a natural consequence, teaching, learning and mastering an additional language to fulfill a number of requirements has been on the stage of human history for a long while. Or as Musumeci stated, it *"(…) has been going on since peoples with different language systems first encountered one another (…)"* (2009, p.43) and up until the current day and age this matter has kept its prominence. People still learn a different language or multiple different languages according to their needs and interests. Yet, even though learning one or more new languages has been a trend that has been going on from very old times until the present day, throughout history there has always been a most scholarly used and internationally accepted communication, trade, entertainment and education language; a specific one that has been changed and selected anew several times in history according to the necessities and conditions of the related period of time, in other words, a lingua franca (Kachru, 1992).

Employed among individuals who do not share a common native language or cultural background (Alptekin, 2012), the lingua franca had been Latin for a while after the demise of the Roman Empire, an empire that lasted hundreds of years and expanded continents wide. In the centuries that followed, the most commonly utilized lingua franca of the globalized day and age, with nearly a billion users, evolved to become English (Musumeci 2009; Intarapanich, 2013) and at the present day, English is still commercialized as the

optimized language for global communication all around the world, with an ever-growing number of its speakers which is coming gradually closer to twenty percent of the world's population (Crystal, 2004). As a consequence, due to the historical, sociological, academic and economical events that gave shape to the history of humankind and therefore the most popular lingua franca of the day, it can once again be understood and highlighted that the most widely learned and taught second or foreign language internationally within the past few centuries has been the English language.

When taken a closer look in history, it may be seen that the dominance of this language as the lingua franca first appeared together with the end of the second world war which took between the years of 1939 and 1945. Within and after this period, English was increasingly started to be used for commerce and scholarly publications as a result of the United States and the United Kingdom's rise to prominence as victorious states (İpek & Eğilmez, 2023). Hence, due to the changes that occurred during this era in socio-political and economic landscapes together with the increasing influence of English-speaking countries, the English language began to spread beyond the British Empire`s colonized territories through deliberate strategies. Gradually, it surpassed the other possible candidates of most commonly used lingua franca, to become the universal language of diplomacy, business, media, science, technology, and more (Alptekin, 2012; Cooper, 1989; Yule, 2016). Moreover, both globalization and the global employment sector's requirement for English skills has intensified the appeal of English as an additional language (Freeman et al., 2015) and the notion of English functioning as a lingua franca, facilitating communication among individuals with diverse mother tongues, has significantly contributed to its extensive embrace (Canagarajah, 2006). As a result of this, English was integrated into education systems worldwide, even in traditionally monolingual regions like the Middle East, Far East, and parts of Europe and was made compulsory in the education systems of numerous countries by the governments (Saito & Samimy, 1996; Cooper, 1989; Yule, 2016). Hence, through the integration of the English language to the curricula of numerous countries and further education of it through alternative courses, this language became the most commonly studied and taught language around the globe in a structured manner.

Thanks to the increase in the level of English being studied as a foreign language, making this process easier and standardized became a viable idea. Hence, within the period during and after the Second World War, the formal education of foreign languages, and thus English, were shaped in accordance with the theories and approaches suggested scientifically. Through the shaping of this process with the newly formed and suggested theories, the pedagogy of foreign language teaching had gone through thorough changes. Some additional changes were also applied just thirty to twenty years prior to the beginning of the twenty-first century (Cooper, 1989; Yule, 2016).

Still, before mentioning the theories and procedures that had been established especially within the 20th century in the branch of teaching English as a foreign language and its learning processes, it would be most beneficial to understand the position and history of the education of English in Turkey, a country in which English has been actively taught as a foreign language for a long time and the country which this paper will be focusing on by means of EFL teachers` autonomy and their critical thinking dispositions.

2.2 English as a Foreign Language in Turkey

As English underwent a transformation into a global language, it gradually shed its status as a language exclusive to its native speakers. In the process, teaching and learning English have emerged as essential components of the lives of people all over the world. It has evolved into a crucial instrument for facilitating international communication and gaining access to a vast reservoir of global knowledge. Consequently, in line with the international trend, Turkey, like many other nations, has incorporated English as a foreign language into its educational framework, integrating it into curricula at various educational levels.

As the most commonly taught foreign language in Turkey for many years, it is important to state that the teaching and learning of English went even further back than the Republic itself. Yet, having been taught most particularly in the last two centuries, together with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, teaching English as a foreign language gained importance eminently in the Republic of Turkey, since this language has been a key to access innovative information and an understanding of the western society together with civilization in order to achieve and keep up to date with the most recent developments,

also, in order to achieve westernization of the republic (Alagözlü, 2012). As an understandable result of this, Turkey shared a sizable budget for language education and made an effort to conform to both European Union and international education standards with the purpose of maintaining the level necessary in international markets and to reach the level of universal standards in cultural, political as well as in scientific-technical fields (Toklu, 2007).

All in all, it would be a sensible recognition to state that the English language held and still holds a great importance and place in Turkey's education system at all levels across the country since it is seen as a necessity to communicate and to keep in touch with the rest of the globe. Yet, after clarifying the position of English and its teaching and learning processes in Turkey, recovering back to a subject which Turkey has also been under the influence of is necessary. As mentioned before, this subject is a wider observation of teaching and learning a foreign language, more specifically English as a foreign language, and the approaches and methodologies that have been formed related to this process. This step back is needed in order to fully comprehend the whole journey of teaching English as a foreign language.

2.3 Teaching English as an Additional Language and Methodologies

Ever since the first attempts of learning a new language, including English, in order to achieve proficiency in the target language being learnt, many have worked and put in enormous effort and for many, figuring out this process, simplifying and perfecting it has been a great issue. Hence for long, the process of additional language teaching and learning has been tried to be settled down to certain templates and routines. To establish these routines and to devise the best way to maintain language learning; (especially throughout the 20th century) numerous approaches and methodologies were constructed and presented by theorists to be utilized by language teachers who lived and instructed in many different parts of the world. However, considering the broad teaching backgrounds of teachers, the different needs, cultural and personal characteristics of students in these regions, as well as the specific needs of this environment (e.g. facilities or classroom space) and the experiences, beliefs and other circumstances the teachers are in were considered, the methodologic approach towards the TEFL process couldn’t really give

the promotion of teacher autonomy and the cultivation of critical thinking dispositions the attention they truly deserve.

From grammar-based approaches such as grammar translation and audiolingualism, cognitive code approaches, connectionism and to communicative and natural approaches (Richard-Amato, 2003) many different types of approaches and methodologies had been theorized to be utilized through a standardized manner in the classrooms which exist all around the world in a variety of different backgrounds. In the part below there is a brief summary of them through the analysis of Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching by Richards & Rodgers (2014), The Development of EFL Methodology by Paul Knight (2001) and Celce-Murcia (2001)'s Language Teaching Approaches: An Overview and a display of where teacher autonomy and critical thinking disposition stands in these methodologies and approaches:

The Grammar-Translation Method: This method, also known as the Prussian method, centered on the target language's literature work and aimed to enhance the students' understanding of them, thus, teach the language. Vocabulary was selected only from the literature at hand and learned through memorization, dictionaries and lists that also include the mother language. Translation was existent as well as prominent and the sentence structure created the core of this method. Speaking and listening were not the main goal but the skills of reading and writing were centralized. Thus, being a highly structured and teacher-centered approach, this method focused mainly on explicit grammar instruction and translation exercises and did not have much room for teacher autonomy and critical thinking disposition.

The Direct Method: As a counter movement to the excessive use of translation and hence the mother tongue the Direct Method appeared. This method, which allowed solely the use of the target language during the language learning process prohibited any kind of translation and utilized resources like visuals and other types of materials at hand to convey the meaning of unknown vocabulary and concepts in the language being learnt. This method, which allowed relatively more opportunity to teacher autonomy and critical thinking disposition to exist when compared to Grammar Translation method, it still

followed a highly structuralized understanding and the curriculum and materials used still influenced the degree of autonomy, as programs mostly followed a predefined content.

Situational Language Teaching / The Oral Approach: This approach centered on spoken language majorly and used the language at aim during instruction. Furthermore, new language items were introduced and emphasized according to need while using the language, therefore, situationally. Yet, Situational Language Teaching / The Oral Approach was not based on a situational syllabus but rather on a structural one, since the situational needs that occurred also followed a structured plan. Hence, associated with a structured and teacher-centered approach, Situational Language Teaching had a limiting impact on teacher autonomy and the promotion of critical thinking disposition.

The Audio-Lingual Method: This method which stemmed from behaviorism took language learning as the internalization of sets of language habits. Through constant repetition of selected patterns, the student was aimed to acquire the target language and continued this process until automatic production in it was achieved. Teachers were in total control of the learning environment and the source of all the information, hence the language being learnt. Yet, they lacked autonomy and critical thinking disposition in themselves. Additionally, errors were not welcomed in this method, since according to it, language was conditioning and errors would result in wrong conditioning.

Total Physical Response: Total Physical Response prioritized listening skills and moved on from there to the other skills: reading, speaking and writing. Learners also gave physical responses to the commands their teacher gave in the target language. Throughout the process a child's acquisition of the mother tongue was mimicked, but this time with the target language. Typically associated with a structured and teacher-centered approach, Total Physical Response limited teacher autonomy and critical thinking dispositions.

The Silent Way: Taking its origins from Gattegno (1976)'s publications, the Silent Way advocated that teaching is actually connected to learning. Expressing one's self while using the target language was key and learners' self-assessment and responsibility in their own learning was prominent. Teachers in this scenario were silent as much as possible all the while monitoring the learning experience. Furthermore, exposure to information during sleep was thought to have positive results in learning. Cuisenaire rods, Fidel and

vocabulary charts were associated with this way and teachers utilizing these items modeled certain phrases while expecting the learners to respond to them. According to the responses the teacher received, the learner was either asked to respond again or the response was accepted. The Silent Way presented many positive components including the promotion of student autonomy and active learning, yet still, it held some restrictions upon the matters of teacher autonomy and critical thinking dispositions especially in the domains of curriculum flexibility, opportunities for teachers to explore content-related critical thinking activities and in certain areas of material adaptations.

Community Language Learning: Community Language Learning was based on psychological counseling techniques which means teacher acting as a counselor and the learner a client. Interacting feelings about the learning experience held an important role and the teacher was supposed to create a safe environment for the learner to manifest these feelings. Further studies in the target language were based on this interaction between the learner and the teacher as well as its content. Through this process the teacher helped the learner to gradually take on the responsibility of their learning just as a parent does with their child. While having many positive characteristics such as a student-centered approach and autonomy of learners, Community Language Learning still had a restrictive impact on teacher autonomy and critical thinking dispositions by means of critical analysis of content. Furthermore, it also caused certain problems in these concepts because during the process of additional language teaching, situations in which following a diverse approach and taking on some more traditional roles as a teacher may come handy.

Suggestopedia: This method which belonged to Lozanov (1978) tried to use music and other media in order to create a safe and eligible environment for students so that they could learn without any psychological obstacles to stop them. This meant, through the use of music, students were aimed to reach the most convenient mental status in which learning is most efficient. Also, content was presented with the melodies selected to sooth learners. Yet, even though the main purpose of suggestopedia was efficiency in communication it was highly structural. Teachers were the ones responsible to create the suitable learning environment and learners were expected to comply with the teacher/parent and absorb the content presented to them without any critical judgment.

Therefore, even though it brought on some advantageous components to additional language teaching, Suggestopedia still placed the teacher in a more authoritative role with scripted materials. This could limit teacher autonomy in terms of content and curriculum decisions and may not explicitly encourage critical thinking disposition.

Communicative Language Teaching: Communicative Language Teaching centralized communication since it took the main aim of learning a language as communication, and therefore the main goal was to develop students' ability to communicate by putting function over form. In order to achieve this aim, learners were presented with authentic texts, audios, clips, etc. Furthermore, they were also involved in exercises that pushed them to have genuine communication and in meaningful tasks that required the use of the target language. Communicative Language Teaching also emphasized that the four skills could not be separated from one another and that they were dependent on each other. Although it respresented many advantages by means of additional language teaching as well as in the domains of autonomy and critical thinking dispositions, following a single set of approach may still have a restrictive impact on teachers' autonomy and their critical thinking dispositions by means of decision-making regarding the curriculum, materials, and language elements.

Natural Approach: The Natural Approach suggested a different learning model that had not been suggested before itself. In this approach there was a dichotomy between the acquisition and the learning of the target language. The former was familiarized with the acquisition of the mother tongue, following a specific order when learning grammar just like in the first language also known as the Natural Order Hypothesis and the latter with sets of conscious behavior that resulted in learning. Yet, in this scenario, the learnt language could not result in the usage of natural language. It could only be used to monitor and correct the natural language use, which was thought to be gained solely through acquisition. Furthermore, according to this approach, acquisition was able to occur through comprehensible input, which was new information just above the learners' current stage. Output wasn't emphasized. In addition to these points, the Natural Approach also stated that the learners' emotional well-being towards learning affected the process. Hence, a lower Affective Filter, in other words, lower negative emotions like anxiety, lack of motivation, etc., was tried to be achieved. While this understanding of

additional language teaching had its own advantages, when applied as a singular pathway in the process, it may cause some setbacks in teacher autonomy and crtical thinking dispositions regarding the domains of content selection, engagement in explicit grammar instruction, addressing specific language elements or critical thinking objectives that fall outside the method's framework.

After the brief revision above, it could be inferred from the explanations as well as the number of the approaches and methodologies listed that many different types of these items were designed and developed in order to improve the whole process of additional language teaching and for a certain time, these were utilized and accepted in singularity during the application of the process. Also, in the case of the study at hand, under the specific scope of Turkey as well, the situation was not so different as the old methods were abandoned and discarded in favor of the new ones, which were dutifully, if not completely, embraced (Alagözlü, 2012) to be applied by the additional language teachers in their classrooms. Yet, considering the vast number of teaching environments and the differences these environments have, the singular acceptance and application of a method proved to be rather impractical and inconvenient, hence, more space for qualities like autonomy and critical thinking dispositions needed to be granted. Consequently, in the process of additional language teaching and therefore in the process of TEFL the usage of the methodologies had to be redefined and reshaped together with the roles of practitioners in the same process, as these individuals are the ones that guide and play a pivotal role in the process of TEFL.

2.4 Teacher's Role in TEFL

In the scenario described earlier, teachers, or practitioners, were essentially seen as implementers of the methodologies created by theorists (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). This was the case regardless of their prior teaching experiences, the locations in which they taught, or the student demographics they served. Furthermore, teaching and the function of a teacher was underestimated and the capabilities of the teachers was disregarded also in additional language teaching, since the profession was seen as a mere copy and paste process. In this process, practitioners often lacked the independence to bring about fundamental changes in the materials they worked with, couldn't set their own teaching

goals and objectives, make necessary adjustments to timelines and procedures based on their learners' needs, and were primarily obligated to adhere to predetermined teaching steps rather than having the flexibility to adapt them. Thus, all that was needed from them to follow certain steps provided them as prescriptions. Even age-old recordings regarding the teaching profession depicted and reassured these beliefs about teachers and the process of teaching;

> An organist can read any piece of music from his notes, though he might not be able to compose it or to sing or play it from memory; and a schoolmaster, in the same way, should be able to teach anything, if he has before his eyes the subject matter and the method by which it should be taught. (Comenius, Didactica Magna, 1657, p.288 as cited in Musumeci, 2009, p.58)

This description of expectations from the 'unable' teachers to fill in their students' minds with the necessary information together with a strict prescribed road map endowed to them though, was not and could not be the reality of the case, due to the fact that the realities of the classroom required differently. Teachers had to take on more active roles than what was expected of them. As can be deduced, this applied also to the department of additional language teaching and therefore to the field of TEFL. And hence, within time the role, responsibilities and the position of the additional language teacher changed drastically, both within the classroom and in the professional community. This role shifted from the teacher being the rule-applier, single source of information and the unquestionable leader within the classroom to a facilitator and a guide as well as a teacher-learner who constantly improves themselves within the field, and a researcher who is a crucial part of the whole department in order to expand information and research concerning the whole additional language learning and teaching process (Musumeci, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Tort-Moloney, 1997).

Consequently, together with the shift in the role of teachers and with the rising importance of the teacher in the additional language teaching / learning process, two new and necessary characteristics of additional language, therefore EFL teachers appeared: autonomy and critical thinking. Yet, before explaining each of these characteristics

starting with teacher autonomy in the research at hand, first autonomy itself will be reviewed.

2.5 Autonomy

Before explaining teacher autonomy, it is beneficial to understand what 'autonomy' means. When stripped from the language learning / teaching context, one could easily find and utilize autonomy or being autonomous in many different backgrounds. Hence, apart from the additional language teaching context, autonomy itself carries a rather more inclusive meaning and effect. Cambridge Dictionary provides two different definitions for autonomy; a more *inclusive and a more individualistic one. In a more inclusive context autonomy is defined as "the right of an organization, country, or region to be independent and govern itself*" and in a more individualistic context it is defined as "*the ability to make your own decisions without being controlled by anyone else*" (1999).

As can be understood from the very definition of autonomy, it is utilizable and freeing in any context it is applied to and it is crucial as it frees a person or an institution to enhance and manage their own actions and their own development according to the specific needs, situations, facilities and background that person or the institution belongs to. Furthermore, it may be inferred to some extent that in order to act autonomously the person or the institution at hand should also be able to carry out specific skills such as critical thinking and informed decision-making processes; skills that could help maintain autonomy and bring reason and reflection into a person's actions before they are carried out. Still, as vital they are, these sub skills will be more explicitly explored in the latter parts of this paper.

Moving back to the specific content of the related title, as it reflects through its sole definition, in foreign language teaching and learning as well, autonomy regulates a revolutionary view on the whole process itself and redefines the role and actions of the individuals who actively take part within the process, including the teachers.

2.5.1 Autonomy in TEFL

In the field of additional language education, the term 'autonomy' first officially appeared for learners rather than teachers as within the process of language teaching more emphasis

was placed on learners and their freedom from control while learning the target language. The reason behind this is simply because the learners` roles also started to shift within the process.

After the first appearance of 'learner autonomy' through the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project established in 1971 (Huang, 2005) many working definitions of learner autonomy were created. According to Benson (2000), Holec (1981) was the one to come up with the first, vigorous and the most commonly cited definition of learner autonomy and for Holec (1981) learner autonomy was *"the ability to take charge of one's own learning*" (p.3). After this one, many more definitions uprose concerning autonomy since together with the turn of the 20th century, there was a considerable increase in the interest towards this matter (Benson, 2000). Some other definitions of learner autonomy also included "*a capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action*" (Little, 1991, p.4) and the capacity and eagerness of learners to make independent decisions (Littlewood, 1996).

Yet, it was not just the learners' roles that changed in foreign language learning and teaching. Teachers and their roles were also other components that shifted both in definition and meaning. What is more, just as autonomy appeared in the learners' experience in foreign language learning, and consequently in their learning of EFL, this quality also became a part of teachers' own teaching experiences. Therefore, there was now another vital quality that a teacher had to equip themself with: teacher autonomy.

2.5.2 Teacher autonomy in TEFL

As the foreign language education process together with the items and people involved in it required a more independent environment for this process to realistically and efficiently take place, concepts such as teacher autonomy which ensured a more independent model of practitioners were formed. Yet, before explicitly discussing this notion and how it came to be, it would be beneficial to take a look at other different concepts concentrating on a more independent decision maker model of foreign language teachers so as to comprehend the transformation and transmission between them.

Due to the realities of a number of various additional language teaching environments present in many different backgrounds, ideas such as 'teacher's sense of plausibility' by Prabhu (1990) or 'principled pragmatism / pragmatic eclecticism' by Kumaravadivelu (1994) were suggested. According to Prabhu (1990), teachers had an understanding of their own teaching and they had to *"(...) operate with some personal conceptualization of how their teaching leads to desired learning with a notion of causation that has a measure of credibility for them*" (p.172). For him, this conceptualization in their teaching could come from a variety of different backgrounds each teacher had and it ranged from a teacher's experiences as a learner, experiences as a teacher or even as a caregiver. Also, they argued that each teacher as their own person could give different responses to similar experiences since each teacher was a different individual and claimed that in the end, *"(...) the resulting concept (...) of how learning takes place and how teaching causes or supports it is what may be called a teacher's sense of plausibility about teaching*" (Prabhu, 1990, p.172). This plausibility's content, level of development and conscious application differed from teacher to teacher, making it a highly personal phenomenon.

Kumaravadivelu (1994), on the other hand, construed pragmatic eclecticism as the selection, adaptation and integration of various methods, approaches and techniques based on sound theories and research knowledge according to the context, learner needs, and teacher expertise in designing language instruction rather than adhering strictly to a single method. This suggested that teachers make the necessary and informed calls and selections while teaching from a variety of working sources without sticking to a single routine and all the while making these selections in accordance with the teacher at hand's own specific classroom dynamics, facilities and background. Both concepts, as can be frankly understood, started to become detached from the methodologic approach towards EFL or any other form of foreign language teaching, by their nature.

Moving on from the aforementioned concepts that suggest a teacher as a more independent decision maker in the classroom, teacher autonomy, which stands as a more inclusive and multidimensional concept, was introduced. At the core, this concept also desired a more independent, informed and mindful model of foreign language teachers, also, as learner autonomy became the desired component of now more learner centered language learning / teaching classrooms; teacher autonomy became more and more

indispensable since, many suggested that teacher autonomy had a crucial role in the development and increase of learner autonomy (Benson, 2001; Little, 1995; Smith, 2003; Tort-Moloney, 1997). Furthermore, as a single method-based approach towards language teaching and learning proved ineffective and unrealistic, now there was a need for teachers with a higher awareness of their own teaching and development as well as teachers with awareness towards the processes that occurred in their classrooms. Hence, the concept of autonomous teachers appeared and overtook.

There are numerous explanations and depictions of the features of teacher autonomy and the autonomous teacher. Being one of them, Little (1995) described autonomous teachers' characteristics as *"(...) having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising via continuous reflection and analysis the highest possible degree of affective and cognitive control of the teaching process, and exploiting the freedom that this confers*" (p.179). Aoki (2002) came up with a description of teacher autonomy by comparing this phenomenon to learner autonomy and reached the conclusion that teacher autonomy "*...can be defined as the capacity, freedom, and/or responsibility to make choices concerning one's own teaching*" (p.111). Also, in the Glossary of Education Reform, teacher autonomy was defined as *"(...) the professional independence of teachers in schools, especially the degree to which they can make autonomous decisions about what they teach to students and how they teach it*" (2014). Yet, as another explanation of teacher autonomy, Huang (2005) depicted the concept in a more inclusive perspective by stating that *"(...) teacher autonomy can be defined as teachers' willingness, capacity and freedom to take control of their own teaching and learning"* (p.206) which indicated a more autonomous stand in the teachers' professional development as well, adding on to the matter at hand a whole different perspective.

Examining the multifaceted characteristics of teacher autonomy, Smith (2003) created a table that illustrated the possible dimensions and meanings of teacher autonomy by further discussing a dichotomy between teachers' teaching, in other words, professional action and their own learning by means of professional development. They further depicted these dimensions of autonomy with regard to technical, psychological and political perspectives (Benson, 1997) on autonomy:

Dimensions of teacher autonomy

In relation to professional action:

A. Self-directed professional action (= ‘Teacher autonomy (II)’)

B. Capacity for self-directed professional action (= ‘Teacher autonomy (I)’)

C. Freedom from control over professional action (= ‘Teacher autonomy (II)’)

In relation to professional development:

D. Self-directed professional development (= ‘Self-directed teacher-learning’)

E. Capacity for self-directed professional development (= ‘Teacher-learner autonomy (I)’)

F. Freedom from control over professional development (= ‘Teacher-learner autonomy (II)’)

In order to achieve a further understanding, Smith (2003) continued by making some points concerning his chart and what each dimension of autonomy in it stood for. Hence, according to him:

To ensure uniformity in the interpretation of 'autonomy' across both learner autonomy and teacher autonomy, it's advisable to refrain from using the latter term when describing real instances of self-directed conduct (i.e., scenarios A and D mentioned above).

The concepts outlined in B. and E. could be seen as relating to a 'technical' or 'psychological' understanding of autonomy, as described by Benson (1997). Conversely, C. and F. pertained to its 'political' aspect, according to the same source.

In the realm of 'technical' and 'psychological' aspects, various scholars discussing learner autonomy highlighted either the learner's 'ability' or additionally underscored their 'readiness' to partake in self-directed actions. These contrasting focal points could be viewed as subordinate elements within categories B and E.

Regarding the 'political' dimension, Benson (2000) posited that autonomy within this context could be interpreted as a 'right' to be free from external influence (or the capability

to exercise this right), in addition to experiencing tangible freedom from control. These distinct focuses could be perceived as subsidiary aspects within categories C and F.

The concept of 'professional development' or 'teacher-learning' represented a subset of the larger domain of 'professional action'. Therefore, the terminology 'teacher-learner autonomy' (Smith, 2000) could be appropriately employed when the main emphasis is on professional development or teacher-learning. However, it's essential to recognize that this terminology pertaines to just one aspect within the wider spectrum of teacher autonomy.

After covering Smith (2003)`s chart as well as his explanations of it together with various other descriptions of teacher autonomy, and consequently, further clarifying the concept and its dimensions, it is also important to highlight once again this characteristic`s crucial role in additional language teaching. As mentioned before, due to the realities of each and every different learning and teaching environment and the role it carries in the development of learner autonomy; teacher autonomy is a key factor for teachers during the language teaching process since truly effective teachers have consistently demonstrated autonomy (Little, 1995).

Having covered teacher autonomy as an indispensable quality of a foreign language teacher, it is vital to state another characteristic that can be considered as a reinforcing quality of this concept. The reason behind this is that, in order to make informed calls one should be able to carry out certain intellectual processes by questioning, comparing, mapping out and linking the information that one comes across with. The name of the total processes which were briefly explained above and as a quality which is expected to play a supporting role in the success of additional language teachers in their autonomy and teachings, critical thinking (Birjandi & Bagherkazemi, 2010; Ghaemi & Taherian, 2011) is ought to be understood and should be carried out by the practitioners within the foreign language teaching environment in order to achieve higher order thinking skills that will improve the whole experience and process of foreign language, and therefore EFL teaching.

Yet again, before covering critical thinking under the specific scope of TEFL, it is necessary to firstly understand what it is, why it is crucial and which means it serves.

Thus, in the following section critical thinking will be explained solely as a concept, without any direct correlation with different other categories.

2.6 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking has been a broad concept approached with multiple perspectives that resulted in a variety of understandings of it. Some of the definitions of this concept included that it; *"(...) is learning how to ask and answer questions of analysis, synthesize and evaluation*" (Paul, 1985, p.37), also that it *"(...) enables individuals to develop appropriate criteria and standards for analyzing their own thinking"* (Elder & Paul, 1994) and it *"(...) is the mental processes, strategies, and representations people use to solve problems, make decisions, and learn new concepts"* (Sternberg, 1986, p.3).

Yet, the basis of critical thinking was found by Socrates himself more than 2000 years ago as he highlighted and *"(...) established the importance of seeking evidence, closely examining reasoning and assumptions, analyzing basic concepts, and tracing out implications not only of what is said but of what is done as well"* (The Foundation for Critical Thinking, n.d.). Hence, with Socrates the uninterrupted acceptance of information and the distribution of it through one individual to another was disturbed, since he highly emphasized questioning rather than espousal. Furthermore, he establitheyd the foundation for the critical thinking tradition, which involves questioning commonly accepted beliefs and explanations in a reflective manner. This process entails a careful distinction between beliefs that are logical and reasonable and those that lack sufficient evidence or rational basis, even if they align with our inherent self-centered tendencies or personal interests and provide a sense of comfort (The Foundation for Critical Thinking, n.d.).

Hence, through the establishment of critical thought, raising logical questions towards new and also decades old knowledge has become possible and desirable, leading people to broaden their perspectives and move forward, processing and reconstructing their thoughts and actions, through a better understanding of the purpose and the applicability of each concept they encounter with.

2.6.1 Critical thinking in TEFL

As can be inferred, education, in which information is being learnt and discussed constantly, forms one of the best environments for critical thinking to take place as through constant questioning and debate learners can develop themselves and shape knowledge all the while they engage to the maximum level with their teacher as a guide and a facilitator in the process. Nevertheless, in education, just as the learners can think critically about their learning experience, so can the guides, in other words, teachers in their teaching and self-development. This situation, as mentioned before, brings success to the process of teaching as it frees place for reflection, adaptation and therefore improvement. Furthermore, in a subject as inclusive and complex in nature as foreign / second language teaching and learning and hence also in TEFL, thinking critically as a teacher is a necessity if an efficient and realistic process is aimed, since *"Authentic education is not carried on by "A" for "B" or by "A" about "B," but rather by "A" with "B," mediated by the world—a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it"* (Freire, 1970, p.93).

After mentioning what is meant by critical thinking, its place and importance in teaching English as a foreign language background, it is also important to recognize the critical thinker and an EFL teacher who thinks critically. Therefore, the characteristics of a critical thinker is a notion which should also be theyd light on. According to Birjandi & Bagherkazemi (2010) a critical thinker, hence an additional language teacher who thinks critically;

- has a strong intention to recognize the importance of good thinking;
- identifies problems and focuses on relevant topics and issues;
- distinguitheys between valid and invalid inferences;
- suspends judgments and decisions in the absence sufficient evidence;
- understands the difference between logical reasoning and rationalizing;
- is aware of the fact that one's understanding is limited and that there are degrees of belief;
- differentiates between facts, opinions and assumptions;
- watches out for authoritarian influences and specious arguments;

– anticipates the consequences of alternative actions. (p.137)

Hence, by possessing these characteristics, in other words, through critical thinking teachers may equate the in-class learning processes of different learners (Lin, 1999), figure out applicable content and perceptions suitable for their classrooms as well as their personal development and create meaningful dialogue (Freire, 1970) which is a vital procedure in additional language teaching and learning. Furthermore, these teachers can make informed decisions about instructional strategies and materials, can foster critical thinking skills in their students by modeling and incorporating this skill into their lessons, can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment and lastly, they can contribute to the overall improvement of education by helping students become active and independent learners, preparing them for success in their academic and professional lives (Asgharheidari & Tahriri, 2015; Ketabi et al., 2013). Hence, as can be anticipated, this situation would end up with the success of the whole TEFL process.

2.7 Critical Thinking Disposition

As a concept linked to critical thinking, understanding what critical thinking disposition (CTD) is necessary. The reason behind this is that if one aims to achieve any level of action or thought, one must first have the intention and motivation to do so. Thus, in terms of being able to think critically, first should come the disposition to carry this skill out since critical thinking dispositions are characterized as lifestyle choices that support critical thinking (Facione, 1990). Furthermore, it is vital to highlight that possessing critical thinking abilities is just a single aspect of CTD; another is having the desire and propensity to apply such abilities (Woo & Tak, 2015).

Besides, it is inferable that just like any trait that is adoptable by individuals, a person who carries the trait of critical thinking displays certain qualifications in their character. Thus, just like a person who can actively think critically throughout their life, people with critical thinking dispositions also carry certain qualifications. They display characteristics like truth-seeking, flexibility of thought, analyticity, systematicity, confidence in themselves, inquisitiveness, maturity, and intellectual curiosity (Kurniati et al., 2019).

Consequently, it can be briefly stated that critical thinking dispositions refer to the attitudes, habits, and tendencies that contribute to one's ability to think critically about an issue and could be utilized to understand the latitude, ratio and tendency of an individuals' level of critical thinking, as was done in this research.

2.8 Autonomy and Critical Thinking in TEFL

A number of studies have been conducted on the levels of autonomy and critical thinking dispositions of EFL teachers, also in the Turkish context. Concerning the former concept, in one of these research, focusing on teachers' autonomy and job satisfaction levels Dinçer (2019) concluded that EFL teachers working in public schools had a low level of autonomy. In another study conducted by Taşcı (2023) on the issues regarding TEFL in Turkey, pre-service teachers reported low autonomy as one of these problems. On the other hand, in Kara and Bozkurt (2022)'s study on teacher leadership and autonomy correlation, the results suggested that the participant teachers perceived high levels of autonomy. The results of Ay and Boz (2022)'s research on the investigation of the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher autonomy indicated a moderate level of autonomy. Finally, in another study conducted upon the matter of interplay between EFL teachers' autonomy, well-being and efficacy, it was concluded that autonomy enhanced teacher efficacy and teachers of EFL working in state schools tended have more autonomy than the ones who worked in private institutions (Yükselir & Özer, 2022).

Related with the latter chracteristic, in a study in which EFL pre-service teachers' perception on CTD was investigated by Coşkun (2022), it was found that the related group had an overall moderate level of CTD. Furthermore, conducted upon the matter of CTDs of the Turkish teacher candidates, Çubukcu (2006)'s study concluded that the participants of this study had an overall moderate level of CTD. Finally, as an exploration of Turkish EFL teacher candidates' understanding of critical thinking and reading, Coşkun and Karahan (2023) concluded in their study that the participant pre-service teachers had an overall moderate level of CTDs.

Although not many in numbers, some studies have also directly or indirectly studied the relationship between the two aspects of EFL teachers' autonomy and critical thinking

levels and in a study related to the two concepts it was concluded that EFL university instructors' selections of teaching styles were highly impacted by their critical thinking skills and self-efficacy attitudes (Amirian et al., 2022). Furthermore, it was concluded that critical thinking abilities in EFL professors have a favorable impact on their feelings of effectiveness. Thus, there is an implication that suggests highly capable critical thinkers are more likely to have a feeling of autonomy and fulfillment in their approaches to teaching.

Furthermore, according to another research, there seemed to be some consensus among university level EFL teachers about the definition of critical thinking as a set of cognitive abilities utilized for problem-solving and reflective learning (Marin & Pava, 2017). The research did discover, nonetheless, that instructors of EFL had a lack of comprehension regarding what critical thinking included. This implies that EFL instructors could require instruction and professional growth opportunities to improve their knowledge and use of critical thinking, which can consequently have an indirect aid to help increase their autonomy in the classroom.

Finally, in a study conducted by Salybekova et al. (2023), a further suggestion to improve the critical thinking skills of foreign language instructors was made through the use of the 4C model (critical thinking, communication, cooperation, and creativity). In this study it was determined that discussions and problem-solving exercises were useful methods for cultivating critical thinking in language teaching and learning. These exercises offered EFL instructors the chance to be creative in their instruction and assist pupils to develop their critical thinking abilities. Hence, through the increase of creativity in the instruction of teachers, there could be seen yet again an indirect form of relationship with autonomy and decision making on the instructors` behalf.

Having the same background with the study at hand, another study which explored the connection among critical thinking abilities and awareness of metacognitive processes in the setting of learning a foreign language (Çakıcı, 2018) in Turkey, the findings revealed an extremely substantial positive association between the characteristics of critical thinking abilities and metacognitive awareness. Hence the results of the study indicate that greater degrees of metacognitive awareness are associated with stronger critical

thinking abilities, which might indirectly support the level of autonomy that EFL instructors display in their classroom.

All in all, even though scarce in number, a certain amount of research has suggested a possible and indirect link in between the concepts of EFL teachers` autonomy and critical thinking dispositions as could be understood through the reviewed research above. It could be also inferred that EFL instructors are more likely to have a feeling of autonomy in the way they teach if they demonstrate a level of critical thinking skills and awareness of metacognitive processes. Incentives for training and professional growth may be very important in developing EFL instructors' critical thinking skills, which can cause a possible increase in their autonomy within the classroom. Furthermore, adding the 4C model along with tasks like debates and problem-solving can help both EFL teachers and students develop their autonomy and critical thinking abilities. However, even though these studies suggest a correlation between autonomy and critical thinking levels of EFL teachers, the number of research concerning these two concepts is still relatively scarce and indirect. Consequently, one can come to the understanding that the link between these two concepts can be further inquired in order to reach a more solid certainty.

To conclude the present chapter, it could be stated that together with the changing roles in the foreign language teaching and learning processes, including TEFL, we can understand that teachers ought to be able to think critically and act in an autonomous manner in their teaching and learning if success and efficiency is aimed to be reached. Yet, globally and also in the case of Turkey, where English is the most commonly taught foreign language, there is a lack of understanding when it comes to the levels of critical thinking and autonomy the EFL teachers have and the correlation between these two necessary concepts that make the teaching of an EFL teacher successful.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Explaining the methodology that the study at hand followed, in this chapter, information regarding the research questions, participants, data collection tools (Critical Thinking Disposition Scale & Teaching Autonomy Scale) and data analysis procedures are given in four main subtitles.

3.1 Research Questions

In the study at hand, the autonomy levels and critical thinking dispositions of Turkish prep-school EFL teachers working in four different universities and the correlation between these two characteristics were aimed to be identified. Furthermore, the correlation of the teaching experience of the participants and their level of education to their autonomy and critical thinking dispoisitions were also investigated. Hence, research questions below were stated:

1) What is the level of autonomy of Turkish university level prep-school EFL teachers?
2) What is the level of critical thinking dispositions of Turkish university level prep-school EFL teachers?
3) What is the relationship between the autonomy levels and critical thinking dispositions of Turkish university level prep-school EFL teachers?

3.2 Research Design

The aim of this study is to find out the autonomy levels and critical thinking dispositions of university level EFL teachers working in prep-schools together with the correlation between these two concepts. The study also further investigates the correlation between these two concepts with the participants' levels of education (Bachelor's degree, MA or PhD) as well as the year of experience in their profession through the usage of two different questionnaires, making it a quantitative study.

Furthermore, it could be stated that the research at hand mainly follows a correlation design since it assessed the relationship between the autonomy levels and critical thinking

dispositions of EFL teachers working in four different universities` prep-schools. It also assessed the correlation between the education level of the participants together with the duration of experience they have with the levels of critical thinking dispositions and autonomy of the same group at hand.

In order to clarify what is meant by correlation design, it is necessary to state its goal, which is to analyze the correlation between a couple or more variables as correlation research. To ascertain if and how much the variables are connected, it entails assessing the strength and direction of correlation between them. Although this kind of research does not prove that a link between two variables is causal, it does, however, offer useful information about its strength and direction.

As the study further reveals the demographic information related to education level and year of experience together with non-demographic information related to autonomy levels and critical thinking dispositions of each university level prep school EFL teacher working in one of four different institutions, it also carries the characteristics of a descriptive study design.

So as to make a clarification on what descriptive study design is, it should be stated that it attempts to lay out and examine a specific phenomenon or occurrence (Mohammad et al., 2021) and without changing factors or demonstrating causal linkages, it is frequently used to gather data regarding the present situation or condition of a subject (Bianchi et al., 2006), as was done in the related part of the research at hand.

3.3 Participants

English as foreign language teachers from four different universities' prep schools in Turkey was selected for this study as the research group. The overall population of the teachers who participated in the research was 92. The teachers involved in the study were from both private and public institutions in Istanbul, Turkey. These teachers were selected with convenience sampling procedure as the primary and only research group. Furthermore, selected teachers had different teaching experiences and levels of education ranging from Bachelor's degree, Master's degree and PhD and these teachers had different age groups, gender and socio-economic backgrounds. The study was conducted

in Turkey and therefore the majority of the teachers who were selected were from Turkish background, apart from teachers coming from foreign countries and pursuing their profession in Turkey. According to all these aspects, these instructors represented the general prep-school teachers in Turkey. Hence, at the end of the process an overall outcome was gained, representing the general party of EFL teachers who teach in universities` prep-schools.

When more thoroughly examined, in the table below, the dispersion of teachers` level of education and experience in their teaching (professional career) can be found. Information related to gender was not involved in the demographic data obtained.

Table 1. Distribution of Socio-Demographic Characteristics

		N	**%**
Years of Experience ($\bar{X}$=13.88, Std. Dev.=8.19, Min.-Max.=1-34) (n=92)	1-7 years	23	25.0
	8 - 12 years	24	26.1
	13 - 20 years	24	26.1
	Above 20 years	21	22.8
Degree of Education (n=92)	Bachelor's Degree	18	19.6
	MA	61	66.3
	PhD	13	14.1

Hence, the average duration of the professional experience of the individuals was revealed as 13.88±8.19 years. When the years of experience of the individuals were evaluated, it is seen that 25% of them had a professional experience of 1-7 years, 26.1% of them 8-12 years, 26.1% of them between 13-20 years and 22.8% of them more than 20 years. Furthermore, it can be observed that 19.6% of them had undergraduate (Bachelor's degree), 66.3% of them had master's degree (MA) and 14.1% of them had doctorate (PhD) level education.

Participant consent was obtained through instructions provided before the questionnaires and by including an item before the actual questionnaire administration. Furthermore, permission from the ethical committee was obtained before the application of the two questionnaires and no personal information related to the participants was collected through these instruments.

Lastly, questionnaires were done on an online setting through the use of e-forms. The participants were reached through their emails as well as direct messages and the EFL teachers taking part in the study were not given any extra explanation or definition about the topics being researched.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Data collection tools

In order to collect the necessary data, two different instruments were used in this research. The type of both instruments were questionnaires. One of these was used to collect data about the autonomy levels of the participants and the other one to collect data about the critical thinking dispositions of them.

3.4.1.1 Teaching autonomy scale

The first questionnaire named Teaching Autonomy Scale (TAS) (Pearson & Hall, 1993) was used to collect data about the autonomy levels of university degree EFL teachers working in four different prep-schools in Turkey. Although it is open to public access, the necessary permission to utilize the scale for the study at hand was obtained from one of its creators, Bruce Hall.

The scale is made up of 18 items and these intend to ask for teachers' perceptions of their level of autonomy in the four main domains: a) the choice of activities and resources, b) classroom behavior expectations; c) lesson preparation and pacing; and d) individual on-the-job decision making. Furthermore, within the scale two different factors that build up teacher autonomy exists. Being the first factor, curriculum autonomy measures autonomy by means of activity and material selection as well as instruction planning and sequencing. This factor is evaluated through the items 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 18 within the scale. On the other hand, as the second factor, general teaching autonomy measures autonomy through overall classroom standards of conduct and individual decision-making in one`s teaching (Moomaw, 2005). Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16 and 17 evaluates this factor within the scale.

Within the TAS, the 4-point Likert-type scoring was chosen to avoid neutral responses. The scoring varies from 1 (definitely true) to 4 (definitely false). Also, certain items in the scale are reverse scored (respectively, items 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18) and display a higher level of autonomy when done so. The remaining items are scored in the regular manner. No certain thresholds were existent for the categorization of the outcomes.

Prior research on the TAS that used exploratory component analysis produced a tool with two factors -curriculum and overall teaching autonomy, as stated above- that demonstrated strong internal consistency reliability (r=.80). Likewise, the overall teaching autonomy was determined by the items which measured classroom standards of conduct and individual workplace decision making (scores ranged from 13 to 52), while curriculum autonomy was specified by the items which measured choice of activities and materials together with lesson planning and organizing (scores ranged from 7 to 28).

3.4.1.2 Critical thinking disposition scale

The second questionnaire named Critical Thinking Disposition Scale (CTDS) (Sosu 2013) was used to collect data about the levels of critical thinking dispositions of the university level prep school EFL teachers who work in four different institutions in Turkey. This scale includes 11 Likert-type close-ended items with a five-point response scale ranging from ‘Strongly Agree’ to ‘Strongly Disagree’. The creator of this questionnaire described it as a model more frugal than others already in use and includes the important dispositional components found in previous taxonomies within it. Related permissions which are necessary by means of applying the CTDS in this research were taken from the creator of the questionnaire, Edward Sosu.

As a questionnaire which is calculated as a two-factor model; Critical Openness and Reflective Skepticism are the two constructs that make up CTDS. The subscale for reflective skepticism expresses the propensity to draw lessons from the past and to doubt the veracity of evidence. On the other hand, the critical openness subscale represents a propensity to actively be receptive to new ideas, critical in assessing them, and flexible in altering one's thinking in response to compelling evidence. An inclination to critical

thinking requires a certain level of both reflective skepticism and critical openness, also, higher scores would indicate a better propensity for critical thought (Sosu, 2013).

Sosu (2013), asserted that a complete dispositional score could fall within the range of 11 to 55 points in CTDS. According to his disclosure, 11-34 points would indicate low; 35-44 points would indicate moderate; and 45 to 55 points would indicate a high disposition of critical thinking. For critical openness subcategory 7-21 points would indicate a low, 22-28 points would indicate a moderate and 29-35 points would indicate a high degree. For reflective skepticism subcategory low levels would be between 4-12 points, moderate from 13-16 points and high levels from 17-20 points.

In a former study, among a sample of graduate students participating in a one-year education program and first-year undergraduate education students, the CTDS showed strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .79 (Sosu, 2013). A Cronbach alpha value of .814 for this study further indicates that CTDS is internally consistent and dependable with the sample.

3.4.1.3 Normality distributions of teaching autonomy and critical thinking disposition scales

Table 2. Normality Distribution of Teaching Autonomy and Critical Thinking Disposition Scales

Scales	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Skewness	Kurtosis
	Statistic	Df	p		
Overall Teaching Autonomy	0.058	92	0.200*	0.004	0.935
Curriculum Autonomy	0.121	92	0.002	0.672	0.639
General Teaching Autonomy	0.080	92	0.190	-0.340	0.887
Critical Thinking Disposition	0.192	92	0.000	-1.530	1.663
Critical Openness	0.189	92	0.000	-1.521	1.788
Reflective Skepticism	0.176	92	0.000	-1.255	0.883

*p<0.05

When the normality distribution of teaching autonomy and critical thinking disposition scale scores was evaluated with the Kolmogorov Smirnov test; scores other than the teaching autonomy score did not show a normal distribution ($p<0.05$). However, since the values of kurtosis and skewness, which are the other assumptions of the normal

distribution, are between ±2, although the scores did not show a normal distribution, it was accepted that the data belonging to the scores of the dependent variables were normally distributed.

3.4.1.4 Reliability analysis of teaching autonomy and critical thinking disposition scales

Table 3. Reliability Analysis of Teaching Autonomy and Critical Thinking Disposition Scales

	Cronbach's Alpha	**N of Items**
Overall Teaching Autonomy	0.849	18
Curriculum Autonomy	0.742	6
General Teaching Autonomy	0.776	12
Critical Thinking Disposition	0.961	11
Reflective Skepticism	0.946	7
Critical Openness	0.901	4

Cronbach's alpha method, which is one of the reliability analysis methods, was applied to all of the items and factors used in both scales. With this method, it was investigated whether the questions in the scale expressed a whole showing a homogeneous structure. The Cronbach`s alpha method was found by taking the ratio of the variances of the questions in the scale to the general variance. The result ought to take a value between 0 and 1. A range of 0.60 to 0.80 was considered reliable, and a range of 0.80 to 1.00 was considered as highly reliable. In addition, care was taken to ensure that the correlations of the items in the scale were not less than 0.30. Items below this value were not included in the reliability analysis.

In this way, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the Teaching Autonomy Scale was obtained as 0.849 and the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient range of the Critical Thinking Disposition Scale was obtained as 0.901-0.961. In conclusion, it was revealed that both scales (CTDS & TAS) that were applied measure the phenomenon to be measured very strongly and are reliable.

3.4.2 Data collection procedure

In order to collect the related data on critical thinking disposition and teacher autonomy, Teacher Autonomy Scale (Pearson & Hall, 1993) and Critical Thinking Disposition Scale (Sosu, 2013) were used after obtaining necessary permissions from their creators and additional questions were added to collect data about demographic information of the participants. Hence, questions were added related to the teaching experience and level of education of each participant prior to the two questionnaires that were used.

Before the distribution of these questionnaires the remaining permissions required were also obtained from the ethical committee of a foundation university. All permissions accessed, the questionnaires were carried to Google Forms and were ready to be utilized as e-questionnaires.

92 university level EFL teachers working in prep schools participated in the questionnaires. They were distributed in May 2022 and the whole data collection process took 8 months. Data was collected from 4 different universities in Istanbul, from both state and fund universities. The data collection tools were distributed through emails and direct messages by using Google Forms due to its practicality and convenience. Each participant was asked to confirm their participation through instructions and a confirmation question prior to the main questionnaires.

As the process was carried out through Google Forms, results were obtained through this application as well and were transferred to an Excel theyet ready to be processed.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedure

In the study at hand, in order to analyze the data gathered, the statistical program SPSS v26.0 was utilized. Also, the list and furher explanations related to the tests utilized in order to structure the obtained data for reaching conclusions regarding the research questions are found below:

Tests used:

- Normality Test (Kolmogorov Smirnov)
- Descriptive Statistics (Frequency Analysis, Descriptive Statistics)

- Independent Group Comparison (Independent Samples T-Test, One-Way ANOVA)
- Pearson Correlation Analysis
- Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Utilized when describing and summarizing the key elements of a dataset, descriptive statistics offer a succinct summary of the dispersion, variability, and central patterns of the data and also in this research, while analyzing the data regarding teacher autonomy and critical thinking dispositions, these statistics were used.

Normality tests demonstrate whether the data significantly vary from a normal distribution or not. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, one of the normality distribution tests, was used in the analysis of the data obtained from the two sclaes utilized in this study, and since the normality assumptions were provided as a result of the analysis, parametric tests were used as well.

Being an extension of t-test, one way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test is utilized in order to compare the means of three or more groups to reveal whether any significant differentiations exist between them. Hence, in the research at hand, one-way ANOVA test was used to compare teacher autonomy and critical thinking dispositions with year of experience and degree of education of the participants. Also, for the ANOVA test, for variance homogeneity, Leven test was used and for group differences, if homogeneity of variance was provided ($p \geq 0.05$) Tukey HSD and LSD, yet, if the variance homogeneity was not provided ($p < 0.05$) Tamhane multiple comparison tests were used.

Helping to understand and quantify the level of association in between two different variables, Pearson correlation coefficient is utilized in order to identify links between variables, assess the significance of linkages, and ascertain if two variables move together linearly or not. Hence, Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated in the correlation analysis of Teaching Autonomy and Critical Thinking Disposition scales in this study.

Lastly, the degree to which every item on an instrument or questionnaire are assessing a single fundamental idea or attribute is determined by Cronbach's alpha coefficient and what is more, this coefficient is used to evaluate the consistency or dependability of a measuring system. Thus, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used in the reliability analysis

of the two scales utilized in this study. All test results were evaluated at the 0.05 significance level.

Abbreviations:

$\bar{X}$: Mean

SD. : Standard Deviation

Df. : Degree of Freedom

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS and DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, the findings of each scale in accordance with the research questions are demonstrated via tables and are explained in greater detail. Furthermore, each of these findings are discussed in relation to prior research carried out in seven different subtitles in accordance with the research questions.

4.1 The Level of Teacher Autonomy of EFL Teachers Working in Prep-Schools of Universities in Turkey

In order to figure out the levels of autonomy of EFL prep-school teachers working in universities of Turkey, descriptive statistics of the data obtained from the participants was taken. Results, can be found in the table below:

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Teaching Autonomy Scale

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD.	Min.	Max.
Teaching Autonomy	92	44.71	8.25	18	68
Curriculum Autonomy	92	13.59	3.50	6	24
General Teaching Autonomy	92	31.12	5.54	12	44

When the descriptive statistics of the Teaching Autonomy Scale was reviewed, the following findings were obtained:

Being one of the teaching autonomy dimensions, the mean score of curriculum autonomy of the EFL teachers working in the prep schools of universities in Turkey was found as $\bar{X}$ =13.59 and the standard deviation as 3.50, the mean score of general teaching autonomy of the same group was found as $\bar{X}$ =31.12 and the standard deviation as 5.54, lastly, the participants` overall teaching autonomy was found as $\bar{X}$ =44.71 and the standard deviation as 8.25.

Due to the reason that a set of thresholds were not provided by the creators of the Teaching Autonomy Scale, the level of autonomy could not be categorized into subcategories as low, moderate or high, directly. Yet, the statistics at hand could still be examined through the comparison of mean scores, minimum and maximum values together with standard

deviations obtained in order to reach an approximate interpretation of the descriptive statistics.

Thus, starting with the subcategory of general teaching autonomy, when the mean score (31.12) is compared to minimum (12) and maximum values (44), it could be inferred that the participants` perceived autonomy in the subcategory of general teaching, excluding curriculum decisions, could be taken as moderate to high level. The standard deviation, being 5.54 also indicated that some variability in the answers obtained existed, yet, not as much as the overall teaching autonomy. Moving on to the next subcategory, when the mean score of curriculum autonomy (13.59) was compared to the minimum (6) and maximum (24) values, it could be inferred that the perceived amount of curricular autonomy among participants was moderate, indicating that participants felt less autonomous when making curriculum-related decisions. Furthermore, the standard deviation of 3.50 also indicated a rather less variability in obtained answers when compared to the overall teaching autonomy. Lastly, when the mean score of overall teaching autonomy (44.71) was compared to the minimum (18) and maximum (68) values, it could be inferred that the perceived amount of overall teaching autonomy among participants ranged from moderate to high level. Yet, the standard deviation of 8.25, which was relatively high, suggested a wide distribution in the participants' judgments of their level of autonomy.

Still, because no certain thresholds were provided and there existed a variety in the perceived levels of autonomy of participants, it is beneficial to further analyze the obtained data via revealing the answers given by the participants to each item in Teaching Autonomy Scale as Marshall (2019) did. Also, a categorization of them according to their quantity could be taken as helpful if a clearer understanding of the autonomy levels of EFL teachers working in prep-schools of universities in Turkey is aimed to be reached.

4.1.1 The overview of the answers to teaching autonomy scale

In the Teaching Autonomy Scale, while certain items followed a regular scoring system, certain items followed a reversed one. Thus, instead of carrying out the regular scoring system (1 to 4) a reverse scoring system was used (4 to 1) while the mean scores of the answers were being calculated of these items. Yet, in this section, because the replies

given to each item in the TAS was reviewed, the number of answers for each point is revealed and observed, without making any changes on the system of scoring.

Table 5. Answer Distribution for Each Point of Item in Teaching Autonomy Scale

Points	Definitely True (1)	More or Less True (2)	More or Less False (3)	Definitely False (4)	Blank
Item 1**	32	40	17	3	-
Item 2**	15	53	17	7	-
Item 3**	5	23	50	14	-
Item 4**	29	39	20	4	-
Item 5**	9	32	38	13	-
Item 7**	22	34	25	11	-
Item 9**	4	20	40	28	-
Item 11**	7	42	33	10	-
Item 13**	8	17	35	31	1
Item 15**	46	32	12	1	1
Item 16**	30	37	19	6	-
Item 17**	17	26	39	10	-
Item 6*	12	43	30	6	1
Item 8*	18	31	27	16	-
Item 10*	14	41	30	7	-
Item 12*	6	17	35	34	-
Item 14*	5	18	39	30	-
Item 18*	6	9	37	40	-

*Curricular Autonomy
**General Teaching Autonomy

When the answer distribution for each point of item in TAS was reviewed, the following findings were obtained:

Being a determinant of general teaching autonomy, for item 1 (I am free to be creative in my teaching approach.), it could be observed that 17 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and only 3 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False) while 40 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True) and 32 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True). There were no blanks left for this item. Overall, it could be seen that there was a wide range of replies for item 1. Some participants (marked as Definitely True) believed that they had complete creative freedom in their teaching, whilst others

(marked as More or Less True or More or Less False) felt there were various degrees of restrictions. Only a few individuals (marked as Definitely False) believed that they lacked the freedom to choose an innovative teaching strategy.

Being a determinant of general teaching autonomy, for item 2 (The selection of student-learning activities in my class is under my control.) 15 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 53 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 17 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and only 7 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item and in general and a wide range of replies for item 2 was found. Some individuals (who marked as Definitely True) believed they had complete power over choosing student learning activities, whilst others (marked as More or Less True or More or Less False) believed they had varied degrees of influence or restrictions. Only a few individuals (marked as Definitely False) believed they had no influence over this component of their instruction.

Being a determinant of general teaching autonomy, for item 3 (I seldom use alternative procedures in my teaching.) 5 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 23 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 50 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and 14 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item. Overall, there existed a wide range of replies for it. While some people believed that they seldom employed alternate techniques, others frequently looked out for different approaches, which were indicated as Definitely False. The majority of participants (marked as More or Less False) did not believe that they seldom employed alternative methodologies, showing a readiness to adopt other teaching philosophies into their practices.

Being a determinant of general teaching autonomy, for item 4 (Standards of behavior in my classroom are set primarily by myself.) 29 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 39 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 20 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and 4 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item and overall, a wide range of replies were recieved. Some individuals (marked as Definitely True) believed that they had complete authority over establishing standards in the classroom, whilst others (marked as More or Less True or

More or Less False) believed they had varied degrees of influence or restrictions. Although small in number, some even revealed that they had no authority over establishing standards in the classroom (marked as Definitely False). The replies indicated that instructors had various degrees of autonomy when it came to establishing expectations and regulations in the classroom.

Being a determinant of general teaching autonomy, for item 5 (My job does not allow for much discretion on my part.) 9 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 32 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 38 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and 13 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item and there was a mixed distribution of replies for item 5 overall. While some participants believed that their jobs considerably limited their autonomy, others, being the majority, believed they had greater freedom to choose how they wanted to educate (marked as greater or Less False or Definitely False). Hence, it could be inferred from the answers obtained that depending on their experiences and the environments in which they operate, the participants perceived different levels of discretion in their teaching roles.

Being a determinant of curricular autonomy, for item 6 (In my teaching, I use my own guidelines and procedures.) 12 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 43 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 30 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and 6 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). 1 participant left this item blank. Overall, there existed a wide range of replies for item 6 and while some individuals encountered varied degrees of restrictions or external influences, others experienced complete liberty to apply their own rules and processes (marked as Definitely True or More or Less True). Only a few participants (marked as Definitely False) believed they lacked the freedom to follow their own rules and processes in their instructions.

Being a determinant of general teaching autonomy, for item 7 (In my situation, I have little say over the content and skills that are selected for teaching.) 22 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 34 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 25 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False), and 11 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item. Overall, there was a wide range of replies for item 7 and while some reported varied degrees of influence or autonomy, other

participants felt they had little control over the material and abilities they taught (perceived as Definitely False or More or Less True). A number of participants (marked as Definitely False) did not believe they had little influence and thought they had autonomy in choosing the subjects and methods of instruction.

Being a determinant of curricular autonomy, for item 8 (The scheduling of use of time in my classroom is under my control.) 18 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 31 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 27 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and 16 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item and in general, there was a wide range of replies for item 8. Certain individuals (marked as Definitely True) believed they had complete control over how the time was allocated in their classroom, whilst others (marked as More or Less True or More or Less False) believed they have varied degrees of restrictions or outside influences. A sizeable portion of participants (noted as Definitely False) did not believe they had any influence over the arrangement of time.

Being a determinant of general teaching autonomy, for item 9 (My teaching focuses on those goals and objectives I select myself.) only 4 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 20 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 40 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False), 28 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item. Overall, a wide range of replies for item 9 was found. Some participants (marked as Definitely True) believed they had complete control over developing teaching goals and objectives, whilst others (marked as More or Less True or More or Less False) believed they had varied degrees of restrictions or outside influences. Also, many participants (marked as Definitely False) felt they had little influence over creating goals and objectives.

Being a determinant of curricular autonomy, for item 10 (I follow my own guidelines on instruction.) 14 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 41 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 30 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and only 7 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item. Overall, there was a wide range of replies for item number 10. While some participants believed they fully adhered to their own educational rules (marked with Definitely True),

others believed their approach to training was limited or subjected to various degrees of influence (marked with More or Less True or More or Less False). A few individuals (rated as Definitely False) felt they did not adhere to their own rules of instruction.

Being a determinant of general teaching autonomy, for item 11 (In my situation, I have only limited latitude in how major problems are resolved.) 7 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 42 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 33 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and 10 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item and a wide range of replies for it was present in general. While some perceived varied degrees of influence or autonomy, other participants felt they had limited freedom in handling big problems (marked as Definitely False or More or Less False). Only a portion of participants believed they had unrestricted commendation and believed they could solve big problems on their own (classified as Definitely False).

Being a determinant of curricular autonomy, for item 12 (What I teach in my class is determined for the most part by myself.) 6 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 17 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 35 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and 34 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item, and overall, there existed a wide range of replies for it. Some participants (those who selected Definitely True) believed they had considerable control on the subject matter of their instruction, whilst others (those who marked More or Less True or More or Less False) believed that they held different degrees of influence or limitations. Quite a few participants (marked as Definitely False) believed they had no influence over what they taught.

Being a determinant of general teaching autonomy, for item 13 (In my class, I have little control over how classroom space is used.) 8 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 17 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 35 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and 31 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). 1 participant left a blank space for this item. The distribution of responses for question 13 was found as diverse overall. While the answers of certain participants revealed that they had limited control over classroom space usage (marked as Definitely True or More or Less True),

others perceived varying degrees of influence or autonomy (marked as More or Less False or Definitely False) for the same concept. Furthermore, a high number of participants did not feel restricted in determining how classroom space was used (marked as Definitely False).

Being a determinant of curricular autonomy, for item 14 (The materials I use in my class are chosen for the most part by myself.) 5 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 18 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 39 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and 30 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item and in general, there was a wide range of replies obtained for item 14. Some participants (marked as Definitely True) believed they had great power over the educational materials they chose, whilst others (marked as More or Less True or More or Less False) believed that they had different degrees of influence or constraints. A considerable number of participants (rated as Definitely False) held the belief that they had no say in the selection of the contents.

Being a determinant of general teaching autonomy, for item 15 (The evaluation and assessment activities used in my class are selected by people other than myself.) 46 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 32 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 12 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and only 1 participant marked point 4 (Definitely False). 1 participant left this item blank and overall, there existed a wide range of replies gathered for it. The majority of participants believed that others decided on evaluation and assessment activities (marked as Definitely True). Some participants believed they had varied levels of autonomy or influence on evaluation design (noted as Definitely False or More or Less False), while others believed that they had no control over the selction of assessment procedures.

Being a determinant of general teaching autonomy, for item 16 (I select the teaching methods and strategies I use with my students.) 30 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 37 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 19 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and only 6 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item and there existed a wide range of replies for it. Some participants (marked as Definitely True) believed that they had great control over the

methods and strategies they chose to use in their classrooms, whilst others (marked as More or Less True or More or Less False) believed that they had different degrees of influence or restrictions. Also, a lower percentage of individuals (marked as Definitely False) believed that they had no influence over the selection of teaching techniques utilized in their classrooms.

Being a determinant of general teaching autonomy, for item 17 (I have little say over the scheduling of use of time in my classroom.) 17 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 26 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 39 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and 10 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item and a wide range of distribution of responses was found. While some participants revealed that they had limited control over time-scheduling (marked as Definitely True or More or Less True), others perceived varying levels of influence or autonomy (marked as More or Less False or Definitely False). A sizable portion of participants did not feel constrained in how they chose to utilize time in their classrooms (marked as Definitely False).

Being a determinant of curricular autonomy, for item 18 (The content and skills taught in my class are those I select.) only 6 participants marked point 1 (Definitely True), 9 participants marked point 2 (More or Less True), 37 participants marked point 3 (More or Less False) and 40 participants marked point 4 (Definitely False). There were no blanks for this item and overall, there existed a wide range of replies for item 18. Some individuals (marked as Definitely True) believed they had major influence over curriculum choices, whilst others (marked as More or Less True or More or Less False) believed they had different degrees of influence or restrictions. A significant portion of individuals believed they had no influence over choices regarding the curriculum (rated as Definitely False).

After a thorough examination of Table 5 and going through the answers as well as their distributions as a whole, a further examination of each answer given to the items of TAS according to its subcategories was found essential so as to gain an insight of the whole, to make inferences and implications as well as to reach conclusions.

4.1.2 The overview and interpretation of general teaching autonomy

Overall, when the items related to general autonomy were viewed, it could be seen that even though certain possible influences or restrictions were prominent, when the answers were observed, the majority of the participants felt free to be creative in their teaching approach, while a smaller number of the participants reported the opposite.

Furthermore, when it came to the selection of student learning activities in the participants` classes, the majority of them stated that even though a level of indecisiveness was prominent in certain answers, they were the ones making the calls in relation to this subcategory. The remaining participants felt more restricted when it came to selecting the student learning activities carried out in their classes.

When moved on to the dimension of rare utilization of alternative procedures in teaching, it was revealed through the answers of participants that the majority of them were carrying out this kind of procedure in their teaching. Again, for this dimension, even though it was minor, a certain level of hesitation was visible in the answers. Lastly, concerning this dimension, it was visible that nearly a third of the participants felt less free to utilize alternative procedures.

When the dimension of setting the standards of behavior in the classroom of the participants was reviewed, it was revealed through the answers that the majority of the participants felt in charge of this domain, even though minor influences or restrictions were felt against this freedom. On the other hand, being in the minority, certain participants revealed the opposite outcome.

When the level of discretion on the part of participants related to their jobs was reviewed, a wider dispersion of answers were obtained. By nearly dividing the participants into two halves, the majority of them felt that their job allowed discretion on their part, whereas the rest revealed the opposite. The majority of the group supported the idea that even though minor restrictions or influences from outside were present, their job allowed for discretion. The second biggest part of the answers revealed, though, that even though they seldom felt their job allowed them a level of discretion, this was not the overall case.

When asked if the participants had any say over the content and skills taught, it was revealed that the majority of them thought that they did not, whereas the remaining participants thought the opposite. The majority of the answers revealed that even though they seldom felt free to choose the content and skills to be taught in their classes, this situation was rare. The second-biggest answer group showed that the participants felt as if they had no control over the skills and content that are taught in their classes whatsoever. The remaining answers showed otherwise, with some revealing a bigger influence on selecting these items yet encountering small restrictions or influences, and others, who were in the minority, feeling completely free in this dimension.

When it came to goals and objectives selected by participants, the majority of the participants thought that they had little to no power over which goals and objectives were selected as an outcome of their teaching process. The majority of the answers revealed that even though they held a certain power over these items, it was too small to be considered their own selection. The second-biggest answer group even thought that they had no influence on these items at all. The remaining answers showed otherwise, and some answers revealed that even though certain possible restrictions were encountered from time to time, in general, they felt they had control over the goals and objectives of their teaching. Only a very small group felt that they had total say over the goals and objectives of their teaching.

When the level of latitude the participants had on how major problems were resolved was observed, the majority of the participants agreed that they had little to no latitude on this item. In general, the participants felt that even though they rarely had a say in major issues, this wasn't common enough to say that they had enough latitude in the resolution of these problems. The rest of the answers showed a different outcome, with some indicating a greater latitude on the major problems while just being influenced by certain possible restrictions, and the others indicating a complete latitude on the major problems to be resolved.

When asked about how much control the participants had over how classroom space was used, the majority of the participants felt that they had a lot of control over this situation. While some of the answers indicated that possible minor restrictions could be

encountered, in general, control over this aspect belonged to them. The others revealed that they had full control over this item. The remaining answers, which were in the minority, showed that the participants felt little to no control over how the space in their classroom was used.

When the evaluation and assessment activities used in the classes of the participants were under question, it was revealed that the majority of the participants` class evaluation and assessment activities were selected by people other than themselves. Only a minority of participants revealed that they had a say or indirect influence in this dimension.

When asked if they selected their own teaching methods and strategies, the majority of the participants agreed that even though they encountered some possible limitations, in general, the given notion was true. The second largest answer group also completely agreed with this notion, and only a certain number of participants agreed that even though they seldom felt free while doing so, generally they encountered limitations and did not feel completely free while selecting their own teaching methods and strategies. Lastly, as the minority, certain participants revealed that they were not free in the selection of their own teaching methods and strategies.

As the last item in general teaching autonomy, when the scheduling of time in the classroom was observed, it was revealed that the answers were again nearly separated into two halves. Yet, the majority of the participants thought that other than minor restrictions, they had control over the scheduling of time in their classrooms. Some, even though they were in the minority, came to the conclusion that they were completely free in this aspect. As the second-biggest answer group, certain participants thought that even though they had freedom for this item from time to time, they did not have freedom in the scheduling of time in their classes in general, and some, which were in the minority, revealed no control at all concerning this item. Still, the majority of the answers revealed that participants felt that they had control over the scheduling of time usage in their classes.

In previous studies where the physical arrangement of classrooms, communication, behavior control, and instructional management were studied as aspects of classroom management, it was revealed that even though Turkey's very centralized system of

education, which carefully regulates the system, was thought to be a possible constraint on the degree of autonomy for instructors, they demonstrated a moderate level of autonomy (Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2020; Yolcu & Akar-Vural, 2021). Especially raising questions on certain items found in the scale, such as instructors` opinions on assessment processes, objectives, goals, and content selection of the class, the results obtained regarding the general teacher autonomy from the research at hand had an approximate compatibility with previous research on the subject when the wide distribution of answers was observed above.

4.1.3 The overview and interpretation of curriculum autonomy

Moving on to the subcategory of curricular autonomy, when asked if the participants used their own guidelines and procedures in their teaching, it was revealed that the majority of the participants agreed to this notion even though they encountered possible restrictions from time to time. As the second largest answer group, a number of the participants revealed that they did not feel completely free when using their own guidelines and procedures all the time and seldom had this freedom. Lastly, being in the minority, certain participants felt completely restricted when utilizing their own guidelines and procedures, and the rest felt the opposite.

When it was asked if the participants` scheduling of the usage of time in their classroom was up to them or not, it could be observed that the given answers were nearly separated into two halves. Yet, it was revealed that the majority of the participants agreed that even though they encountered minor restrictions, in general, they had a certain level of freedom when it came to this matter. Also, certain participants agreed that they had full control over this notion. Still, as the second largest group, a number of participants agreed that, in general, they had a lack of control over this notion, even though they felt limited freedom from time to time. Also, being in the minority, certain participants agreed that they felt no control over this notion.

When asked if the participants followed their own guidelines on their instruction, it was revealed that even though they encountered possible restrictions, in general, the majority of the participants followed their own guidelines. Also, certain participants agreed that they were completely free to follow their own guidelines when instructing. Yet, the

second-largest answer group revealed that even though they seldom felt the freedom to follow their own guidelines, they did not feel completely free regarding this notion. Lastly, being in the minority, certain participants revealed that they did not feel free to utilize their own guidelines at all.

When asked if what is taught in their classes is determined by the participants themselves or not, it was revealed that the majority of the participants did not agree with this notion. Being the largest group of answers, participants agreed that even though they seldom had a say in the given selection, they in general lacked the freedom to determine what was going to be taught in their lessons. As the second largest group, a number of participants agreed that they had no control over this notion. On the other hand, certain participants agreed that even though from time to time they came across possible restrictions, they in general had a say in the matter. Lastly, as the minority, certain participants agreed that they had a say in the given notion.

When the participants were asked about the selection of materials used in their class, it was revealed that they did not have a say over the selection of materials. The majority of them agreed that even though they had little control over the notion, it was not considerable. The second-largest answer group revealed that they felt no control over the notion. On the other hand, even though small, a group of participants agreed that even though they encountered certain limitations, they in general had greater control over the material to be chosen. Lastly, being in the minority, certain participants agreed to the notion that they had full control over which materials they used in their own class.

As for the last notion of curriculum autonomy, when asked if the content and skills taught in the class were selected by the participants, it was revealed that the majority of them thought that they had no say over this notion. Also, the second-largest answer group revealed that even though they felt a limited amount of freedom related to this notion, they in general also lacked the ability to select which content and skills were going to be taught in their lessons. Only a certain number of participants felt that even though they encountered some limitations, they were in general free to carry out this selection, and the rest, being in the minority, felt completely free in this notion.

When the overall answers given for the subcategory of curriculum autonomy are reviewed, it can be found that even though not as much as general teaching autonomy, the answers showed a somewhat wide distribution, and when it came to classroom content and evaluation procedures, teachers did not feel as free as in the other dimensions of curricular autonomy. Yet, the results obtained reflect a useful set of descriptive analyses of the levels of autonomy teachers` who took part in the research had. Also, when other studies done on the part of curriculum autonomy teachers in Turkey held were reviewed, it could be clearly stated that there is an approximate compliance with the obtained data in this research since it is true that the level of curriculum autonomy is constrained by Turkey's centralist educational system and the absence of clear guidelines promoting teachers' active participation in the construction of curricula, even though teachers in Turkey try to carry out certain alterations to the curriculum based on their choices and the needs of the learners they work with (Bümen et al., 2014).

4.1.4 The overview and interpretation of overall teaching autonomy

After displaying the outcomes related to both curricular and general teaching autonomy to reach the whole, comparing the sum of these interpretations to previous studies is necessary to create further implications and to achieve a better understating of the overall teaching autonomy of the participants.

Thus, when the previous studies were reviewed, it could be found that even though the extent of autonomy for instructors may be constrained by Turkey's strictly regulated, highly centralized educational system, teachers in Turkey were found to be displaying a moderate level of autonomy (Ay & Boz, 2022).

When compared with the results at hand, together with the wide distributions of answers obtained from the subcategories of general teaching and curricular autonomy, it could be inferred that a somewhat similar outcome was obtained for EFL teachers working in the prep schools of universities in Turkey. Still, when it comes to understanding the autonomy levels of these instructors, it is crucial to take a variety of aspects into consideration to reach a conclusion and to reflect upon this matter due to its complex nature. Thus, it could be stated that the complexity of autonomy in the Turkish educational setting must be taken into account, along with the impact of external

leadership positions and teacher perspectives (Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2020) when making any further inferences related to this subject, which can determine the increase or decrease in the levels of autonomy that instructors demonstrate in their professional careers.

4.2 The Correlation Between the Autonomy Levels of Prep School EFL Teachers Working in Universities in Turkey in Relation and Year of Experience

In order to figure out the relationship between the two variants of teaching autonomy and year of experience of the participants, one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) test was carried out and the correlation between these two aspects was revealed.

Table 6. Comparison of Teaching Autonomy Scale Score by Years of Experiences

		N	$\bar{X}$	SD.	F	P
Curriculum Autonomy	1 - 7 years	23	13.91	2.95	0.143	0.934
	8 - 12 years	24	13.42	2.90		
	13 - 20 years	24	13.71	4.16		
	Above 20 years	21	13.29	4.04		
General Teaching Autonomy	1 - 7 years	23	31.70	5.30	0.393	0.758
	8 - 12 years	24	31.21	5.58		
	13 - 20 years	24	31.46	4.85		
	Above 20 years	21	30.00	6.63		
Overall Teaching Autonomy	1 - 7 years	23	45.61	7.50	0.318	0.812
	8 - 12 years	24	44.63	7.46		
	13 - 20 years	24	45.17	8.12		
	Above 20 years	21	43.29	10.22		

One-Way ANOVA, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Hence, when the overall teaching autonomy average score of the individuals was evaluated with the related test according to the years of professional experience, it was found that:

Participants who had an experience of teaching between 1 to 7 years had a mean score of curriculum autonomy as $\bar{X}$ =13.91, participants who had a year of experience as 8 to 12 years had a mean score of $\bar{X}$ = 13.42, participants who had a year of experience as 13-20 years had a mean score of $\bar{X}$ = 13.71 and lastly, participants who had a year of experience

over 20 years had a mean score of $\bar{X} = 13.29$ curriculum autonomy. Hence, the curriculum autonomy average score did not differ significantly when compared with the duration of professional career the participants had ($p>0.05$).

Participants who had an experience of teaching between 1 to 7 years had a mean score of general teaching autonomy as $\bar{X} = 31.70$, participants who had a year of experience as 8 to 12 years had a mean score of $\bar{X} = 31.21$, participants who had a year of experience as 13-20 years had a mean score of $\bar{X} = 31.46$ and lastly, participants whose year of experience was over 20 years had a mean score of $\bar{X} = 30.00$ general teaching autonomy. Hence, the general teaching autonomy average score did not differ significantly when compared with the duration of professional career the participants had ($p>0.05$).

Lastly, when the overall teaching autonomy was measured in accordance with year of experience of instructors, participants who had an experience of teaching between 1 to 7 years had a mean score of $\bar{X} = 45.61$, participants who had a year of experience as 8 to 12 years had a mean score of $\bar{X} = 44.63$, participants who had a year of experience as 13-20 years had a mean score of $\bar{X} = 45.17$ and finally, participants who had a year of experience over 20 years had a mean score of $\bar{X} = 43.29$ overall teaching autonomy. Hence, the overall teaching autonomy average score did not differ significantly when compared with the duration of professional career the participants had ($p>0.05$).

In previous research conducted on the relationship between autonomy levels of teachers and the length of their professional career, it was found that instructors who had a longer period of experience in teaching demonstrated a higher degree of autonomy and a bigger amount of control on decision making processes in their practices of teaching due to a heightened level of confidence and development in their pedagogical expertise over time (Zhang et al, 2021). Yet, in the study at hand, no significant correlation between the level of autonomy of the teachers and their year of expertise was found. Similarly, in research conducted by Pearson & Hall (1993) and in the research conducted by Ipek Şahin (2017), this time in the context of Turkey, neither of the studies showed a correlation between teachers` autonomy and their experience in teaching.

The reason behind the mismatches found in between the studies listed above may root from lack of self – improvement on teachers` behalf, state of mind the instructors are at,

like burnout or levels of self-efficacy, the materials teachers work with and the contextual or institutional constraints. It is important to remark that according to some research, school administrators may feel they have more influence over teachers than they do autonomy, which highlights the importance of paying more attention to the autonomy-supportive atmosphere in educational settings since the correlation between teacher autonomy and teaching experience emphasizes the need of giving instructors the required autonomy and support to improve their teaching practices and level of work satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2021 & Vangrieken & Kyndt, 2019).

4.3 The Correlation Between the Autonomy Levels of Prep School EFL Teachers Working in Universities in Turkey in Relation and Degree of Education

In order to figure out the relationship between the two variants of teaching autonomy and degree of education of the participants, one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) test was carried out and the correlation between these two aspects was revealed.

Table 7. Comparison of Teaching Autonomy Scale Score by Degree of Education

		N	$\bar{X}$	SD.	F	P
Curriculum Autonomy	Bachelor's Degree	18	12.83	3.01	9.317	<0.001***
	MA	61	13.05	2.94		
	PHD	13	17.15	4.56		
General Teaching Autonomy	Bachelor's Degree	18	31.39	4.15	4.142	0.019*
	MA	61	30.23	5.63		
	PHD	13	34.92	5.47		
Overall Teaching Autonomy	Bachelor's Degree	18	44.22	6.23	6.935	0.002**
	MA	61	43.28	7.77		
	PHD	13	52.08	9.45		

One-Way ANOVA, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Hence, when the overall teaching autonomy score of the participants was evaluated with the related test according to their education level:

It was revealed that when observed for the curriculum autonomy subcategory, participants with a Bachelor`s degree (BA) had a mean score of 12.83 and a standard deviation of 3.01, the ones with a Master`s degree (MA) had a slightly higher mean score of 13.05 and

a standard deviation of 2.94 which showed a smaller difference in curricular autonomy of the participants who had these two degrees of education. Yet lastly, participants with a doctorate degree (PhD) had the highest mean score of 17.15 and a standard deviation of 4.56, indicating that the participants who obtained their PhD were more autonomous when it came to curriculum autonomy. Furthermore, in the scores of this subcategory a significant difference was found in between the three groups since the one-way ANOVA test was highly significant ($F= 9.317$, $p<0.001$).

It was further revealed that when observed for general teaching autonomy, which stood for classroom construct, participants with a Bachelor`s degree (BA) had a mean score of 31.39 and a standard deviation of 4.15, the ones with a Master`s degree (MA) had a slightly lower mean score of 30.23 and a standard deviation of 5.63 which showed a smaller difference in general teaching autonomy of the participants who had these two different degrees of education. Lastly, participants with a doctorate degree (PhD) had the highest mean score of 34.92 and a standard deviation of 5.47, indicating that the participants who obtained their PhD were more autonomous when it came to their general teaching, in other words, classroom conduct. Furthermore, in the scores of this subcategory as well, an evident difference was found in between the three groups since the one-way ANOVA test was highly significant ($F= 4.142$, $p<0.019$).

Finally, it was revealed that when observed for overall autonomy, participants with a Bachelor`s degree (BA) had a mean score of 44.22 and a standard deviation of 6.23, the ones with a Master`s degree (MA) had a slightly lower mean score of 43.28 and a standard deviation of 7.77 which showed a smaller difference in overall autonomy of the participants who had these two degrees of education. Lastly, participants with a doctorate degree (PhD) had the highest overall mean score of 52.08 and a standard deviation of 9.45, indicating that the participants who obtained their PhD were more autonomous when it came to overall teaching autonomy. Furthermore, in all the scores obtained from TAS, a remarkable difference was found in between the three groups since the one-way ANOVA test was found highly significant ($F= 6.935$, $p<0.002$).

In previous research conducted on the relationship between the autonomy levels of teachers and their degree of education the conclusion that higher-educated instructors

frequently displayed greater levels of autonomy in their practices of teaching was arrived (Benson, 2010). Accordingly so, the study at hand revealed that especially the instructors who have completed their PhDs, demonstrated a higher level of overall teaching autonomy, in the case of university level EFL teachers teaching in prep-schools in Turkey. Also, these teachers displayed a greater autonomy when it came to curriculum and general teaching (classroom conduct) subcategories of autonomy. On the other hand, as could be seen in the findings, graduates of MA demonstrated a higher level of autonomy when it came to curriculum autonomy, yet fell behind a small amount when it came to overall and general teaching autonomies. The reason behind this can be related to a heightened level of information obtained through higher education about organizational decision making yet still being bound to the state of collaborative relationships between teacher, institutional and systematic restrictions as well as individual differences since the school setting and structural restraints can have an impact on the link between education level and teacher autonomy. In addition, the degree of teacher autonomy might range across different topics and educational domains, which can also suggest an impact on the results obtained (Benson, 2010; Felayabi et al., 2022).

4.4 The Level of Critical Thinking Dispositions of Prep School EFL Teachers Working in Universities in Turkey

In order to understand the level of critical thinking dispositions of the university level EFL teachers actively performing their profession in prep-schools in Turkey, a descriptive analysis of the Critical Thinking Disposition Scale was carried out. The evaluated scores of the individuals who took part in the research can be found in the table below:

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of Critical Thinking Disposition Scale

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD.	Min.	Max.
Critical Thinking Disposition	92	44.90	9.80	17	55
Critical Openness	92	28.52	6.42	8	35
Reflective Skepticism	92	16.38	3.67	7	20

To reach a better understanding of the table above, a more thorough analysis regarding the evaluation process of the given scale is necessary. As the creator of the CTDS, Sosu (2013) claimed that a full dispositional score is possible to be received with an interval of

11 to 55 points, which is obtained through the addition of the results of each of the eleven questions` value asked in the related scale. According to his disclosure, when the evaluation process is done, 11 to 34 points would demonstrate low disposition; 35 to 44 points would demonstrate moderate; and 45 to 55 points would demonstrate a high disposition of critical thinking among the participants.

Furthermore, in addition to the overall processing of the scale, examining the subscales which belong to the CTDS is a must if one aims a good strategy. Thus, the two subcategories, critical openness and reflective skepticism, should also be taken under observation for processing in accordance with the previously explained disclosure. As the first subcategory, critical openness would have the thresholds respectively as follows: low levels from 7 to 21 points, moderate from 22 to 28 points and finally high levels from 29 to 35 points; the points in total ranging from 7 to 35. Likewise, the secondary subcategory reflective skepticism would have its thresholds as follows: low levels from 4 to 12 points, moderate from 13 to 16 points and finally high levels from 17 to 20 points; ranging from 4 to 20 points.

When the disclosures explained above are compared with the actual results obtained, it could be seen that since the average score of critical openness as a subcategory obtained from the dimension of critical thinking disposition was found as 28.52 and standard deviation as 6.42, the level of critical openness of EFL teachers who participated in this study can be identified as moderate level. Yet, it is important to remark that the result is close to the higher category with only 0.48 points below the point 29 which is taken as the threshold of high-level critical openness.

Moving on to the next sub-category, the average score of reflective skepticism was found as 16.38 and standard deviation as 3.67. According to these findings, the participant EFL teachers` reflective skepticism can be considered as moderate, yet considerably closer to higher level of reflective skepticism, as the found result is in between the points of 16 and 17, 17 being the threshold for higher level of reflective skepticism. Furthermore, the standard deviation of the given answers was found a smaller amount, implying that there is a smaller dispersion in the given answers in between teachers who took part in the research when compared to critical openness.

Lastly, the overall average score of critical thinking disposition of the EFL teachers working in university prep-schools was found as 44.90. Thus, as can be seen in Table 1, the overall critical thinking dispositions of the participants can be considered as moderate, yet, it is once again necessary to highlight the fact that there is only 0.10 points of a difference between the obtained result and 45 points, which is the threshold for a high level of critical thinking disposition overall.

When the descriptive results of the research at hand is compared with others conducted in previous years, it could be seen that certain similarities and differences are found in the results. In one research conducted in Turkey through a different scale evaluating the critical thinking dispositions of secondary school teachers, it was found that participant teachers had the highest critical thinking disposition in the subcategories of analyticity and inquisitiveness; furthermore, they had the lowest CTD levels in the subcategory of open mindedness. When the characteristics these subcategories cover are observed, one can come to the conclusion that these could be taken as of similar attributions as reflective skepticism and critical openness, respectively. While the former findings align, a difference could be seen in the findings of the latter concept. Additionally, the general critical thinking dispositions of the participant teachers were found relatively low at the end of this research (Sağlam et al., 2017).

This overall result also differs from the one obtained from the research at hand in which the participants were found to have a moderate level of CTD. It had been highlighted that the development of critical thinking in students through instructors can be impacted by factors including instructional abilities, teacher attitudes, understanding of critical thinking, influence from coworkers and management, and types of evaluation (Nguyen et al., 2023). Thus, one can reach the inference that the differences found in between the studies could stem from similar reasons from evaluation processes that ought to be followed throughout the duration of the education process, the characteristics (beliefs, experiences, burnout levels etc.) as well as the level of awareness of practitioners, their own experiences to institutional flexibilities, since practitioners themselves can also be considered as learners within their professional development. Lastly, another reason for the differentiation in the findings can be taken as teachers' epistemological views,

particularly their comprehension of constructivism and science, since these may have an impact on their critical thinking abilities (Kucukaydin et al., 2023).

In Coşkun (2022)`s research where the perceptions of Turkish pre-service teachers on critical thinking was sought for, the findings revealed an overall mid-level critical thinking disposition among them which aligned with the findings of the research at hand. Hence, since through deliberate education and training critical thinking abilities may be acquired (Halpern, 1998), this correspondence can imply an insight on how much the critical thinking abilities in the teacher training programs are promoted and it can also imply an insight on the further applications of these abilities by the in-service practitioners in the university level.

Lastly, in another study on critical thinking levels conducted with university professors in Iran, the results obtained revealed that based on the initial findings, the average score of the participants in terms of critical thinking ability appeared to be more or less 46 points out of 80 which suggested that overall, the participants demonstrated an average level of critical thinking proficiency (Khodabakhshzadeh et al., 2017). This result corresponds with the outcome of the research at hand even though the contexts in which the two studies were applied differ. Furthermore, since the majority of the research on critical thinking dispositions have been on pre-service teachers and teachers who come from different levels than universities, the study at hand provides a better understanding of the CTD levels of university level EFL teachers in Turkey, further creating a space where this characteristic can be compared with other backgrounds.

4.5 The Correlation between the Level of Critical Thinking Dispositions of Prep School EFL Teachers Working in Universities in Turkey and Their Teaching Experience

In order to achieve results related to the correlation between the CTD levels of participants and their years of experience, first the years of experience they had was categorized into 4 main group in the demographic data. These categorizations were between 1 to 7, 8 to 12, 13 to 20 and above 20 years. Later on, the obtained data on years of experience were compared and were accordingly categorized with the results of CTDS and its subcategories. Hence, in short, the mean score of critical thinking disposition of

the individuals in the study was evaluated with the one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) test according to the duration of professional experience:

Table 9. Comparison of Critical Thinking Disposition Scale Score by Years of Experiences

		N	$\bar{X}$	SD.	F	P
Critical Openness	1-7 years	23	28.52	5.95	0.059	0.981
	8 - 12 years	24	28.08	7.44		
	13 - 20 years	24	28.67	6.13		
	Above 20 years	21	28.86	6.43		
Reflective Skepticism	1-7 years	23	16.39	3.35	0.050	0.985
	8 - 12 years	24	16.17	3.86		
	13 - 20 years	24	16.58	4.01		
	Above 20 years	21	16.38	3.64		
Critical Thinking Disposition	1-7 years	23	44.91	9.03	0.052	0.984
	8 - 12 years	24	44.25	10.99		
	13 - 20 years	24	45.25	9.89		
	Above 20 years	21	45.24	9.78		

One-Way ANOVA, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

When the mean score of critical thinking disposition of the individuals in the study was evaluated with the related test according to the duration of professional experience (year of experience),

Average score of critical openness of individuals with professional experience between 1-7 years was found as $\bar{X} = 28.52$, average score of individuals with 8-12 years of professional experience was found as $\bar{X} = 28.08$, average score of individuals with 13-20 years of professional experience was found as $\bar{X} = 28.67$ and average score of individuals with more than 20 years of professional experience was found as $\bar{X} = 28.86$. The average score of critical openness did not differ significantly according to the duration of professional experience of the individuals (p>0.05).

Average score of reflective skepticism of individuals with professional experience between 1-7 years was found as $\bar{X} = 16.39$, average score of individuals with 8-12 years of professional experience was found as $\bar{X} = 16.17$, average score of individuals with 13-20 years of professional experience was found as $\bar{X} = 16.58$ and average score of

individuals with more than 20 years of professional experience was found as $\bar{X} = 16.38$. The average score of reflective skepticism did not differ significantly according to the duration of professional experience of the individuals ($p>0.05$).

Average score of critical thinking disposition of individuals with professional experience between 1-7 years was found as $\bar{X} = 44.91$, average score of individuals with 8-12 years of professional experience was found as $\bar{X} = 44.25$, average score of individuals with 13-20 years of professional experience was found as $\bar{X} = 44.25$ and average score of individuals with more than 20 years of professional experience was found as $\bar{X} = 45.24$. The average score of critical thinking disposition did not differ significantly according to the duration of professional experience of the individuals ($p>0.05$).

In the previous studies conducted on the relationship between teachers` CTD and their teaching experience, the critical thinking dispositions like problem-solving abilities, analytical thinking, and open-mindedness were found more prevalent among teachers with greater classroom experience Zhang et al. (2021). Furthermore, in another study conducted by Blumen & Blumen (2022) it was revealed that there existed a positive and important correlation amongst CTD and pedagogical practice. Yet, the findings of the study at hand did not see an increased level of CTD as the participants` years of experience increased.

This difference in findings could stem from a variety of reasons since previous research has also concluded that the development of critical thinking abilities may be influenced by instructional strategies, instructional ideas, and educational environments (Zhou & Lin, 2019; Aizikovitsh-Udi & Cheng, 2015). The strict standardization of the education and evaluation processes which involves all the mentioned possible factors above may have an impact on lack of correlation between critical thinking dispositions and experience in teaching of the participants. Another reason can also be stated as the shift that occurred in the later years of the teacher training programs and societal understandings with regard to an encouragement towards CTD which may have an impact that have enhanced the level of CTDs of less experienced teachers, making the results obtained from each group similar.

4.6 The Correlation between the Level of Critical Thinking Dispositions of Prep School EFL Teachers Working in Universities in Turkey and Their Level of Education

In order to reveal the correlation between the education levels of participants and their CTD levels, first the degree of education they had was categorized into 3 main groups in the demographic data. These categorizations were: Bachelor`s degree, Master`s degree and PhD. Later, the obtained data on the level of education the participants had were compared and were accordingly categorized with the results of CTDS together with its subcategories. Thereafter, the mean score of critical thinking disposition of the individuals in the study was evaluated with the one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) test in accordance with the level of education:

Table 10. Comparison of Critical Thinking Disposition Scale Score by Degree of Education

		N	$\bar{X}$	SD.	F	P
Critical Openness	Bachelor's Degree	18	26.22	7.73	1.884	0.158
	MA	61	29.39	5.51		
	PHD	13	27.62	7.95		
Reflective Skepticism	Bachelor's Degree	18	15.28	4.71	1.030	0.361
	MA	61	16.69	3.13		
	PHD	13	16.46	4.41		
Critical Thinking Disposition	Bachelor's Degree	18	41.50	12.20	1.592	0.209
	MA	61	46.08	8.30		
	PHD	13	44.08	12.18		

One-Way ANOVA, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

When the mean score of critical thinking disposition of the participants in the study was evaluated with the related test according to their education level (degree of education),

The average score of critical openness of the people educated at the undergraduate (Bachelor's degree) level was found as $\bar{X} = 26.22$, the average score of the people educated at the graduate level (MA) was found as $\bar{X} = 29.39$ and the average score of the people educated at the doctorate (PhD) level was found as $\bar{X} = 27.62$. Thus, it is revealed

that critical openness mean score did not differ significantly according to the education level of the individuals who participated in the study at hand ($p>0.05$).

The average score of reflective skepticism of the people educated at the undergraduate (Bachelor's degree) level was found as $\bar{X} = 15.28$, the average score of the people educated at the graduate level (MA) was found as $\bar{X} = 16.69$ and the average score of the people educated at the doctorate (PhD) level was found as $\bar{X} = 16.46$. Hence, reflective skepticism mean score did not differ significantly according to the education level of the individuals who took part in the research at hand ($p>0.05$).

Lastly, the average score of critical thinking disposition of the people educated at the undergraduate (Bachelor's degree) level was found as $\bar{X} = 41.50$, the average score of the people educated at the graduate level (MA) was found as $\bar{X} = 46.08$ and the average score of the people educated at the doctorate (PhD) level was found as $\bar{X} = 44.08$. Hence, the overall critical thinking disposition mean score did not differ significantly according to the education level of the individuals who participated in this study ($p>0.05$).

In the previous studies conducted, the relevance between the level of education teachers had and their critical thinking dispositions showed mostly an indirect relation. Even though the levels of critical thinking dispositions of teachers were investigated, a lack of data upon the level of education of in-service teachers and its correlation with CTD is prominent. Yet, within the studies which showed an indirect link between these two aspects, certain qualities in teacher education were highlighted. Especially in the training programs, teachers` CTD levels have been closely observed and it had been highlighted that teacher educators could design learning experiences which make it possible for their learners to develop both critical thinking skills and dispositions (Paul, 1995). This indicates that the education a teacher receives can be a possible indicator of their CTD levels, since there could be studies found which draw the conclusion that there is a direct proportion between academic success and CTD levels of pre-service teachers (Karagöl & Bekmezci, 2015).

Still, even though certain studies conducted indirectly shows a direct proportion between CTD and education of (primarily pre-service) teachers from a variety of disciplines and levels, in the study at hand, there was no direct correlation of degree or length of education

on the CTD levels of university level prep-school EFL teachers working in Turkey. Moreover, being a study that gathered data from the aforementioned group alone, the findings obtained for this subtitle presents an insight of the correlation between the two aspects for the EFL teachers working in university prep-schools group only, creating a requirement for further studies to be compared with the data gathered in this one.

4.7 The Correlation between the Autonomy Levels and Level of Critical Thinking Dispositions of Prep School EFL Teachers Working in Universities in Turkey

In order to figure out the correlation between the overall teaching autonomy levels of EFL teachers working in prep schools of universities in Turkey, and critical thinking dispositions of them, together with the subcategories of both aspects, the Pearson correlation test was applied to both scales.

Table 9. Correlation Analysis Between Teaching Autonomy and Critical Thinking Disposition Scale Scores

		Overall Teaching Autonomy	**Curriculum Autonomy**	**General Teaching Autonomy**	**Critical Thinking Disposition**	**Reflective Scepticism**	**Critical Opennes**
Overall Teaching Autonomy	R	1					
	P						
Curriculum Autonomy	R	.859***	1				
	P	<.001					
General Teaching Autonomy	R	.946***	.647***	1			
	P	<.001	<.001				
Critical Thinking Disposition	R	.051	.115	.004	1		
	P	.626	.274	.972			
Reflective Skepticism	R	.039	.102	.019	.950***	1	
	P	.710	.333	.858	<.001		
Critical Openness	R	.056	.129	-.023	.984***	.880***	1
	p	.595	.219	.825	<.001	<.001	

Pearson correlation, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

When the relationship between the teaching autonomy and critical thinking disposition scale scores was evaluated with the related test, it was found that:

Overall teaching autonomy and critical thinking disposition had a very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.051$, $p = 0.626$) and thus was found as not significant statistical wise ($p > 0.05$). In a similar vein, curriculum autonomy and critical thinking disposition had a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.115$, $p = 0.274$), which was also found insignificant statistically. Lastly, general teaching autonomy and critical thinking disposition displayed a very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.004$, $p = 0.972$), which made it insignificant statistical wise.

In light of the above findings, when the previous studies conducted upon the relationship between the correlation between teacher autonomy and critical thinking dispositions of teachers in other contexts are reviewed, it was found that overall, teachers who were more autonomous in their teachings were more prone to possess a higher degree of CTD (Vangrieken & Kyndt, 2019). Yet, these results did not correspond with the obtained results of the study at hand, since no significant correlation between the autonomy levels and CTDs of EFL teachers working in prep-schools of universities in Turkey was found. Therefore, it would be beneficial to highlight that, aspects such as teaching experience, autonomy, and CTDs can be affected by variables like cooperation degrees between teachers and certain areas of autonomy (Vangrieken & Kyndt, 2019). Thus, the probability underneath why significant correlation was not discovered in this study could vary from the teaching experiences, institutional constraints, teaching methodologies, teacher training, subject matter, measurement limitations and individual differences.

All in all, even though a theoretically favorable link between instructors' critical thinking tendencies and teaching autonomy may be anticipated, many variables, including environmental, institutional, and individual characteristics, might affect this relationship. It is crucial to remember that although correlation analyses are crucial, they do not always suggest causality, and it is crucial to take into account the difficulties and constraints associated with interpreting the findings.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study aimed to demonstrate the levels of two highly desirable characteristics of EFL teachers, teacher autonomy and critical thinking disposition and the correlation between these two characteristics for the specific group of university level EFL teachers working in four different university's prep-schools in Turkey. The impact of year of experience and level of education on these two characteristics were also investigated. Being a quantitative study, correlational and descriptive study designs were followed in the research so as to appropriately answer the research questions. Related data was collected through the utilization of two different questionnaires, Teacher Autonomy Scale (Pearson & Hall, 1993) and Critical Thinking Disposition Scale (Sosu, 2013), respectively. Additional questions were asked in order to gather socio-demographic data. Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis was conducted to assess both scales' reliability. Prior to comparing the obtained data relations, skewness and kurtosis values were also measured. The obtained data was processed through the utilization of SPSS v26.0 program. Descriptive statistics were utilized to identify the level of teacher autonomy of the participants. One-way ANOVA test was used to depict the relationships between year of experience and degree of education with both autonomy levels and critical thinking dispositions of the participants. Lastly, Pearson correlation test was utilized to demonstrate the correlation between teaching autonomy levels and critical thinking dispositions of the participants.

Even though in the specific items related with instructors' opinions on assessment processes, objectives, goals, and content selection suggested a certain setback, as one of the subcategories of overall teaching autonomy, the general autonomy levels of the participants who took part in the study was interpreted as moderate when the findings were reviewed. Furthermore, these findings related to general teacher autonomy displayed a level of alignment with prior studies conducted upon the same matter. When the findings on the second subcategory of overall teaching autonomy were reviewed, it was concluded that although certain drawbacks existed especially in the domains of classroom content and evaluation procedures, in the other dimensions or curricular

autonomy participants felt more autonomous and overall, they had a moderate level of curricular autonomy. Still, even though both subcategories fell into the moderate category, when compared with general teaching autonomy, this subcategory fell behind. Furthermore, the level of curricular autonomy interpreted in this study, exhibited a level of compatibility with previously conducted research reviewed in the study. As the sum of both general and curricular autonomy factors, the overall teaching autonomy of the participants who took part in the study was thus interpreted to be moderate level. Having an approximate compatibility with prior research conducted upon the matter, the obtained result was suggested to be influenced by components such as the educational setting, impact of external leadership positions as well as teacher perspectives and presented descriptive data utilizable for further studies upon the matter.

When the relationship between the autonomy levels and year of experience the participants had was observed, no significant correlation between these two aspects was found. While this finding regarding the matter had compatibility with certain studies conducted before, it conflicted with others. The factors that influenced the obtained result and the mismatches found between this research and others were suggested to be notions such as lack of self – improvement on teachers` behalf, state of mind the instructors are at, the materials teachers work with and the contextual or institutional constraints.

A positive correlation was obtained when the relationship between teacher autonomy and level of education was investigated in the study. This result, was also compatible with prior research conducted upon the same matter. Furthermore, it was revealed that especially participants with PhD degrees were more autonomous also in the both subcategories of general teaching and curricular autonomy. Yet still, it was evident that while participants with MA degrees displayed a higher level of autonomy in the curricular autonomy subcategory, they slightly fell behind in the general teaching autonomy. The reason for this was inferred to be an improvement of these participants' knowledge on organizational decision making, yet still facing certain constraints on matters such as the state of collaborative relationships between teachers, institutional and systemic restrictions, as well as individual differences.

When the critical thinking dispositions of the participants were investigated, the obtained results demonstrated a moderate level of critical thinking disposition on the participants behalf also in the two subcategories of reflective skepticism as well as critical openness. When compared with other studies conducted previously, these results were found compatible with some while conflicting with others and some factors that influenced these outcomes were suggested as the evaluation procedures that should be adhered to, the practitioners' attributes and their level of awareness, their personal experiences as educators and learners, and their epistemological perspectives as well as institutional adaptabilities.

Regarding the relationship between critical thinking dispositions of the participants and the year of experience they had, no significant correlation was found in this research. This outcome conflicted with certain studies conducted regarding the same subject. The obtained results were indicated to be impacted by the notions of teaching methods, pedagogical concepts, educational environments as well as the change that took place in recent years in teacher training programs and societal attitudes, where there is a growing emphasis on promoting critical thinking development, which may have influenced less experienced teachers, ultimately resulting in similar outcomes across different groups with various teaching experiences.

No significant correlation was found in the domains of critical thinking disposition and degree of education participants had in this research, even though previous studies conducted upon this matter had indirectly suggested a positive correlation between the two notions through findings reviewed mainly on teacher training programs. Presenting direct data upon the relationship between these two aspects, a requirement for further investigation regarding this matter was expressed.

Finally, when the relationship between the autonomy levels and critical thinking dispositions of the participants were investigated, no significant correlation between these two characteristics were found, even though previously conducted research upon them theorized a positive relationship between the two qualifications. Various factors that were proposed to influence this outcome included levels of cooperative relationships between

practitioners, their teaching backgrounds, institutional limitations, teaching approaches, teacher training, the subject matter, measurement constraints, and individual variations.

The results obtained from this study can provide the following implications for ELT:

Recognition of the importance of promoting teacher autonomy in ELT, as it plays a crucial role in classroom decision-making, content selection, and overall teaching practices.

Implementation of professional development programs and training that empower English language teachers to make informed decisions regarding assessment, objectives, and content selection.

Considerations regarding focus on curricular autonomy in ELT, especially in areas like classroom content and evaluation procedures, where teachers may need more support and resources to exercise autonomy effectively.

Development of strategies and resources that enable English language educators to adapt and customize their curricula to meet the specific needs of their students.

Acknowledgement of the notion that level of teacher autonomy may vary based on years of teaching experience and educational qualifications and thus, creation of professional development opportunities for educators with different levels of experience and educational backgrounds to address their specific needs and constraints.

Recognition of the importance of cultivating critical thinking skills among English language teachers as it can have a positive impact on their instructional practices.

Encouragement of the integration of critical thinking development in teacher training programs and ongoing professional development initiatives of EFL teachers.

Acknowledgement of the potential influence of recent shifts in teacher training programs and societal attitudes on critical thinking development, which may lead to similar critical thinking dispositions among educators with varying levels of experience and thus consideration on how these shifts can be leveraged to create more consistent and effective approaches to critical thinking development in ELT.

Promotion of collaborative teaching environments in ELT to encourage cooperative relationships between practitioners, which can potentially enhance teacher autonomy and critical thinking development.

Furthermore, apart from the implications mentioned above, in light of the study conducted, there emerges possibilities for certain further research. Below are some of these, listed:

As autonomous teachers are believed to foster autonomy in their learners, the relationship between the teacher and learner autonomy in the Turkish context can be studied across different levels of education.

Since learners` tendency of critical thinking is highly related to their instructor's same ability, the relationship between critical thinking dispositions of teachers and learners can be studied across different levels of education in the Turkish context.

As autonomous teachers are expected to have greater efficiency in their teachings, the correlation between teaching efficacy and autonomy in the Turkish context can be studied.

Since teachers with a higher critical thinking disposition are believed to conduct a more efficient teaching process, the relationship between the teaching efficacy and critical thinking dispositions of teachers in the Turkish context can be studied.

Due to the reason that this study was only conducted amongst EFL teachers in the university level, the relationship between autonomy and critical thinking dispositions of teachers in other levels of education can also be studied in the Turkish context.

Further research on the influence environmental, institutional, and individual characteristics have on the relationship between the critical thinking dispositions and teacher autonomy as well as the influence these characteristics have on each concept separately can be conducted in the Turkish context.

Finally, further research can be conducted on which aspects of teacher training enhances teacher autonomy and critical thinking dispositions of in and pre-service teachers in which degrees and how they can be further developed can be conducted.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Etik Kurulu Kararı

Bu belge, Yükseköğretim Kurulu tarafından 19.01.2021 tarihli "Lisansüstü Tezlerin Elektronik Ortamda Toplanması, Düzenlenmesi ve Erişime Açılmasına İlişkin Yönerge" ile bildirilen 6698 Sayılı Kişisel Verilerin Korunması Kanunu kapsamında gizlenmiştir.

"

Appendix 2. Critical Thinking Disposition Scale

The following statements are about the ways in which you approach learning and new situations. Tick one box which most closely reflects your views. *Be assured there is no 'right' or 'wrong' response.*

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
a. I am often on the lookout for new ideas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. I often use new ideas to shape (modify) the way I do things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. I use more than one source to find out information for myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. It is important to justify the choices I make.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. It's important to understand other people's viewpoint on an issue.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. I usually think about the wider implications of a decision before taking action.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. I usually try to think about the bigger picture during a discussion.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. I sometimes find a good argument that challenges some of my firmly held beliefs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. I usually check the credibility of the source of information before making judgements.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. I often re-evaluate my experiences so that I can learn from them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. I often think about my actions to see whether I could improve them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Critical Thinking Disposition Scale — Edward M. Sosu (2013)

Appendix 3. Teaching Autonomy Scale

(Shaded items—1,2,4,6,8,9,10,12,14,16,18—are reversed scored; i.e., responses of 1, 2, 3, 4 are scored 4, 3, 2, 1, respectively. Thus, high total summated scores represent higher teaching autonomy than low summated scores.)

Directions: Please indicate the extent to which each of the following statements is true for you personally, using the following scale:

1 - Definitely True

2 - More or Less True

2 - More or Less False

4 - Definitely False

There are no correct answers, so mark each statement as honestly as possible, in terms of how well you feel the statement describes you and your teaching situation.

	Definitely True			**Definitely False**
1. I am free to be creative in my teaching approach.	1	2	3	4
2 The selection of student-learning activities in my class is under my control.	1	2	3	4
3. I seldom use alternative procedures in my teaching.	1	2	3	4
4. Standards of behavior in my classroom are set primarily by myself.	1	2	3	4
5. My job does not allow for much discretion on my part.	1	2	3	4
6. In my teaching, I use my own guidelines and procedures.	1	2	3	4
7. In my situation, I have little say over the content and skills that are selected for teaching.	1	2	3	4
8. The scheduling of use of time in my classroom is under my control.	1	2	3	4
9. My teaching focuses on those goals and objectives I select myself.	1	2	3	4
10. I follow my own guidelines on instruction.	1	2	3	4

1 – Definitely True

2 – More or Less True

3 – More or Less False

4 – Definitely False

	Definitely True			**Definitely False**
11. In my situation, I have only limited latitude in how major problems are resolved.	1	2	3	4
12. What I teach in my class is determined for the most part by myself.	1	2	3	4
13. In my class, I have little control over how classroom space is used.	1	2	3	4
14. The materials I use in my class are chosen for the most part by myself.	1	2	3	4
15. The evaluation and assessment activities used in my class are selected by people other than myself.	1	2	3	4
16. I select the teaching methods and strategies I use with my students.	1	2	3	4
17. I have little say over the scheduling of use of time in my classroom.	1	2	3	4
18. The content and skills taught in my class are those I select.	1	2	3	4

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

Serra CANTEZ

Eğitim

Derece	Yıl	Üniversite, Enstitü, Anabilim/Anasanat Dalı
Yüksek Lisans	2019-23	T.C. Maltepe Universitesi, Ingiliz Dili Egitimi
Lisans	2013-17	Yildiz Teknik Universitesi, Ingilizce Ogretmenligi

İş/İstihdam (Varsa)

Yıl	Görev
2018-2023	Sozlesmeli Ogretim Gorevlisi