Factors effecting level of preferring alternative assessment methods

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors effecting assessment preference of ELT (English Language Teaching) students. Data was collected from 150 ELT students studying at four universities located in Ankara (Turkey). In order to analyze the collected data multiple regression was calculated. Level of preferring alternative assessment methods was defined as dependent variable. Some characteristics related to learning were defined as predictive (independent) variables; critical thinking learning strategy, metacognitive learning strategy, self efficacy for learning, level of preferring higher order thinking tasks, kinesthetic learning modality, Auditorally learning modality, Visually learning modality. Before calculating multiple regression analysis some assumptions were tested such as, multicollinarity, multivariate normality, homogeneity of variance. Multiple regression analysis results showed us that those independent variables explains %30 percent of variance in level of preferring alternative assessment methods. On the other hand level of preferring higher order thinking tasks has the strongest effect. Self efficacy for learning and level of adopting meta-cognitive learning strategy have respectively second and third strongest effect on dependent variable. Moreover level of adopting critical thinking learning strategy and learning modalities have no significant effect on dependent variable.

Keywords: Assessment Preference, Learning Strategies, Self Efficacy, Multiple Regression Analysis

1. Problem Status

Learning is permanent changes that occurs behaviours as a result of life experiences. So, effective learning can provide with constructing learning area effectively. In order to educate people who respond to the demands of new world, students’ individual differences should be taken into consideration in schools. Approaches to learning are related with student’s motivation and using their appropriate strategies for learning. According to Ellez and Sezgin (2002), motivation indicates why students want to learn and strategy indicates how they learn.

The last 20 years have seen a number of significant changes in Higher Education (HE) around the world. Many of these changes relate to new managerial and evaluative structures that have been introduced across the sector internationally in different forms. One particular consequence of the emphasis on evaluation has been the accompanying focus on the results of assessment. Assessment is an umbrella term. Understanding of it varies, depending on how one sees the role of the assessment itself in the educational process, as well as the role of the participants (the assessors and the assesses) in the education and assessment processes. The main difference is described in terms of an ‘assessment culture’ and a ‘testing culture’ (Birenbaum 1994, 1996, 2000).

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Quality of the learning depends on the harmony between instruction and assessment process. If there is no match between “how you teach” and “how you assess” quality of the learning is damaged. This is why recent studies on educational sciences have focus on the relationship between characteristics related to learning and assessment.

It is generally acknowledged that assessment plays a crucial role in the learning process and, accordingly, on the impact of new teaching methods (Gijbels & Dochy, 2006). The way students prepare themselves for an assessment depends on how they perceive the assessment (before, during and after the assessment), and these effects can have either positive or negative influences on learning. It is obvious that there is relationship between students’ perceptions about learning and assessment.

As it is seen on the figure 1 quality of the learning is effected by the harmony between students’ perceptions about learning and assessment. Students’ perceptions about learning mostly related to learning strategies, learning approaches, learning styles etc. Students’ perceptions of assessment is related to “assessment preferences”

Assessment preference is defined as imagined choice between alternatives in assessment and the possibility of the rank ordering of these alternatives. Several studies have investigate such assessment preferences earlier.

Assessment is an important component of learning environments as learning approaches. It explains quantity of students’ achievement and development by measuring both learning process and products. There is strong relation among instruction, learning and assessment process. Effective assessment of student achievement depends on how they are instructed and how they learn. So, all these concepts should be taken in to consideration while planning of learning environment.

While planning learning environment, students’ individual differences should be considered both in instruction and assessment process. For this reasons, recently the concept of “assessment preferences” has gained importance.

The concept of “assessment preferences” refers to students’ opinions, attitudes, and preferences of assessment methods and its properties.

According to the studies of Zoller and Ben-Chaim (1997), Birenbaum and Feldman (1998), Traub and McRury (1990) and Zeidner (1987) students, especially the males (Beller and Gafni 2000), generally prefer multiple
choice formats, or simple and de-contextualised questions, over essay type assessments or constructed-response types of questions (complex and authentic).

Scouller (1998) investigated the relationships between students’ learning approaches, preferences, perceptions and performance outcomes in two assessment contexts: a multiple choice question examination requiring knowledge across the whole course and assignment essays requiring in-depth study of a limited area of knowledge. The results indicated that if students prefer essays this is more likely to result in positive outcomes in their essays than if they prefer multiple choice question examinations.

Beller and Gafni (2000) gave an overview of several studies which analysed the students’ preferences for assessment formats, their scores on the different formats, and the influence of gender differences. In a range of studies they found some consistent conclusions suggesting that, if gender differences are found (which was not always the case), female students prefer essay formats, and male students show a slight preference for multiple choice formats. Furthermore, male students score better on multiple choice questions than female students and female students score better than male students on open ended questions than on multiple choice questions as could be expected (Ben-Shakhar and Sinai 1991).

Overall, from the studies regarding students’ assessment preferences, it seems that students prefer assessment formats which reduce stress and anxiety. It is assumed, despite the fact that there are no studies that directly analyze the preferences of students and their scores on different item or assessment formats, that students will perform better on their preferred assessment formats. Students with a deep study approach tend to prefer more the essay type of questions, as do female students.

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors effecting assessment preference of ELT (English Language Teaching) students. Below are the research questions;

- Is critical thinking learning strategy significant predictor of students’ level of preferring alternative assessment methods?
- Is metacognitive learning strategy significant predictor of students’ level of preferring alternative assessment methods?
- Is self efficacy for learning significant predictor of students’ level of preferring alternative assessment methods?
- Is level of preferring higher order thinking tasks significant predictor of students’ level of preferring alternative assessment methods?
- Is kinesthetic learning modality significant predictor of students’ level of preferring alternative assessment methods?
- Is auditorally learning modality significant predictor of students’ level of preferring alternative assessment methods?
- Is visually learning modality significant predictor of students’ level of preferring alternative assessment methods?

2. Method
In this part research model, working group, data collection instruments, data analysis are presented.

2.1. Research Model and Working Group

This is a correlation research which aims to find out the relation between two or more variables without any intervention. 150 ELT students studying at four universities located in Ankara (Turkey).

2.2. Data Collection Instruments
In order to collect data relevant sub-factors of “Motivates Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MLSQ)” and “Assessment Preference Inventory(API)” has been used. MLSQ was originally developed by Pintrich, Smith, Garcia & McKeachie(1993) and adopted to Turkish culture by Büyüköztürk, Akgün and friends (2004). API was originally developed by Birenbaum (1994) and adopted to Turkish culture by Gülbaşar and Büyüköztürk (2008).

2.3. Data Analysis
In order to analyze collected data multiple regression has been calculated. Multiple regression is a statistical technique that allows us to predict someone’s score on one variable on the basis of their scores on several other variables. In this study level of preferring alternative assessment methods was defined as dependent variable. Some characteristics related to learning were defined as predictive (independent) variables; critical thinking learning strategy, metacognitive learning strategy, self efficacy for learning, level of preferring higher order thinking tasks, kinesthetic learning modality, Auditorially learning modality, Visually learning modality.

3. Findings
Before calculating multiple regression analysis some assumptions were tested such as, multicollinarity, multivariate normality, homogeneity of variance. It was defined that no assumption of multiple regression was violated.

Table 1: Multiple regression results about factors affecting preferring alternative assessment methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Partial r</th>
<th>Part r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>14,943</td>
<td>4,567</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,272</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visually</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.544</td>
<td>.587</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditorally</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>-.078</td>
<td>.938</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>-.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinesthetic</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.785</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.187</td>
<td>1.883</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>-.168</td>
<td>.867</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>.132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self efficacy</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>2.929</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>-.014</td>
<td>-.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Order Thinking</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>.252</td>
<td>3.192</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>.206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R = 0.548  R² 0.30  P<0,01

Multiple regression analysis results showed us that those independent variables explains %30 percent of variance in level of preferring alternative assessment methods p<0,01. On the other hand level of preferring higher order thinking tasks has the strongest effect. Self efficacy for learning and level of adopting meta-cognitive learning strategy have respectively second and third strongest effect on dependent variable. Moreover level of adopting critical thinking learning strategy and learning modalities have no significant effect on dependent variable.

This result means that students who prefers exams which aims to assess higher order thinking skills, who has strong self efficacy for learning and who use metacognitive learning strategy, have tendency to prefer alternative assessment methods such as performance tasks abd portfolios.

References


