T.C.

UFUK UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME

EXPLORING PREPARATORY SCHOOL EFL LEARNERS' BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

MASTER'S THESIS

SONER ÇETİN

SUPERVISOR

LECT. DR. CEYHUN KARABIYIK

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KABUL VE ONAY

Soner Çetin tarafından hazırlanan "EXPLORING PREPARATORY SCHOOL EFL LEARNERS' BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING" başlıklı bu çalışma, 13.12.2019 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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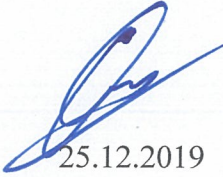Yukarıdaki imzaların adı geçen öğretim üyelerine ait olduğunu onaylarım.

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BİLDİRİM

Hazırladığım tezin tamamen kendi çalışmam olduğunu ve her alıntıya kaynak gösterdiğimi taahhüt eder, tezimin kağıt ve elektronik kopyalarının Ufuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü arşivlerinde aşağıda belirttiğim koşullarda saklanmasına izin verdiğimi onaylarım:

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ÖZET

HAZIRLIK OKULU ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN DİL ÖĞRENİMİNE İLİŞKİN İNANÇLARININ İNCELENMESİ

Temel amacı Gazi Üniversitesi Hazırlık Okulu öğrencilerinin dil öğrenme inançlarını araştırmak olan bu çalışma farklı bölümlerden 500 öğrencinin katılımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışma ayrıca öğrencilerin dil öğrenme inançlarıyla demografik değişkenler ve akademik başarı arasındaki ilişkiyi de incelemiştir. Dil öğrenme inançları envanteri BALLI (Horwitz, 1987) ve öğrenci mülkatından bu çalışmada faydalanılmıştır. Çalışma, öğrencilerin dil öğrenmeyle ilgili çeşit inançlara sahip olduklarını göstermiştir. Bunun yanında, cinsiyet, çalışma saatleri ve genel dil öğrenme inançları arasında önemli bir farklılık tespit edilmiştir. Spesifik olarak, cinsiyetin dil öğrenme eğilimi, iletişim stratejileri, motivasyon ve dil öğrenme zorluğu inançları üzerinde ve çalışma saatlerinin iletişim stratejileri üzerinde etkisi olmuştur. Fakat dil yeterlilik düzeyi ve genel dil öğrenme inançları arasında bir ilişki tespit edilememiştir. İnanç boyutlarında, dil yeterlilik düzeyinin dil öğrenme eğilimi, iletişim stratejileri ve dilin doğasına dair inançlar üzerinde etkisi tespit edilmiştir. Akademik başarıyla genel dil inançları arasında bir korelasyon bulunamamıştır. Ancak dil öğrenme eğilimi, zorluğu ve iletişim stratejileri akademik başarıyı en iyi tahmin eden boyutlar olmuştur. Çalışma, nitel veri yardımıyla bu sonuçların sebeplerini açıklamıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Dil Öğrenme İnançları, Öğrenci İnançları, Cinsiyet, Çalışma Saatleri, Yeterlilik Seviyeleri, Akademik Başarı

ABSTRACT

EXPLORING PREPARATORY SCHOOL EFL LEARNERS' BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

This research study whose main goal was to explore foreign language learning beliefs of preparatory school students at Gazi University was conducted with the participation of 500 students from various departments. The study also explored the relationship between leaners' beliefs about language learning and demographic variables as well as academic achievement. BALLI (Horwitz, 1987) and a student interview were utilized in the research. The study showed that learners held various beliefs regarding language learning. Also, a significant difference was found between gender, study hours and overall language learning beliefs. Specifically, gender had an effect on beliefs about aptitude, communication strategies, motivations and difficulty of language dimensions and study hours had an effect on beliefs about communication strategies. However, no such difference was detected between proficiency levels and overall language learning beliefs. In dimensions of belief, proficiency levels had an effect on beliefs about aptitude, difficulty of language and nature of language. Academic achievement did not correlate with overall language learning beliefs, yet beliefs about aptitude, difficulty of language and communication strategies predicted academic achievement best. The study offered possible explanations as to the results by making use of qualitative data.

Key words: beliefs about language learning, learner beliefs, gender, study hours, proficiency levels, academic achievement

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BALLI: Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory

BALL: Beliefs about Language Learning

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

Ss: Students

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

Status of English language has gradually changed from foreign language to lingua franca especially in the last decades and in the beginning of the 21st century, it has become *the* international language (Seidlhofer, 2013). English is now the most widely taught language in over 100 countries and the reason for this prevalence may include historical tradition, political, cultural or technological contact (Crystal, 2012). Whatever the reason, English is in great demand and people want to learn it with various motivations.

As English has gained importance, many research studies have been conducted in order to increase effectiveness of education and find more efficient methods (El-Fiki, 2012; Vongxay, 2013; Kongevold, 2014, Howat & Smith, 2014; Hodgin, 2014). However, in the last few decades, researchers in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) have also focused on affective factors which may have an effect on learners' success in language learning. Researchers have discovered that learners bring their preconceived notions or beliefs to classroom environment and these ideas are indications of what learners expect from their education and what their attitudes towards learning a language might be (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Horwitz, 1987; Wenden, 1987). Hence, many researchers (Horwitz, 1988, 1999; Wenden, 1987; Luppescu & Day, 1990; Tumposky, 1991; Cotteral, 1995; Truit, 1995; Kern, 1995; Mantley-Bromley, 1995) have not only investigated beliefs that language learners embody, but also sought to find factors that affect beliefs and in what ways these factors are affected by those notions.

Language learning is an important and complex undertaking; for that reason, each and every aspect regarding it must be analyzed. Horwitz (1988) states that understanding learner beliefs is important as educators need to realize learner approaches to language instruction as well as their satisfaction level in learning process. As it is seen, teaching and learning are not limited only to relevant methodology or specific techniques employed in classrooms. Riley (2007) argues that educators tend to ignore beliefs about learning that is why a valuable contribution that can be made to education by students is thrown away (Allwright, 1984). However, beliefs' sphere of influence extends beyond sheer contribution. Gobel and Mori (2007) state that most of

the attributions for success and failure are thought to be internal. In a similar vein, Wenden (2001) argues that beliefs play a prominent role in language learning and their effect on the process can be positive or negative. For this reason, beliefs of students can be assumed to affect their success as well as the outcome of the educational process directly.

Beliefs are complex and messy constructs (Pajares, 1992) and while they determine the way learners make sense of their experiences in a learning environment, they are also affected by factors such as self-concept, identity, personality, and individual differences (Epstein, 1990). As these factors shape beliefs to a great extent, they cannot be ignored. Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) state that factors influencing beliefs are numerous and include family, social and cultural background, classroom/social peers, previous experiences, individual differences such as gender, and personality. Therefore, while investigating beliefs, other factors must be taken into account in order to realize the extent to which beliefs are effective in the learning process.

1.1. Conceptual Framework

The role and significance of beliefs have always caught researchers' attention from various fields of research. In cognitive, educational and social psychology, beliefs are considered to be an important construct to be explored as they exert influence on human behavior (Gabillon, 2005). Many learning theories especially based on studies in human cognition (Flavel, 1979), expectancies (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), attitudes and motivation (Gardner&Lambert, 1972) utilized beliefs to understand human behavior. In cognitive psychology, beliefs about learning and knowledge have been investigated with the assumption that they are related to metacognition (Flavell, 1987), which encompasses how individuals see themselves as learners and what their goals and needs are. From this perspective, language learners were considered to be active participants in learning process and employ various mental strategies so as to analyze the system of language that is learnt (Williams & Burden, 1997). For language learning environment, the same is true since metacognitive knowledge, which is defined as what learners know about learning and language learning (Wenden, 1999), is effective in selection of cognitive activities in order to complete a task (Sugizaki, 2014).

Some people may think that second language can be learnt with no difficulty in a short time. Although such claims can be ignored as they seem naive or unrealistic, students may also be influenced by such notions and bring them to the classroom environment, especially if these beliefs are prevalent in the culture. For example, if students believe that phonetic accuracy is the foremost requirement of learning a language, they will devote most of their time to studying pronunciation in order to develop native-like accent, which may cause frustration when they find it hard to achieve. Adult learners who believe in the superiority of younger learners will probably have negative expectations regarding their ultimate success or those who had unsuccessful learning experience can easily come to the conclusion that special abilities are required for learning a language. Therefore, such notions surely influence students' effectiveness in the classroom and despite beliefs' obvious relevance to understanding of expectations, motivations and satisfaction of learners, they remain relatively unexplored (Horwitz, 1988). With respect to this, Holec (1987) argues that language learners must experience some kind of psychological preparation "deconditioning" in order to break free from prejudices in language learning as their beliefs are consistent with their strategies as well. Teachers, therefore, should put effort in identifying language learners' beliefs and interfere with unfounded notions, increase their understanding of how students approach the task and eventually promote more effective learning strategies in learners (Horwitz, 1988). In an attempt to explore learners' beliefs about language learning, Horwitz (1985) introduced "beliefs" into language learning and created an inventory (BALLI) which evaluates learners' beliefs about language learning on five factors. While Horwitz's studies generally catalogue and report notions of learners, they also have pedagogical implications that can be utilized by educators in order to change certain ill-conceived notions held by students regarding language learning. In other words, practical studies can be conducted by means of BALLI (Sugizaki, 2014).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In Turkey, learning English is of great importance especially for job recruitment. For this reason, a great amount time and resource is put into learning English by individuals as well as the state. However, effectiveness of the learning and teaching process is questionable and studies show that it requires improvement (Işık, 2008). Therefore, it is a national problem. Beliefs have an important effect on learners'

performance and are directly relevant to their progress (Barcelos, 2003). In that sense, what learners do while learning a second language depends on what they believe and this will bring about success or failure (Horwitz, 1988). There are also important factors such as age, gender, social and cultural background, learning strategies that may influence the language learning process (Hou, 2015). These factors are also closely related to language learning beliefs on many levels (Epstein, 1990). Furthermore, learners' beliefs could be facilitative or inhibitive. In other words, they may have positive or negative effect on learning outcomes. Therefore, investigating learners' beliefs by means of empirical research is a necessity as beliefs are a complementary element for efficient implementation of educational goals (Horwitz, 1999) and minimize negative affective factors that stem from learning beliefs in order to improve the quality of education outcomes.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine language learning beliefs of Gazi university preparatory school students. The study also explores the interplay between demographic variables, academic achievement, and language learning beliefs while offering possible explanation as to the connection between them. In order to reach this goal, the researcher aims to find answers to the following research questions.

1. What are the overall beliefs of the participants about language learning?

2. Is there a significant difference between the participants' beliefs with respect to gender?

3. Is there a significant difference between the participants' beliefs with respect to study hours?

4. Is there a significant difference between the participants' beliefs with respect to proficiency levels?

5. Is there a correlation between the participants' beliefs about language learning and their academic achievement?

6. Can achievement be predicted by any dimension of learner beliefs?

7. What are the participants' perceived beliefs about language learning in relation to

a. foreign language aptitude?

b. the difficulty of language learning?

c. the nature of language learning?

d. learning and communication strategies?

e. motivations and expectations?

1.4. Importance of the Study

In the current literature, many research studies have been done in order to investigate language learning beliefs of students (Horwitz, 1985; Wenden, 1987; Mantley-Bromley, 1995; White, 1999; Bernat, 2004; Wu Man-fat, 2008; Fujiwara, 2014). In Turkey, however, number of studies investigating beliefs are somewhat fewer (e.g. Kunt, 1997; Halaçoğlu, 1999; Tercanlıoglu, 2003; Altan, 2006; Genç, Kuluşaklı & Aydın, 2016) and only a few of them explored the relationship between beliefs and factors influencing them or attempted to explore the reasons of these connections by means of qualitative research methods to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon. Hence, first of all, exploring the relationship between mentioned variables and beliefs is important because studies show that gender, personality, prior learning experiences and educational context are all influential in shaping beliefs (Bernat & Gvozdenko; 2005). Secondly, as beliefs are subject to vary depending on context (Truit, 1995) more research studies must be carried out in different settings in order to understand the causes of these differences. Lastly, by means of qualitative research, origins of erroneous beliefs can be specified as inventories are limited to given statements and cannot offer reasons as to why some beliefs are held (Benson & Lor, 1999). In this respect, the ultimate importance of the study is to minimize detrimental effects of preconceived notions and increase the quality of education outcomes.

1.5. Assumptions

In this research study, it is assumed that the participants will fill in the questionnaire meticulously in the framework of their genuine ideas regarding language

learning. In addition, the participants are assumed to answer the questions in the interviews sincerely.

1.6. Limitations

There are a few limitations to this study. Firstly, this study was limited to Turkish university students whose ages ranged from nineteen to twenty-one. Secondly, only students from eleven departments participated in the study. Lastly, the study was conducted in one setting; Gazi University, therefore, caution must be exercised while generalizing the conclusions.

1.7 Definitions of Terms

Aptitude

The amount of time it takes an individual to learn the task in question (Stansfield, 1989).

Beliefs

Notions or ideas that individuals have about various issues (Horwitz, 1987).

Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)

It is an instrument developed to assess learners' notions on various issues regarding language learning (Horwitz, 1988).

English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

The term refers to language learning contexts where English is not extensively used for communication or medium of instruction (Nunan & Carter, 2001).

Motivation

The extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and satisfaction experienced in this activity (Dornyei, 1998)

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature on beliefs in parallel with the goal of this study. Definitions of beliefs, nature of beliefs, traits of beliefs, importance of beliefs, factors influencing beliefs, beliefs about language learning, and studies on learners' beliefs are presented in this chapter.

2.2. Definition of Beliefs

Exploring beliefs have always been one of the main concerns of both educators and researchers. Abelson (1979) describes them in terms of individuals' manipulation of knowledge for a specific goal. Horwitz (1987) defines beliefs as notions or ideas that individuals have about various issues. Murphy and Mason (2006) explain the term belief as something that one accepts or holds as truth. Even if there are many definitions, defining what beliefs are as de facto seems to be hard work since, according to some researchers, paradox is inherent in beliefs (Dewey, 1983; Izard & Smith, 1982) and they may disguise in other names (attitudes, values, judgements, social strategy to name but a few); hence field of study and purpose have been the chief determinants of definitions of beliefs (Pajares, 1992). For that reason, it is possible to find various definitions across the literature with different assumptions. In that sense, some key elements must be explained to understand these definitions better.

The definition of beliefs is closely related to distinction between the terms knowledge and belief as these two terms are related to a great extent (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Ernest, 1989). As for the difference between the two, Ernest (1989) states that while beliefs are the affective outcome of thought and knowledge is the cognitive outcome. In a similar fashion, Nespor (1987) considers beliefs have more to do with affective process compared to knowledge and unlike knowledge, do not require group consensus. In this sense, it can be said that beliefs are more prone to not to be verified as Murphy and Mason (2006) state. Taking these remarks into account, it is possible to say that knowledge can be examined, however beliefs are more elusive. Also, there is a strong connection between beliefs and emotions, which distinguishes beliefs from knowledge. Lefrancois (2000) states that "Beliefs are personal convictions

and unlike knowledge, which tends to be impersonal and impartial, a belief often has strong emotional components" (p. 5). So, while there are many attempts to define beliefs by theorists and researchers, a clear-cut definition is hard to make, which apparently stems from the very nature of beliefs.

2.3. Nature of Beliefs

Izard and Smith (1982) depicts the paradoxical nature of beliefs by explaining the verb "to believe" whose meaning may be "to doubt" or "to be sure" depending on context. In that sense, the verb "believe" can dwell on opposite sides in terms of literal meaning and because of this reason, the word itself may sound contradictory.

Many philosophers drew attention to this phenomenon such as Dewey (1986) and William James (as cited in Cormier, 2000). Perceiving beliefs intermingled with human experience; James states that beliefs have an influence on one's perception of reality, which in turn affects beliefs. He states:

In the realm of truth-processes, facts come independently and determine our beliefs provisionally. But these beliefs make us act, and as fast as they do so, they bring into sight or into existence new facts which re-determine the beliefs accordingly (p. 65).

Our beliefs are a part of our experience and because of that reason, they evolve and change, so sometimes our beliefs may clash and become contradictory. Dewey (2013) stated that individuals are always in contact with reality and therefore interpret it. The process of interpretation leads to forming of beliefs. By doing so, we tend to comprehend the world.

Peirce (1958) argued that desires are led and actions are shaped by beliefs. In the face of a new situation, beliefs are what prepare individuals. He stated that beliefs are paradoxical since they have the power to control doubt and thought simultaneously. In other words, one's beliefs are what start and stop actions.

Due to their paradoxical nature, beliefs are hard to define. Kalaja and Barcelos (2007) use contrasting adjectives to make this point. "Beliefs are social, but also individual; unique, but also shared; rational and emotional; diverse, but also uniform." Beliefs can be a tool of empowerment or constraint (p.233).

In conclusion, researchers and philosophers argued that beliefs are paradoxical and contradictory. Furthermore, beliefs are not only a product of our experience and thought, but also they have control on our actions to a great extent, because of that reason, beliefs cannot be easily defined and also are prone to change.

2.4. Traits of Beliefs

As can be seen from the definitions circling around beliefs, it is hard to come up with a definite and precise explanation. However, beliefs have a tremendous effect on education (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2007), so they must be investigated in every aspect. In order to explain traits of beliefs, researchers have used various terms. Those explanations offer clues about the characteristics of beliefs, however; researchers seem to have polarized views about the phenomenon. These two views can be investigated within normative approach and contextual approach (Barcelos, 2003, p.16).

While Wenden (1998) and Horwitz (1987) view beliefs as static, Hosenfeld (2003) and Dufva (2003) view them as dynamic constructs. Horwitz (1987) describes learners' beliefs as stable and unchanging. In addition, she describes beliefs with words like myths, naive and misconceptions. On the other hand, Hosenfeld (2003) states that "(beliefs are) embedded in experiences continually changing and dynamic" (p.38). He believes that they are subjective.

Another polarized viewpoint about beliefs is that they are cognitive or social phenomenon. According to Holec (1987) beliefs are merely assumptions, which are the product of cognitive process. However, Barcelos (1995) states that beliefs are "cultural assumptions based upon their previous educational experience, previous (and present) readings about learning and contact with other people" (p.40).

It's clear from the different viewpoints of researchers that the framework in which beliefs are placed determines their traits. That is to say, how beliefs are perceived and examined depends entirely on theoretical approach that researchers employ. In normative approach, beliefs are examined as an end product while in contextual approach they are examined according to how they are formed. That is why approaches to beliefs determine the methodology used to investigate them. Barcelos (2000) explains the features of the approaches.

Table 1
Features of the Two Belief Approaches

	Normative	Contextual
Methodology	Likert-scale questionnaires	Observations, interviews, diaries and case studies
Definition of Beliefs	Beliefs are preconceived notions, misconceptions, opinions	Beliefs are part of culture of learning and representations of language learning in a given society
Beliefs and Action Relationship	Beliefs are signs of students' future behaviors and effectiveness as language learners in cause-effect relationship	Beliefs are context specific, so they are investigated in relation with their actions in context
Advantages	Can be used with large samples in different time periods	Can be used by taking students' words into account within the actions' contexts
Disadvantages	Restricts respondents' options with a set of predetermined statements that can be different from student's interpretation	Time consuming with large samples. That is, it is more practical with small populations

Since beliefs have an active role in learning (Fives and Buehl, 2008), it is crucial to understand main characteristics and traits of them, however, there is a broad spectrum of assumptions about beliefs and they must be articulated in broad strokes. Based upon above mentioned characteristics and definitions, Pajares (1992) compiled 16 assumptions from the literature in his study. Riley (2009) synthesized those assumptions about beliefs:

1. Beliefs are shaped at an early age with the effect of cultural transmission. They continue to exist and preserve themselves against contradictions that stem from reason, time, education or experience.

2. If a belief is embedded into the belief structure at an early age, it is harder to change. After adulthood, it is uncommon for a belief to alter.

3. Beliefs are tools in understanding tasks and choosing the cognitive instruments with which individuals interpret, plan and come to a decision about tasks. Behaviors are under beliefs' strong effect.

2.5. Importance of Beliefs

As beliefs about language learning play a crucial part in learners' learning behavior and learning process, many researchers put emphasize on their significance in their studies. A student's stance in a learning environment can be directly attributed to their beliefs because it is beliefs that affect how students perceive that particular environment (White, 2008). For that reason, researches have been investigating learning beliefs for decades. Puchta (2010) articulates the importance of beliefs:

Beliefs have a significant role since they are our guiding assumption in our lives. They help us understand and explain cause and effect relation as well as the world around us. We create an image of that world in our minds and act in accordance with this mental representation. When we believe something, we accept it as truth which is hard to discredit. Beliefs, in that sense, can be called "perceptual filters" from whose point of view we interpret events and our expectations become evidence for the confirmation of beliefs (p. 8).

In general sense, beliefs are influential in educational settings to a great extent, so the process and outcome of education are directly affected by them. Wenden (1987) argues that students' beliefs can influence their learning strategies, which is also parallel with Horwitz's (1987) argument that students' choice of classroom activities can be affected by their notions. In that sense, beliefs shape the learning process and are influential at every stage of education (Fives and Bueh, 2008). In a similar fashion, White (2008) states that beliefs have an important role in learning and they are relevant not only to learners' identity as language learners or users, but also to language learning in general.

Ellis (1994) and Kalaja & Barcelos (2003) also draw attention to the fact that beliefs are effective in learners differences and one of the chief determinants in learning outcomes. For instance, Mori (1999) points out the connection between the learning ability and beliefs; therefore, argues that positive beliefs can boost learning performance. In contrast, negative beliefs can also impede learning experience

(Lightbown and Spada, 2013). Horwitz (1987) states that erroneous beliefs about language learning can bring about less effective strategies, which in turn, means decrease in learning performance.

In light of the remarks mentioned above, it's safe to say that beliefs are significant psychological factors that have great effect on language learning behavior and learning outcomes. Therefore, investigating learners' beliefs is a step to predict and comprehend language learning behavior (Rifin, 2000).

2.6. Learner Beliefs

When people get started on learning a language, they tend to bring their ideas, experiences and beliefs into the learning environment. For that reason, beliefs have an important effect on learners' performance and are directly relevant to their progress (Barcelos, 2003). In that sense, what learners do while learning a second language depends on what they believe and this will bring about success or failure (Horwitz, 1988).This can be detailed and explained in Mercer's (2011) remarks. She argues that learners' behaviors, motivations and attitudes are affected by beliefs and this is how they interpret the world as language learners. She states:

Each individual has a set of self-beliefs which is unique and complex. This does not only affect how they behave and what decision they make now, but also how they interpret their previous experiences as well as future aims and challenges they set for themselves. In any learning context, formal or informal, they do not exist as blank sheet of paper but they carry their beliefs regarding foreign language learning into the classroom. While these beliefs affect the learning experience, they are also affected by it.

As beliefs play a prominent role in language learning, their effect on the process can be positive or negative. In this respect, the effects can be categorized as facilitative and inhibitive (Wenden, 2001). While facilitative beliefs which are realistic, supportive and positive bring about success, inhibitive beliefs which are unrealistic, unsupportive and negative lead to failure. This is because motivation, use of various strategies and level of satisfaction in learning process are affected by beliefs (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). The type of beliefs learners hold determine how they perform in

classroom and those who have positive beliefs tend to be more productive (Mantle & Bromley, 1995).

Studies carried on in various educational contexts show that beliefs have an impact on their language learning experience as a whole. For example, according to Horwitz's study (1999), American learners of Japanese found Japanese a difficult language compared to European languages German, French and Spanish. Rivera and Matsuzawa's (2007) research shows that students' learning priorities depend on the kind of language they learn (a commonly taught language or less commonly taught language). Students who learn less commonly taught languages gave more importance to language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking). In this sense, students' perception of a language can determine how they behave and what they should value. Therefore, student beliefs can be determined by prior learning experiences, educational context or personal traits.

Even if that's the case, teachers seem to ignore student's notions regarding language learning. Riley (1997) and Barkhuizen (1998) state that learner beliefs are ignored by educators and never given enough importance. For that reason, a valuable contribution that can be made to education by students is thrown away (Allwright, 1984).

2.7. Factors Influencing Learner Beliefs

Learner beliefs are complex and while they determine the way learners making sense of their experiences in a learning environment, they are also affected by factors such as self-concept, identity, personality and individual differences (Epstein, 1990). As these factors are the main determinants of beliefs, they cannot be ignored. Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) state that factors influencing beliefs are numerous and include "family and home background, cultural background, classroom/social peers, interpretations of prior repetitive experiences, individual differences such as gender and personality" (p. 10). Made up by individuals, society also has a role in language learning and, naturally, it shapes learners' perspective. Therefore, society exerts an influence upon learners' beliefs with respect to language learning. Learners bring those beliefs into the classroom environment (Bernat and Gvozdenko, 2005).

In addition, Horwitz (2000) argues that social, political and economic circumstances can also shape beliefs of learners. Several studies have been done so far regarding these factors. For example, Tumposky (1991) comparing American and Soviet students argues that culture contributes to belief systems of students to a great extent. In his study about language learning beliefs, Rifkin (2000) emphasizes the importance of individual differences like personality and he believes that among other factors such as type of school or level of language instruction, it is personality of individuals that makes the greatest difference. As for gender, in his study Bacon and Finnemann (1992) found that male and female students showed great differences in terms of their language learning strategies and beliefs in nature of language. So, the factors that influencing learner beliefs are self-concept, identity, personality, individual differences, gender, prior experiences, educational context.

2.8. Beliefs about Language Learning

Language learning environments are complicated as they are subject to various parameters and at times could be unpredictable. Hall (2011) argues that "what goes on in a classroom is inevitably much more than the logical and tidy application of theories and principle; it is localized, situated-specific, and, therefore, diverse" (p. 4). In this respect, these parameters could be teachers' approaches, methods, techniques, beliefs as well as students' ages, genders, needs and attitudes. For this reason, learners' beliefs are one the factors that have great impact on language learning process.

Horwitz (1988) states that understanding learner beliefs is an important undertaking as educators need to realize learner approaches to language instruction as well as their satisfaction level in learning process. As for learner beliefs, Victori and Lockhart (1995) suggest that students have assumptions not only about themselves but also about nature of language learning. In parallel with this argument, Horwitz (1988) asserts that learners have preconceived ideas regarding successful learners and in what way a language should be learnt. For example, some prevalent ideas among learners are that children are better learners than adults; aptitude is a rare thing; vocabulary learning and translation are what matter most in language learning. Therefore, beliefs have a central role in the achievement of learners (Cotterall, 1999) as these beliefs guide learners through their learning journey and dictate how they behave (White, 2008).

Richards and Lockhart (1996) classified language learning beliefs in seven dimensions and explains the possible reasons why learners may have a particular opinion on language and an aspect of language learning.

1. Beliefs about the nature of English are related to difficult aspects and status of English in comparison to other languages. For example, a learner who thinks that English grammar is an obstacle to their achievement, they tend to value grammar-based teaching methodology.

2. Beliefs about speakers of English are related to learners' specific opinions and attitudes about native speakers of English. For instance, if a learner thinks that Americans don't mind when non-native learners make a mistake, they will be more eager to communicate with native speakers.

3. Beliefs about four language skills refer to learners' specific assumptions about the nature of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For example, even if a reading activity in a classroom aims to improve extensive reading skills, learners may see it as an opportunity for building up their vocabulary knowledge.

4. Beliefs about teaching are related to learners' beliefs about effective or ineffective teaching. For instance, if a learner doesn't believe that pair work activities are useful in a speaking class, they will fail to understand their educational value and find them useless.

5. Beliefs about language learning refer to strategies that learners believe are useful. For example, if a student comes from a culture where rote learning and memorization are employed, they may find it difficult to integrate themselves into the learning environment where such methods are discouraged.

6. Beliefs about "self" refer to learners' perception of themselves as language learners. For example, if a learner feels uncomfortable about speaking to native speakers, they will avoid such occasions.

7. Beliefs about goals refer to reasons why a person learns a language and what their priorities in that particular language are. For example, if a student plans to communicate with native speakers of language, they will value native-like pronunciation.

8. Beliefs about appropriate classroom behavior relate to learners' view about what constitutes appropriate forms of classroom interaction. These beliefs may be culturally based. For instance, copying another student's homework can be cheating in one culture while it is considered ethical in another.

From what is argued about language learning beliefs in students' perspective, it's clear that learners tend to have opinions about themselves, language and classroom environment (Wesely, 2012). Therefore, their needs and notions must be taken into account and teachers must interfere where necessary (Tudor, 1992). Bassano (1986) suggests teachers these six steps regarding how to approach to students in terms of their beliefs. 1. Take learners' past experiences into account as well as their assumptions about language learning. 2. Help students build confidence. 3. Move slowly. 4. Make them feel achievement. 5. Allow free choice 6. Consider students' interest, goals and objectives.

2.9. Studies on Learners' Beliefs about Language Learning

For decades many extensive studies have been done to explore language learning beliefs (e.g. Horwitz, 1987, 2000; Wenden, 1987; Luppescu & Day, 1990; Campbell, Shaw, Plageman & Allen, 1993; Cotteral, 1995; Mantley-Bromley, 1995; Kuntz, 1996). While some of these studies investigated learners' beliefs in a descriptive fashion, some of them researched teachers' beliefs or the relationship between the both in different contexts. In parallel with the scope of this study, studies that explore learners' beliefs and their interplay with demographic variables and success are presented in this chapter. Taking different factors and variables into consideration is important since beliefs are multilayered and cannot be reduced to a single dimension. Each dimension is unique and has different effect on learning process (Mori, 1999).

2.9.1. Studies on Language Learning Beliefs in Different Contexts

Horwitz (1987) explored 32 ESL students' language learning beliefs at the University of Texas. The responses of the students showed that they had various beliefs about language learning. For instance, they believed in the existence of language aptitude. However, they disagreed with the statement that those who are good at mathematics are not good at language learning. Horwitz stated that cultural background and previous learning experiences may affect learners' beliefs about language learning.

Horwitz (1988) did another study with the participation of 241 foreign language learners to research language learning beliefs. Even if participants studied different languages (German, French, Spanish), all the groups held similar beliefs. They believed in the existence of aptitude and valued grammar and vocabulary studies as well as translation in language learning.

Yang (1992) investigated 505 Taiwanese students' language learning beliefs and the results showed that repetition, practice and formal structure studies are thought to be important for learners. In addition, foreign language majors, compared to the other majors, had a greater tendency to believe in foreign language aptitude.

In his study, Truit (1995) conducted a research study concerning language learning beliefs with 204 students in Korea. The students stated that language proficiency is an important goal. They had high motivation for learning English because of rewards such as getting a better job. They also put emphasize on pronunciation and speaking English well; however, they didn't find grammar as an important aspect of language learning. Truitt came to the conclusion that despite their desire to learn English, their lack of confidence holds them back because of their low level of self-efficacy.

Oh (1996) investigated language learning beliefs of 195 university students studying Japanese at University of Texas. The study indicated that origin of students and travel to Japan have an effect on beliefs. Also, perception of target language may affect learners' confidence levels as well as perception of language difficulty. Therefore, it can be said that target language also plays a role in learners' beliefs.

Horwitz (1999) reviewed seven studies conducted in different contexts in order to discover how learners' beliefs show difference across cultures. She analyzed the results of the studies by comparing the items in BALLI. She stated that factors such as age, proficiency levels or language learning experience may influence beliefs of learners within the same cultural group.

In his research, Diab (2000) conducted a BALLI study to investigate language learning beliefs of 288 university students learning English and French in Lebanon. English learners attached importance to accuracy, motivation and speaking while French learners had strong beliefs in importance of French, confidence in speaking and

motivation. The participants reported various beliefs regarding language learning, which implies that political environment affects language learning beliefs.

Wu Man-fat (2008) investigated 243 Chinese ESL learners' beliefs and he found that participants had various beliefs about learning a foreign language. The result of the study showed that learners believed in the existence of language aptitude and they had no special ability in learning a foreign language. This finding correlates with the result of Bernat's (2004) study (N=20) where participants lacked beliefs in language learning aptitude. They also stated that English is different from other academic subjects.

In another research, to find out whether gender has an effect on language learners' beliefs, Diab (2006) conducted a study with 284 Lebanese studying French and English. The results indicated that females had higher levels of motivation and confidence compared to males. Bernat & Lloyd (2007) did a study regarding genders at an Australian university with the participation of 107 male and 155 female students from 19 countries. The two groups were compared on five dimensions that are present in BALLI. The result of the study indicated that both males and females had similar beliefs except for two items. The females agreed more with the statement that those who speak more than one language are intelligent and it is less enjoyable to practice English with native speakers. In Lee's study (2014) with 84 international university students, the results were similar. The researcher found no statistical difference between genders. Mudra (2016) conducted a research study with 100 EFL students in Indonesia and found no statistical difference between genders except for some individual items.

In other studies investigating gender effect on beliefs, the results were conflicting. Daif-Allah (2012), Rieger (2012), Dada (2018), Al Bataineh (2019) investigated the possible relationship between gender and language learning beliefs in their studies. Rieger (2012) conducted a study to compare males and females (N=109) studying at various universities in Budapest in terms of language learning beliefs and he concluded that there was a significant difference between them. Similarly, Dada (2018) explored the effect of gender on language learning beliefs with the participation of 160 pre-service ESL teachers in Nigeria. The study showed that between the genders, there was a significant difference. Daif-Allah (2012) replicated the study with the participation of 250 students in Saudi Arabia and detected significant difference on three levels (aptitude, communication strategies and motivation & expectations). There

was, however, no significant correlation between gender and overall language learning beliefs. In a similar fashion, Bataineh (2019) arrived at a conclusion similar to that of Daif-Allah (2012) to some extent. He investigated the gender effect on five dimensions with 83 participants studying at English language teaching department in Jordan and genders differed on only motivations & expectations and difficulty of language learning.

Huang and Tsai (2003) analyzed the difference between high and low proficiency level students (N=89) in Taiwan in terms of their language learning beliefs. The study yielded a significant difference between the groups on three factors which were aptitude, difficulty and nature of language learning. A striking result was that high proficiency level students believed that they had special ability for language learning and found learning English easier compared to the other group. Nikitina and Furuoka (2007) investigated the beliefs of starter and intermediate level students (N=107) who learn Russian at a Malaysian University. Statistical analysis pointed out three factors (aptitude, difficulty and communication strategies) where opinions of the groups differed significantly. Similar results were found in Malaysian context in Yang's study (2015), however instead of aptitude, in beliefs about motivation learners with different proficiency levels differed significantly (N=82). Juanías (2016) conducted a similar study with 563 Colombian students to explore relationship between English level and language learning beliefs. The study revealed no significant difference between the two. In order to investigate the relationship between learners' beliefs and proficiency levels, Abdolahzadeh and Nia (2014) conducted a research study with 226 students studying at a public school in Iran. The results indicated that there was a significant difference between students from different proficiency levels and their beliefs. Fujiwara (2014) investigated the beliefs of 532 Thai students' beliefs about language learning in relation to their proficiency levels. Students' responses were analyzed on five dimensions of BALLI. The results showed that there was a significant difference between elementary and intermediate level students. Those who were on higher levels of proficiency believed that reading and writing are easier and they rejected the importance of grammar.

Khodaday (2009) did a study to investigate learners' beliefs and academic achievement in Iran. 418 undergraduate and graduate university students participated in the study. Out of 34, only five items correlated significantly with the academic

achievements of students. Lan (2010) conducted a similar research study with 212 Taiwanese 7th graders and results yielded a positive correlation between achievement and overall language learning beliefs. Abdolahzadeh and Nia (2014) conducted a research study with 226 students studying at a public school in Iran to explore relationship between achievement and beliefs about language learning. The findings showed that there was a positive correlation between proficiency and overall beliefs in language learning. Likewise, Angelianawati (2012) found a similar result in the study conducted with the participation of 160 students from a high school in Indonesia. Also, Mori (1999) conducted a study with 187 college students to explore language learning beliefs of students and their academic achievement. The two variables correlated significantly which is similar to the result of Peacock's study (1999) done with 247 EFL students and teachers in Hong Kong and that of Ren and Bai's study (2016) conducted with 100 English major students in college in China. However, Hayati (2015) did a research study with 66 students studying at a university in Indonesia to examine the relationship between English academic achievement and language learning beliefs. The result of the study indicated no significant correlation between the two. A similar study was also conducted by Tanaka and Ellis (2003) with 166 participants who studied abroad. The students' TOEFL scores were utilized for the study and no significant correlation was detected between learners' beliefs and achievement. This result is also similar with studies conducted by Loyo (2010) with 326 participants in Mexico and Lee (2014) with 84 international students studying in the United States (2014).

Lee (2014) conducted a study with 84 international students to explore effects of study hours and its relationship with language learning beliefs. The age of participants ranged from 19 to over 30 and they were majoring at three different departments. The result of the study yielded no significant correlation between the variables.

2.9.2. Studies on Language Learning in Turkish Context

Kunt (1997) did a research study on language learning beliefs with 882 Turkish students who studied at a university in North Cyprus. The result of the study indicated that students attached great importance to grammar and vocabulary learning. They also reported high levels of instrumental motivation for learning English.

268 students participated in a study conducted by Halaçoğlu (1999) at Çukurova University. In the study, students' language learning beliefs and exam scores were analyzed to find out if there was a correlation between the two. The researcher found no significant correlation between learners' overall beliefs and achievement.

Tercanlıoglu (2003) conducted a research study with 118 students (45 male and 73 female) in order to explore beliefs about language learning and its relationship with gender. Participants' highest score was in factor "motivations and expectations" and no significant correlation was found between beliefs and gender.

Altan (2006) administered BALLI to a total of 248 university students studying at the departments of English, German, French, Japanese and Arabic at five universities in Turkey. Although in some items the responses were a bit different in terms of their percentages, in general the learners held similar beliefs about language learning. The similarity of beliefs among the different target language groups was an important finding (p.50).

Öz (2007) investigated beliefs of 470 secondary school EFL learners in Turkey. The study attempted to explore how learners' beliefs systems were organized and whether there were any significant differences in respect to school context, gender, age and grade level. The majority of students were female (81.7%) and age of the participants ranged from 16 to 20. The study indicated that school context, gender, age and grade level played a crucial role in forming beliefs.

Ariogul, Unal and Onursal (2009) conducted a research with the participation of 343 students majoring at English, German and French language departments. All three groups were found to hold some beliefs that could be detrimental to their long-term language learning. Among the three groups, French language learners had more positive expectations in language learning. Another finding in the study was that even if all the groups stated that some people were gifted in learning languages, they thought that they had no special skill.

Şevik (2013) carried out a study to explore university preparatory class students' beliefs about foreign language learning. The respondents stated that everyone can learn to speak a language, yet they didn't believe they had language aptitude, which is also consistent with the findings of Ariogul et al. (2009). They also stated that English

is not a difficult language and they would be able to speak English. In addition, they valued vocabulary learning, repetition and pronunciation. Most importantly, they had instrumental motivation because they stated that English would be useful for them for finding a good job, which is parallel with Bernat's (2004) findings. Lastly, they agreed with the statement that it is better to learn a language in a foreign country.

Yazıcı (2014) conducted a research study with the participation of 90 male and 90 female students who studied at a preparatory school. Other than one item "those who speak more than one language are intelligent", there was no significant difference between the beliefs of females and males.

Geyimci (2015) examined beliefs and strategy use of 218 preparatory class students at Beykent University. The results of the study showed that the students had strong motivation for learning English and were willing to practice English with native of speakers. The participants valued repetition and practice. Moreover, they attached importance to learning English because they believed that it would help them get a better job in the future.

So studies on beliefs about language learning yielded different results because of the fact that they are affected by many factors that are elusive and diverse. For that reason similar studies were replicated in different contexts and times. All in all, it can be said that beliefs are highly context-specific.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The study was conducted at Gazi University Preparatory School to investigate the students' beliefs about language learning. The main goal of the study was to discover preparatory school students' overall beliefs about language learning. The study also compared overall beliefs of students with respect to gender, self-study time and proficiency levels. In addition, correlation between academic achievement and overall language beliefs were investigated. The research included 500 students. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to collect data as one type of research method may not be enough for observing beliefs as they are intangible and may be affected by a number of variables which are hard to evaluate. In that regard, employing either qualitative or quantitative method may not be enough as they have strengths and weaknesses of their own (Punch, 2009). Creswell (2009) states that mixed method research design makes use of both qualitative and quantitative forms. It encompasses philosophical presumptions, qualitative and quantitative methods as well as mixing the both in a research study. Hence, it is not only gathering data and analyzing, but also putting both of these methods in a framework whose strength is greater than that of qualitative and quantitative methods. Furthermore, Punch (2009) states that while qualitative methods could be powerful in some areas, quantitative methods can be strong in others. That's why using both methods can compensate for each other's weaknesses when they are used together. All in all, by making use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the researcher sought to collect valid and reliable data. In addition to that, shortcomings of each method were minimized by employing the both methods. Hence, a questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data, and a student interview was used to collect qualitative data.

3.2. Setting

Gazi University is one of the largest universities in Ankara, Turkey and it was established in 1926 as teacher's training school. In 1976, it became Faculty of Education and finally in 1982 it became Gazi University. The study took place at Gazi University School of Foreign Languages which is also located in Ankara, Turkey. The

school offers one-year extensive language courses which are compulsory for some departments. Before students can continue their studies at their departments, they have to finish one-year compulsory language education and be successful. The departments are Medicine, Business Administration, Electronic Engineering, Computer Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Civil Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Architecture, Urban and Regional Planning and International Relations. There are also language education departments; English Language Teaching, French Language Teaching, German Language Teaching, and Arabic Language Teaching. The number of students who choose to study at these departments may change yearly, however there were about 1100 students in total when the study was carried out.

The classes at school of Foreign languages are 50 minutes long and five days a week. Students have to attend 85% of the classes throughout an academic year. Also, there are 6 midterm exams and one final exam as well as pop-up quizzes and portfolio studies. If students fail to pass the class or they have enrolled in the school for the first time, they have to take the proficiency test at the beginning of the year. The proficiency test measures students' abilities in listening, reading, writing and speaking and is conducted in two days. The listening test has 4 listening tracks on various topics, lectures, dialogues or conversations whose lengths range from 3 to 5 minutes. Students are given 5 multiple choice questions for each listening track. The reading test has 2 paragraphs which are 500 words long each and the section must be finished in 50 minutes in total. In the writing test, students are asked to write a paragraph on a given topic in 50 minutes. Lastly, the speaking test is conducted as an interview by an instructor. Those who pass the test are acknowledged to be successful and can start to study at their departments. If they fail, they have to take the placement test. In the placement test, students are evaluated on their reading, listening, writing and speaking abilities. Each test has sections that have different degree of difficulty, which is in parallel with a placement test. Students are placed in classes in accordance with their levels in respect to the results of the exam. There are three proficiency levels; starter, elementary and pre-intermediate.

3.3. Participants

The study was carried out with the participation of 500 students. Gay (1996) suggests that for a population around 1000, a sample consisting of %20 of the total population is enough. In our case, the sample size was twice the recommended number.

The students were from Medicine, Business Administration, Electronic Engineering, Computer Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Civil Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Architecture, Urban and Regional Planning, and International Relations departments which require compulsory English courses. English Language Teaching students weren't included in the study as they receive different classes and their language proficiency levels were different. The students had three different proficiency levels, starter, elementary and pre-intermediate. Those who were at pre-intermediate level weren't included in the study as their numbers were too few to yield any reasonable result. That is why only starter and elementary level students were included in the study. The participants were fairly balanced across age. Ages of participants range from 18 to 21 with a mean of 19.1. The number of female and male students was 240 and 260, respectively.

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

3.4.1. Demographic Information Form.

A demographic information form was given to students to collect information regarding their genders, ages, departments and self-study hours.

3.4.2. BALLI.

Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) was developed by Horwitz in 1987 to identify students' beliefs about language learning. After its development, the scale was used in numerous studies (Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Cortazzi, & Jin, 1996; Siebert, 2003). Kuntz (1996) reviewed research studies using Horwitz's scale. She stated that "…development of the BALLI marked the beginning of systematic research on student beliefs about language learning, and that subsequent research has identified common beliefs that should influence language instruction, curriculum development, textbook writing, and program planning" (p.1).

BALLI (Horwitz, 1987) has 34 items and evaluates beliefs of learners in five areas: 1) Items 1, 2, 6, 10, 11, 16, 19, 30, 33 assess foreign language aptitude; 2) Items 3, 4, 5, 15, 25, 34 assess the difficulty of language learning; 3) Items 8, 12, 17, 23, 27, 28 assess the nature of language learning; 4) items 7, 9, 13, 14, 18, 21, 22, 26 assess learning and communication strategies; 5) items 20, 24, 29, 31, 32 assess motivations and expectations. 32 BALLI items are scored on a five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly

disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. Two items 4 and 15 have different response scales. Item 4 is about the perceived degree of difficulty of English and responses include a) a very difficult language, b) a difficult language, c) a language of medium difficulty, d) and easy language, e) a very easy language. Item 15 inquiries about the time needed to be spent to speak a language very well and the answers include a) less than a year, b) 1-2 years, c) 3-5 years, d) 5-10 years, e) you can't learn a language in one hour a day. The Turkish version of the inventory (Yalçın, 2013) was utilized in the current study. The following changes were made by Yalçın (2013) in the inventory. In item 4, the expression "the language I'm trying to learn" was replaced with "English"; in item 8, rather than the expression "the foreign culture", "English-speaking cultures" was used; in items 7, 9, 12, 14, 21 the expression "the/a foreign language" was replaced with "English"; in items 5, 24, 28, 29, 3,1 instead of the expression "this language", "English" was used; in item 12, the expression "English-speaking country" took the place of the phrase "the foreign country"; the word "Americans" was replaced with "native speakers of English in item 13, with "native speakers of English in item 24 and with "friends whose native language is English" in item 32; in item 36 the phrase "cassettes or tapes" was replaced with "audio materials".

3.4.3. Final Exam.

The results of final exam conducted at Gazi University Preparatory school were utilized for this research. The exam measures four main skills, namely listening, reading, writing and speaking. The first three skills are measured on the first day of the exam. Each section is to be completed in sixty minutes. On the second day, the speaking exam is conducted which takes about fifteen minutes to complete. The listening section has four listening tracks and students are asked to answer the questions according to given instructions. The question types are multiple-choice, filling the gaps with one word, matching and true-false. The reading section has two reading passages, each of which has 3 question types, multiple choice, open ended questions and reference, respectively. In the writing section, students are asked to write a fully organized paragraph on a given topic. In the speaking section, students are first asked guided questions individually and then they are expected to converse with their partners about the topic they are given. In order to ensure score reliability, the writing and speaking sections are cross-checked by two teachers. Each section of the exam is evaluated on a

score of 25. The students' total scores are calculated by adding up the results of four skills' scores.

3.4.4. Interview.

The study aims to analyze learners' beliefs in-depth. Since using an inventory for that purpose may not be enough for reaching out assumptions, an interview is conducted by making use of sub-categories of the scale to understand possible reasons. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state that the research interview is composed of human interaction of daily life and considered to be a professional conversation; therefore, it is a way of collecting data as well as gaining knowledge from people. Collecting data and using it for research purposes have many advantages. Gray (2004) believes that interviews offer highly personalized data and opportunities for probing. Semi-structured interviews are non-standardized and are frequently used in qualitative analysis (David & Sutton, 2004, p. 87). Corbetta (2003) depicts semi-structured interviews as:

The order in which the various topics are dealt with and the wording of the questions are left to the interviewer's discretion. Within each topic, the interviewer is free to conduct the conversation as he thinks fit, to ask the questions he deems appropriate in the words he considers best, to give explanation and ask for clarification if the answer is not clear, to prompt the respondent to elucidate further if necessary, and to establish his own style of conversation (p. 270).

The strength of semi-structured interviews lies within its flexibility to be directed as the interviewer believes right. The researcher can prompt, probe (finding a new path that has not been considered before) and paraphrase when necessary. Hence, a semi-structured interview is a powerful tool in research, especially, to explore concepts that have not been considered before.

From this point of view, the researcher prepared a set of 5 interview questions that explore possible reasons of learners' beliefs on five dimensions (motivations & expectations, foreign language aptitude, nature of language learning, communication strategies and difficulty of language learning) depicted in BALLI. The interview questions were evaluated by two foreign language teachers and necessary edits were made.

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

Prior to the conduction of the questionnaires, the researcher got the necessary permissions by contacting the administration. The students were informed that they had the right not to complete the questionnaire and this had no effect on their grades. The students were also given information regarding their rights to secure the ethical aspects of the research. The questionnaire was implemented in 2018-2019 academic year with the participation of 500 students. 240 (48%) of the students were female and 260 (52%) of them were male. The questionnaire took about 15 minutes to complete.

The interviews were made privately with the students who volunteered for the interview. In order not to miss any important detail and information, the researcher got the permission to record the interviews. The students were given information about the nature of the study to make sure they feel safe giving answers to the questions. The interviews were held in Turkish as the proficiency levels of the students may prevent them from speaking their minds while answering the questions. Interviews were recorded with a high quality sound recording device to increase validity and each interview took about 5 minutes. In order to ensure reliability, intercoder agreement (cross-checking) was employed. Intercoder agreement is a procedure where a single researcher finds another person who can cross-check codes (Creswell, 2009). Miles and Hubermam (1994) recommend that the consistency of coding should be in agreement at least 80% of the time for good qualitative reliability. In the current study consistency rate was 93%.

3.6. Data Analysis

In the research, necessary data were obtained by means of questionnaires and interviews. Out of 600 posted questionnaires, 568 of them were returned and incomplete ones were discarded. In total 519 questionnaires were included in the data set. 28 participants took part in the interview sessions. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed and various statistical analysis were performed. In addition, preliminary analyses were carried out to reveal if there were any outliers for the study's data set. According to the results, 19 responses were excluded. Following that, normality test was conducted for 500 responses. The data for this set were normally distributed for the most part and they were under the curve shape in the histogram. Furthermore, majority of the scores were cumulated around the Q-Q plot line, which suggests that data for this set were normally distributed (see appendices c and d).

For normally distributed data, parametric tests are used (Pallant, 2011). That's why to find answers to research questions 1 to 6, parametric tests were employed. For the 7th research question, which is related to qualitative data, content analysis was employed. In the study, both descriptive and inferential analyses were utilized. As the first research question intends to discover the overall beliefs of the participants about language learning, descriptive analyses were conducted. Descriptive statistics have a number of uses. In order to describe characteristics of your data or to address specific research questions, descriptive analysis can be performed (Pallant, 2011). For the second, third and fourth research questions, which aim to compare participants' language learning beliefs with respect to their genders, study hours, and proficiency levels, independent samples t-tests were administered, which are used to compare the means of two independent variables (Nachar, 2008). The fifth research question aimed to discover the correlation between the participants' language learning beliefs and their academic achievement. When there are two continuous variables, Pearson Product Moment Correlation can be performed (Morgan, Reichert, & Harrison, 2016). Therefore, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to discover the relationship between overall language learning beliefs and academic achievement. After finding the correlation between learner beliefs and academic achievement, Multiple Regression analyses were performed to identify the best predictor of achievement. Multiple regression analyses can be used to explore the relationship between one continuous dependent variable and a number of independent variables (Pallant, 2011).

In order to answer the seventh and last research question, interview recordings were transcribed and content analysis was performed afterwards. Holsti (1969) concisely defines content analysis as any technique for drawing conclusions and systematically defining specified characteristics of messages. Krippendorf (1980) states that content analysis is a systematic, replicable approach for summarizing a text by the help of content categories based on clear rules of coding. As the answers of the students may vary to a great extent for a given question, content analysis is required for categorizing the answers to draw logical conclusions from them. Stemler (2001) explains the strength of content analysis as:

If content analysis technique is used in the right manner, it offers an effective way of compiling data. The greatest perk of it is being systematic for summarizing a

great number of words by making use of definite rules of coding. It's not just counting words randomly, but putting them in categories systematically (p. 5).

Therefore, content analysis is good for examining trends and patterns in an interview while explaining reasons for their existence. That is why it is an effective method for understanding a phenomenon deeply.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter reports on participants' responses to items in the questionnaire and compare their beliefs with respect to gender, proficiency levels and study hours. Furthermore, the correlational relationship between beliefs and achievement was reported along with qualitative data.

4.1. Research Question 1: *What are the overall beliefs of the participants about language learning?*

4.1.1. Language Aptitude.

Beliefs about language learning with respect to language aptitude are related to whether participants believe in the existence of specialized abilities concerning language learning. The descriptive findings in this respect are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Learners' Responses about Language Aptitude

Items	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Not Sure f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly Agree f (%)	Mean
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	2 (0.4)	4 (0.8)	29 (5.8)	139 (27.8)	326 (65.2)	4.56
2. Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	9 (1.8)	15 (3.0)	52 (10.4)	165 (33)	259 (51.8)	4.30
6. People from my country are good at learning foreign languages.	62 (12.4)	142 (28.4)	220 (44.0)	59 (11.8)	17 (3.4)	2.65
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	7 (1.4)	22 (4.4)	93 (18.6)	241 (48.2)	137 (27.4)	3.95

11. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.	187 (37.4)	131 (26.2)	96 (19.2)	40 (8)	46 (9.2)	3.74
16. I have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	180 (36)	127 (25.4)	132 (26.4)	48 (9.6)	13 (2.6)	2.17
19. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	149 (29.8)	117 (23.4)	153 (30.6)	39 (7.8)	42 (8.4)	2.41
30. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	113 (22.6)	125 (25.0)	156 (31.2)	78 (15.6)	28 (5.6)	2.56
33. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	23 (4.6)	42 (8.4)	95 (19)	146 (29.2)	194 (38.8)	3.89

The table clearly shows that a large proportion of the students (93%) believe that learning a language is easier for children than adults. Only an insignificant percent of them disagree with the 1st item. As for the 2nd item, whether some people have a special ability for learning languages, almost 84% of students agree with the statement and about 10% of them are not sure. Almost half of the students are not sure whether Turkish people are good at learning foreign languages and most of the rest are negative about Turkish people's ability to learn a foreign language. While 77% of the students believe that speaking a foreign language makes it easier to learn another foreign language, more than 5% of them disagree with the statement. For the 11th item, which addresses the relationship between mathematics or science and foreign language, more than 60% of the students do not believe in such connection. However, 17.2% of them agree with the statement. Similarly, more than 60% of the students are negative about their abilities in learning a foreign language. For the 19th gender related item , whether women are better than men at learning foreign languages, more than half of the students disagree with the statement and 30% is not sure about it. While more than a quarter of students think that speaking more than one language is related to being intelligent,

almost half of the students do not think these two concepts are related. Interestingly, despite students' disbelief in Turkish people's ability in learning a foreign language, almost 70% of the students state that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.

4.1.2. Difficulty of Language Learning.

Beliefs about language learning with respect to language difficulty are related to the general difficulty of learning a foreign language. The descriptive findings in this respect are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Learners' Responses about the Difficulty of Language Learning

Items	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Not Sure f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly Agree f (%)	Mean
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	8 (1.6)	13 (2.6)	80 (16)	194 (38.8)	205 (41)	4.15
5. I believe that I can learn to speak a foreign language very well.	12 (2.4)	34 (6.8)	141 (28.2)	182 (36.4)	131 (26.2)	3.77
25. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.	135 (27)	176 (35.2)	114 (22.8)	40 (8)	35 (7)	2.32
34. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	40 (8)	60 (12)	119 (23.8)	130 (26)	151 (30)	3.58

An overwhelming percentage of students (79%) believe that some languages are easier to learn than others. In a similar way, almost 63% of the respondents are optimistic about speaking a foreign language very well. Almost 30% are not sure about the statement. As for the 25th item, 62.7% of the students think that speaking a language is not easier than understanding it. Only a small percentage of them think that speaking a foreign language is easier than understanding it. In parallel with the previous item, more than half of the students believe that reading and writing English is easier than speaking and understanding it.

Table 4
Learners' Responses about the Difficulty of English

Item	A very difficult language f (%)	A difficult language f (%)	A language of medium difficulty f (%)	An easy language f (%)	A very easy language f (%)	Mean
4. English is	15 (3)	91 (18.2)	306 (61.2)	76 (15.2)	12 (2.4)	2.95

For the 4ᵗʰ item, which explores how difficult English is, students are supposed to choose an option ranging from very easy to very difficult. In answer to the question, most of students (%61.2) find English a medium difficulty language. While more than a quarter of them think it's easy, more than %20 believe that it is hard.

Table 5
Learners' Responses about the Time Required to Speak English Fluently

Item	Less than a year f (%)	1-2 years f (%)	3-5 years f (%)	5-10 years f (%)	You can't learn a language in one hour a day f (%)	Mean
15. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language very well?	100 (20)	259 (51.8)	84 (16.8)	17 (3.4)	40 (8)	2.27

For the 15ᵗʰ item of the questionnaire, which asks the necessary time for speaking a language fluently by studying one hour a day, more than half of the respondents seem to believe that it takes 1-2 years to speak a language. 20% of them think it takes less than a year while almost 17% believe it requires 3-5 years to achieve fluency in a given language.

4.1.3. The Nature of Language Learning.

Beliefs about language learning with respect to nature of language concern issues relevant to the nature of language learning process and how languages are best learnt. The descriptive findings in this respect are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Learners' Responses about the Nature of Language Learning

Items	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Not Sure f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly Agree f (%)	Mean
8. It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English.	56 (11.2)	131 (26.2)	159 (31.8)	99 (19.8)	54 (10.8)	2.93
12. It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.	3 (0.6)	6 (1.2)	27 (5.4)	117 (23.4)	347 (69.4)	4.59
17.The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words.	4 (0.8)	27 (5.4)	106 (21.2)	224 (44.8)	139 (27.8)	3.93
23.The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar.	92 (18.4)	164 (32.8)	161 (32.2)	68 (13.6)	15 (3.0)	2.50
27. Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects.	4 (0.8)	15 (3.0)	36 (7.2)	161 (32.2)	284 (56.8)	4.41
28. The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.	65 (13.0)	134 (26.8)	189 (37.8)	81 (16.2)	31 (6.2)	2.75

While 37.4% of the learners believe that it's not necessary to know English-speaking cultures to speak English, almost 30% think otherwise. An overwhelming majority of the learners think that English can best be learnt in an English-speaking country. While almost 75% percent of the respondents think that it's vocabulary that matters most in learning a foreign language, 20% of them are not sure about it. Half of the respondents think that grammar is not crucial in learning a language and more than 30% are not sure whether grammar has an important place in language learning process. More than 90% of learners believe that learning a foreign language is different from

learning other academic subjects. Lastly, those who say translation is an important element of learning English are more than 20% while almost 40% think that it is not an important part of learning. A similar percentage of the learners are not sure about it.

4.1.4. Communication Strategies.

Beliefs about language learning with respect to communication strategies refer to specific strategies learners employ to master a foreign language. The descriptive findings in this respect are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Learners' Responses about Learning and Communication Strategies

Items	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Not Sure f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly Agree f (%)	Mean
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.	28 (5.6)	112 (22.4)	139 (27.8)	141 (28.2)	80 (16.0)	3.26
9. You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.	319 (63.8)	113 (22.6)	52 (10.4)	13 (2.6)	3 (0.6)	4.46
13. I enjoy practicing English with the native speakers of English I meet.	14 (2.8)	36 (7.2)	101 (20.2)	175 (35.0)	174 (34.8)	3.91
14. It's o.k. to guess if you don't know a word in English.	20 (4.0)	61 (12.2)	147 (29.4)	194 (38.8)	78 (15.6)	3.49
18. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	0 (0)	8 (1.6)	38 (7.6)	194 (38.8)	260 (52)	4.41
21. I feel timid speaking English with other people.	81 (16.2)	113 (22.6)	126 (25.2)	108 (21.6)	72 (14.4)	2.95
22. If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on.	174 (34.8)	138 (27.6)	99 (19.8)	69 (13.8)	20 (4)	2.24
26. It is important to practice with audio materials.	3 (0.6)	12 (2.4)	43 (8.6)	220 (44)	222 (44.4)	4.29

Almost 30% of the learners assume that speaking English with an excellent pronunciation is not important while more than 40% of them believe it is. A great majority of the respondents (86.2%) disagree with the statement that "You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly". Almost 70% state that they enjoy practicing English with the native speakers while only 10% do not agree with the statement. More than half of the learners think that it is O.K. to guess an unknown word, however nearly 30% of them are not sure about it. 90% of the students attach importance to practicing and repeating and almost no one disagrees with the statement. For the statement "I feel timid speaking English with other people.", learners seem to have different opinions. While almost 40% of the respondents disagree with the statement, a similar percentage of the students do not feel timid speaking English with other people. A quarter of the respondents are not sure about it. More than 70% of the students think that errors must be tolerated for the beginner level students, which wouldn't make it difficult for them to speak correctly later on. A majority of students (88.4%) think that practicing with audio materials is crucial.

4.1.5. Motivations and Expectations.

Beliefs about language learning with respect to motivations and expectations are related to learners' desire for learning a language as well as expectation for language learning opportunities. The descriptive findings in this respect are presented in Table 8.

Table 8
Learners' Responses about Motivations and Expectations

Items	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Not Sure f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly Agree f (%)	Mean
20. People in my country feel that it is important to speak English.	20 (4.0)	52 (10.4)	101 (20.2)	181 (36.2)	146 (29.2)	3.76
24. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know native speakers of English better.	13 (2.6)	36 (7.2)	61 (12.2)	226 (45.2)	164 (32.8)	3.98
29. If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.	2 (0.4)	6 (1.2)	16 (3.2)	96 (19.2)	380 (76.0)	4.69

				74		
31. I want to learn to speak English well.	3 (0.6)	2 (0.4)	16 (3.2)	(14.8)	405 (81)	4.75
32. I would like to have friends whose native language is English.	3 (0.6)	10 (2)	62 (12.4)	133 (26.6)	292 (58.4)	4.40

More than 65% of the participants think that Turkish people find it important to speak English. More than three quarters of the learners wish to learn English for the purpose of getting to know native speakers of English. Almost all the learners believe that learning English is a way of finding a good job. Furthermore, they also want to learn English well. Similarly, more than 85% of the participants would like to have friends whose native language is English.

As the first research question intends to discover the overall beliefs of the participants about language learning, descriptive statistics were computed.

Table 9
Means and Standard Deviation of Subcategories for BALLI

Factors	N	M	SD	%
Aptitude	500	3.36	.38	67.2
Difficulty	500	3.17	.43	63.4
Nature	500	3.52	.45	70.4
Communication	500	3.63	.37	72.6
Motivation	500	4.31	.46	86.2
BALL	500	3.56	.24	71.2
Valid N (listwise)	500			

The table displays the descriptive statistics for the subcategories in beliefs about language learning. Measures of central tendency were computed to summarize the data for the beliefs about aptitude, language learning difficulty, nature of language, communication strategies and motivations and expectations variables. Measures of dispersion were computed to understand the variability of scores for each variable. The following are the results of this analysis; for aptitude the result is: N = 500, M=3.36, SD=.38; for beliefs about learning difficulty: N = 500, M=3.17, SD=.43; for nature of language: N = 500, M=3.52, SD=.45; for beliefs about communication and strategy beliefs: N = 500, M=3.63, SD=.37; for beliefs about motivations and expectations: N =

500, M=4.31, SD=.46. When you look at the mean, it appears that students hold strong beliefs in all factors composing the inventory with beliefs about motivation having the highest score followed respectively by communication strategies, nature of language learning, aptitude and difficulty of language learning. Standard deviation scores may suggest little variability (Bland & Altman, 1996) in the responses of the participants across five sub categories of the questionnaire. Therefore, based on the small standard deviation in all factors, it looks like the responses didn't vary much. To state differently, the participants' responses to the questionnaire items dispersed around the mean scores to a small extent.

4.2. Research Question 2: *Is there a significant difference between the participants' overall beliefs with respect to gender?*

In the 2nd research question, overall language learning beliefs and five beliefs dimensions in the questionnaire were compared with respect to gender. Table 10 presents information about mean scores and standard deviation of females' and males' overall beliefs.

Table 10
BALL Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for Gender

Groups	N	M	SD
Females	240	3.60	.23
Males	260	3.52	.25

It can be observed that females scored higher on language learning beliefs compared to males considering the mean scores of both groups. However, further analysis was conducted to see whether this difference was a statistically significant one. The table presents the relevant t-test results.

Table 11
t- test Results Comparing Gender on Overall Beliefs

Learner beliefs	N	M	SD	t	df	P
Females	240	3.60	.23	3.50	498	.01
Males	260	3.52	.25			

p<.05

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare females and males

on overall language learning beliefs. Values which are equal or less than .05 is considered to be statistically significant (Pallant, 2011). In that sense, there was a significant difference in the mean scores for females (M=3.60, SD=.23) and males (M=3.52, SD=.25); t(498)=3.5, p=.01 about language learning beliefs. These results suggest that gender makes a difference in terms of overall language learning beliefs. In other words, females had stronger overall language learning beliefs. In addition, effect magnitude was calculated via Cohen's d formula (d=.24). This calculation can be used when comparing two groups' means. Cohen's d effect size ranges are d=.2 small, d=.5 medium and d=.9 large (Cohen, 1998). In this case, the effect size was small in comparison of genders.

Further analysis was performed to explore mean differences in the different beliefs dimensions of female and male participants. Table 12 presents information regarding difference between females' and males' beliefs on five dimensions in BALLI.

Table 12
t- test Results Comparing Gender on Five Beliefs Dimensions

Dimension	Group	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Aptitude	Females	240	3.39	.36	2	498	**.05**
	Males	260	3.33	.40			
Difficulty	Females	240	3.13	.43	-2.4	498	**.02**
	Males	260	3.22	.43			
Nature	Females	240	3.55	.46	1.8	498	.07
	Males	260	3.48	.43			
Communication	Females	240	3.73	.36	5.9	498	**.00**
	Males	260	3.53	.36			
Motivations	Females	240	4.37	.44	2.7	498	**.01**
	Males	260	4.26	.47			

p<.05

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare females and males on dimensions of language learning beliefs. Values which are equal or less than .05 is considered to be statistically significant (Pallant, 2011). In this respect, there was a significant difference in the mean scores for females (M=3.39, SD=.36) and males (M=3.33, SD=.40); t(498)=2, p=.05 in beliefs about aptitude; females (M=3.13, SD=.43) and males (M=3.22, SD=.43); t(498)=-.42, p=.02 in beliefs about difficulty of

language learning; females (M=3.73, SD=.36) and males (M=3.53, SD=.36); t(498)=-5.9, p=.00 in beliefs about communication strategies; females (M=4.37, SD=.44) and males (M=4.26, SD=.47); t(498)=2.7, p=.01 about beliefs in motivation. However, no significant difference was found between females (M=3.55, SD=.46) and males (M=3.48, SD=.43); t(498)=-1.8, p=.07 in beliefs about nature of language learning. These results suggest that gender had a significant effect on beliefs about aptitude, difficulty, communication strategies and motivations in language learning. Furthermore, females held stronger beliefs in the existence of aptitude and motivation also valued use of various communication strategies more, whereas males found English easier compared to their female counterparts.

4.3. Research Question 3: *Is there a significant difference between the participants' beliefs with respect to study hours?*

In the 3rd research question, overall language learning beliefs and five beliefs dimension in the questionnaire were compared with respect to study hours. Table 13 presents information about mean scores and standard deviation of learners' overall beliefs who study up to 1 hour and more than 1 hour.

Table 13
BALL Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for Study Hours

Groups	N	M	SD
Up to 1 hour	250	3.53	.24
More than 1 hour	250	3.59	.24

It can be observed that learners who study more than 1 hour scored higher on language learning beliefs compared to those who study up to 1 hour considering the mean scores of both groups. However, further analysis was conducted to see whether this difference was a statistically significant one. Table 14 presents the relevant t-test results.

Table 14
t- test Results Comparing Ss as to Study Hours on Overall Beliefs

Learner beliefs	N	M	SD	t	df	P
Up to 1 hour	250	3.53	.24	-2.60	498	.01
More than 1 hour	250	3.59	.24			

p<.05

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare learners studying up to 1 hour and more than 1 hour on language learning beliefs. Values which are less than .05 is considered to be statistically significant (Pallant, 2011). In that sense, there was a significant difference in the mean scores for students who study less than one hour (M=3.53, SD=.24) and who study more than one hour (M=3.59, SD=.24); t(498)=-2.60, p=.01 in terms of language learning beliefs. These results suggest that study hours made a difference in terms of overall language learning beliefs. In addition, effect magnitude was calculated via Cohen's d formula (d=.25). Cohen's d effect size ranges are d=.2 small, d=.5 medium and d=.9 large (Cohen, 1998). In this case, the effect size was small in comparison of study hours.

Further analysis was performed to explore mean differences in the different beliefs dimensions of learners who study up to 1 hour and more than 1 hour. Table 15 presents information regarding difference between the two groups on five dimensions in BALLI.

Table 15
t- test Results Comparing Ss as to Study Hours on Five Belief Dimensions

Dimension	Group	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Aptitude	Up to 1 Hour	250	3.36	.38	-.29	498	.78
	More than 1 hour	250	3.37	.38			
Difficulty	Up to 1 Hour	250	3.15	.45	-1.35	498	.18
	More than 1 hour	250	3.20	.41			
Nature	Up to 1 Hour	250	3.49	.44	-1.76	498	.08
	More than 1 hour	250	3.56	.45			
Communication	Up to 1 Hour	250	3.59	.38	-2.7	498	**.01**
	More than 1 hour	250	3.68	.36			
Motivations	Up to 1 Hour	250	3.28	.46	-1.9	498	.06
	More than 1 hour	250	3.36	.46			

p<.05

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare learners studying up to 1 hour and more than 1 hour on dimensions of language learning beliefs. Values which are equal or less than .05 is considered to be statistically significant (Pallant, 2011). In this respect, there was a significant difference in the mean scores between those who study less than 1 hour (M=3.59, SD=.38) and more than 1 hour (M=3.68,

SD=.36); t(498)=-2.7, p=.01 in beliefs about communication strategies. However, no significant difference was found between those who study less than 1 hour (M=3.36, SD=.38) and more than 1 hour (M=3.37, SD=.38); t(498)=-.29, p=.02 in beliefs about aptitude; those who study more than 1 hour (M=3.15, SD=.45) and less than 1 hour (M=3.20, SD=.41); t(498)=-1.35, p=.18 in beliefs about difficulty of language learning; those who study more than 1 hour (M=3.49, SD=.44) and less than 1 hour (M=3.56, SD=.45); t(498)=-1.76, p=.08 in beliefs about nature of language learning; those who study more than 1 hour (M=3.28, SD=.46) and less than 1 hour (M=3.36, SD=.46); t(498)=-1.9, p=.06 in beliefs about motivation and expectations. These results suggest that study hours make a difference in beliefs about motivations in language learning. In other words, learners who study more than 1 hour valued use of various strategies more than those who study less than 1 hour.

4.4. Research Question 4: *Is there a significant difference between the participants' beliefs with respect to proficiency levels?*

In the 4th research question, overall language learning beliefs and five beliefs dimension in the questionnaire were compared with respect to proficiency levels. Table 16 presents information about mean scores and standard deviation of starter and elementary level learners' overall beliefs.

Table 16
Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for Proficiency Levels

Groups	N	M	SD
Starter	317	3.54	.23
Elementary	183	3.58	.25

It can be observed that elementary level learners scored higher on language learning beliefs compared to starter level counterparts considering the mean scores of both groups. However, further analysis was conducted to see whether this difference was a statistically significant one. Table 17 presents the relevant t-test results.

Table 17
t- Test Results Comparing Ss as to Proficiency Levels on Overall Beliefs

Learner beliefs	N	M	SD	t	df	P
Starter	317	3.54	.23	-1.73	498	.08
Elementary	183	3.58	.25			

p<.05

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare starter and elementary level students on language learning beliefs. Values which are more than .05 are considered to be statistically insignificant (Pallant, 2011). In this respect, there was not a significant difference in the mean scores for starter level students (M=3.54, SD=.23) and elementary level students (M=3.58, SD=.25); t(498)=-1.73, p=.08 in terms of language learning beliefs.

Further analysis was performed to explore mean differences in the different beliefs dimensions of starter and elementary level learners. Table 18 presents information regarding difference between the two groups on five beliefs dimensions.

Table 18
t- test Results Comparing Ss as to Proficiency Levels on Five Belief Dimensions

Dimension	Group	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Aptitude	Starter	317	3.31	.37	-4.2	498	**.00**
	Elementary	183	3.46	.38			
Difficulty	Starter	317	3.13	.44	-3.03	498	**.03**
	Elementary	183	3.25	.41			
Nature	Starter	317	3.55	.44	-2.01	498	**.05**
	Elementary	183	3.47	.45			
Communication	Starter	317	3.63	.38	-.66	498	.512
	Elementary	183	3.62	.37			
Motivations	Starter	317	4.32	.46	.9	498	.925
	Elementary	183	4.32	.47			

p<.05

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare starter and elementary level students on dimensions of language learning beliefs. Values which are equal or less than .05 are considered to be statistically significant (Pallant, 2011). In this respect, there was a significant difference in the mean scores for starter level (M=3.31, SD=.37) and elementary level (M=3.46, SD=.38); t(498)=-4.2, p=.00 in beliefs about

aptitude; starter level (M=3.13, SD=.44) and elementary level (M=3.25, SD=.41); t(498)=-.3.03, p=.03 in beliefs about difficulty of language learning; starter level (M=3.55, SD=.44) and elementary level (M=3.47, SD=.45); t(498)=-2.01, p=.05 in beliefs about nature of language learning. However, no significant difference was found between starter level (M=3.63, SD=.38) and elementary level (M=3.62, SD=.37); t(498)=-.66, p=.512 about beliefs in communication strategies; starter level (M=4.32, SD=.46) and elementary level (M=4.32, SD=.46; t(498)=-.9, p=.512 about beliefs in motivation. These results suggest that level of learners made a difference in aptitude, difficulty and nature of language learning. In other words, elementary level students held stronger beliefs in the existence of aptitude and found English easier. On the other hand, starter level students held stronger dispositions regarding how languages are learnt.

4.5. Research Question 5: *Is there a correlation between the participants' overall beliefs about language learning and academic achievement?*

The 5th research question seeks to find out if there is a correlation between learners' overall language learning beliefs and academic achievement. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. Therefore, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the correlational relationship between the learners' academic achievement and their overall language learning beliefs. The results are displayed in Table 19.

Table 19
Pearson's r Correlation Coefficients for Achievement and Overall Beliefs

BALLI	Academic Achievement
Overall learner Beliefs	.07

N=500, p<0.01

According to Pallant (2011) p values greater than .05 are considered to be statistically insignificant. Therefore, it can be stated that academic achievement and overall language learning beliefs didn't correlate significantly, r=.07, N=500, p=.11. In other words, there was no relationship between students' academic achievements and their overall language learning beliefs.

4.6. Research Question 6: *Can academic achievement be predicted by any dimension of learner beliefs?*

The 6th research question seeks to find out which beliefs dimensions can predict academic achievement best. For that purpose, the correlation between the participants' academic achievement and five related factors were computed through Pearson correlation. Table 20 presents information regarding the results of the correlation.

Table 20
Pearson's r Correlation Coefficients for Achievement and Beliefs Dimensions

	a	b	c	d	e	f
Achievement	1					
Aptitude	.213**	1				
Difficulty	.154**	.187**	1			
Nature	-.049	.213**	.146*	1		
Communication	.146**	.095*	.012*	.327**	1	
Motivation	.000	.230**	.109	.232**	.333*	1

**.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*.Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The statistical analysis indicated statistically significant correlation coefficients between academic achievement and aptitude, difficulty and communication strategies. According to the correlation analysis presented in the table, three variables (aptitude, difficulty and nature) appeared to be correlated with academic achievement. In order to determine the variable which best predicts academic achievement, standard multiple regression analysis was conducted.

Prior to the elaboration of the results, some preliminary tests were performed to ensure that multiple regression test would be best to be conducted. Before regression was performed, assumptions of the test were taken into account. The sample size which should be (N>50+8m (where m=number of independent variables) (Tabachnik&Fidell,2007, p.123) is maintained in our case (500>74). Multicollinearity and singularity along with outliers, normality, homoscedasticity, and independence of residuals were checked and the data were rearranged accordingly. As Tabacnik and Fidell (2007) determined the critical values of Mahalanobis distance in terms of number variables, the critical value for 3 independent variables should be 16.27. The Mahalonobis (13.25<16.27) and Cook's distances (.24<1) were found to be within the desired range and the residuals were normally distributed. Additionally, the residuals

have a straight-line relationship with predicted dependent variable scores. Therefore, the data were appropriate for multiple regression test to be conducted. Accordingly, data were applied for multiple regression coefficient analysis. In table 21, the result of the multiple regression analysis was presented.

Table 21
Multiple Regression for Achievement and Belief Dimensions

Model	Standardized Coefficients	t	sig	Correlation			Collinearity Statistics	
				Zero Order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
Aptitude	.207	8.1	.00	.213	.207	.202	.956	1.046
Difficulty	.113	4.7	.01	.154	.116	.111	.964	1.037
Communi.	.165	2.6	.00	.146	.169	.164	.990	1.010

The model significantly explained 8.6% variance of the dependent variable (R^2=.086; F=15.47; Sig=.000). In other words, there was a 8.6% variance of all three variables on academic achievement. Since this result depicts a general picture of the variables, it is necessary to further examine the regression coefficient to determine the statistically significant predictors of academic achievement.

Further regression coefficients revealed that all three independent variables entered in the model predicted the dependent variable- here academic achievement. Of the independent variables, the best predictor appeared to be aptitude (β=.207; Part=.202; Sig=.00) followed respectively by communication (β=.165; Part=.164; Sig=.00) and difficulty (β=.113; Part=.111; Sig=.01). Based on the results of the multiple regression test, it can be argued that academic achievement of the learners seemed to be affected by aptitude, communication and difficulty. In other words, it can be argued that these three factors predicted the achievement of the participants.

4.7. Research Question 7: *What are the participants' perceived beliefs about language learning in relation to motivations and expectations, the difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, learning and communication strategies, and the nature of language learning?*

In order analyze qualitative data collected by means of interviews, thematic content analysis was used. Thematic content analysis was employed to explore patterns and themes for each question.

4.7.1. Motivations and expectations

For the first interview question that seeks to explore motivations and expectations of learners, interviewees were asked the question "Why do you learn English? What motivates you?". The answers were divided around the category motivations and expectations. The categorization of the responses is presented in the figure. The number in the bubbles shows the frequency of the answer.
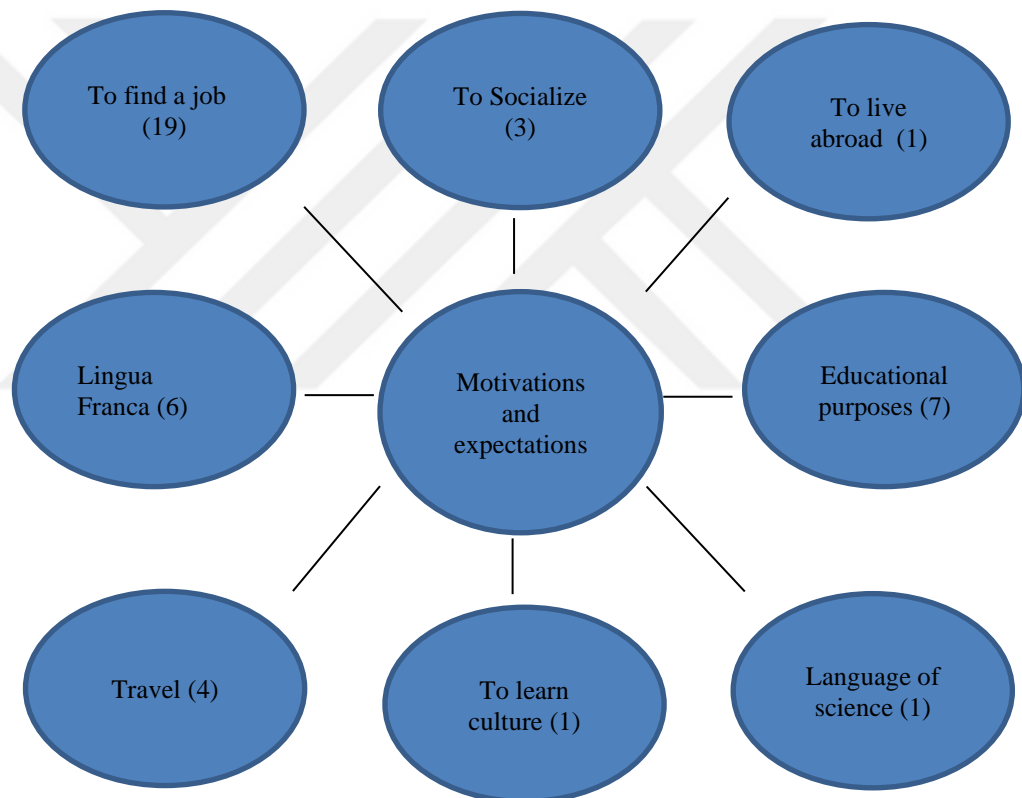
Figure 1: Answers Regarding Motivations and Expectations

Most participants stated more than one reason regarding the reason why they learn English. An overwhelming number of learners believed that English is necessary for finding a job. This is the main motivation for learning English.7 of the participants stated that they learn English for educational purposes. 6 of them consider English a lingua franca.

P1: Knowing English will help me find a job in the future. This will in turn provide me a better life, which motivates me to learn English.

Even if some participants don't like English, they find it crucial that they learn English. Many seem to have instrumental motivation for learning the language.

P2: The only reason why I learn English is because of my job. In fact, I don't like learning English.

P19 articulates the place of English among other languages and believes that it's a lingua franca.

P19: It's the most common language in the world and the world is getting smaller. We all need to learn English and it's also necessary for my job.

P20 believes that most resources are in English that's why in order to further one's education and improve oneself, English is a must.

P20: It's necessary for my education as resources are generally in English. It's also good to learn about a culture.

P17 desires to go abroad and by being able to speak English, she will be able to express herself better.

P17: I would like to go abroad and by learning a language, I will be able to express myself a lot better.

In conclusion, participants are motivated to learn English and they have instrumental motivations mostly. Their future goals are determinative in learning English.

4.7.2. Difficulty of English

For the second interview question that seeks to explore learners' beliefs in language learning difficulty, interviewees were asked the question "How difficult is English in general? What part of it is the most difficult and why?". The answers were divided around the category of difficulty of English. The categorization of the responses is presented in the figure. The number in the bubbles shows the frequency of the answer.
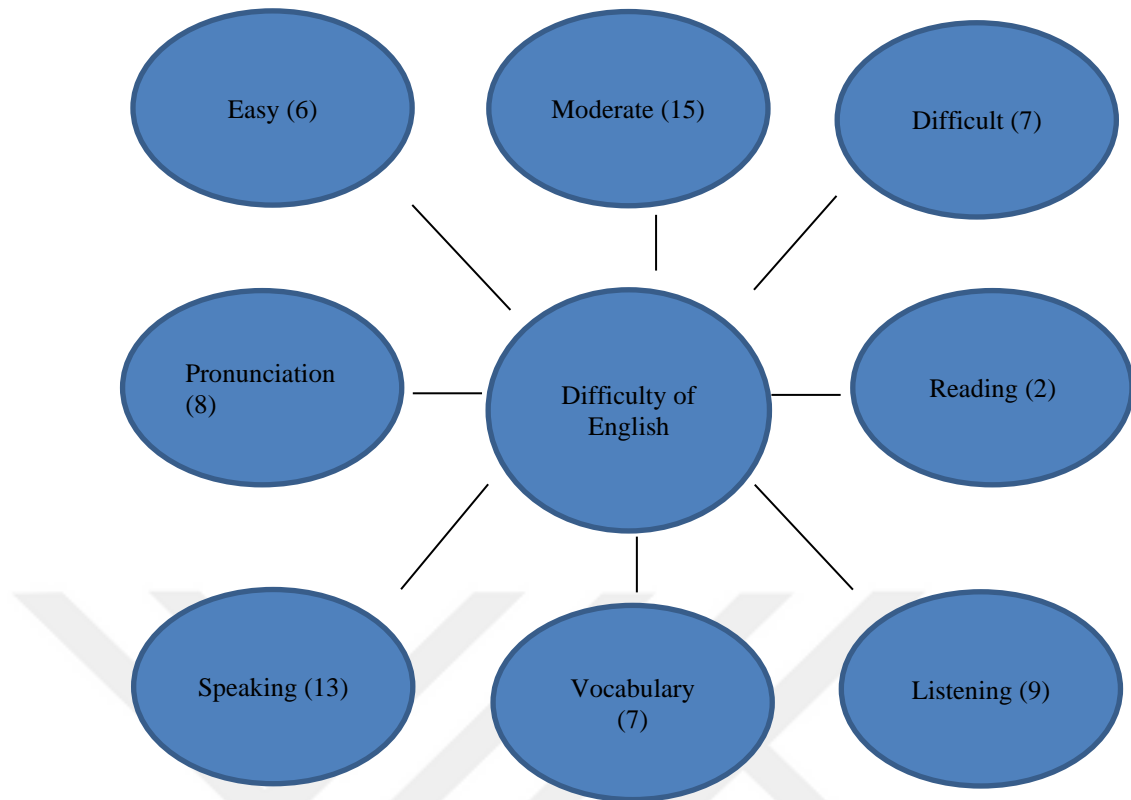
Figure 2: Answers Regarding Difficulty of English

According to the responses, most students find English a moderate difficulty language. A great emphasize has been put on speaking as being the most difficult part. Similarly, participants found pronunciation and listening hard to deal with. They also argued that pronunciation is the cause of speaking and listening being difficult to master. Also, they find vocabulary items hard to learn because there are so many lexical items in English language.

P2: It's a medium level language. The hardest part is listening because words are not spelled as they are pronunciated. Words are swallowed.

P8: It's a difficult language. In fact, the hardest part is speaking and the reason is pronunciation.

P23: It's a medium level language. For my part, listening is the hardest part. Presently, I'm improving and I find it hard to understand native speakers because of pronunciation. If we consider my scores, listening is the lowest.

Some participants pointed out lack of practice as the main cause of speaking's being the hardest part of learning English.

P9: It's a medium level language. Speaking is probably the hardest skill to master because we don't have the chance to speak with natives. We talk to people who are non-native that's why the practice is ineffective.

While some participants found reading as the hardest part of learning English, some of them also stated that it is because of number of lexical items in English. In addition, some participants argued that it is vocabulary items themselves that makes it hard to learn English.

P7: It's a medium level language. I think vocabulary learning is the hardest part. We come across so many unknown words. There are so many words.

P24: It's a medium level language. Reading is hard. Vocabulary items are really challenging. There are so many of them.

One of the participants drew attention to Turks' self-confidence in speaking English.

P13: It's an easy language. Speaking is hard because Turks lack self-confidence and I do, too. I believe it is speaking that is the most challenging.

In conclusion, the participants found speaking, listening and pronunciation hard as well as vocabulary learning. They stated that pronunciation is one of the main causes of their having hardship while speaking and listening. In their view, vocabulary items make it hard to understand a written or spoken text.

4.7.3. Aptitude

For the third interview question that seeks to explore learners' beliefs in language learning aptitude, interviewees were asked the question "Can everyone learn English? Is everyone equal in that sense?". The answers were divided around the category aptitude. The categorization of the responses is presented in the figure. The number in the bubbles shows the frequency of the answer.
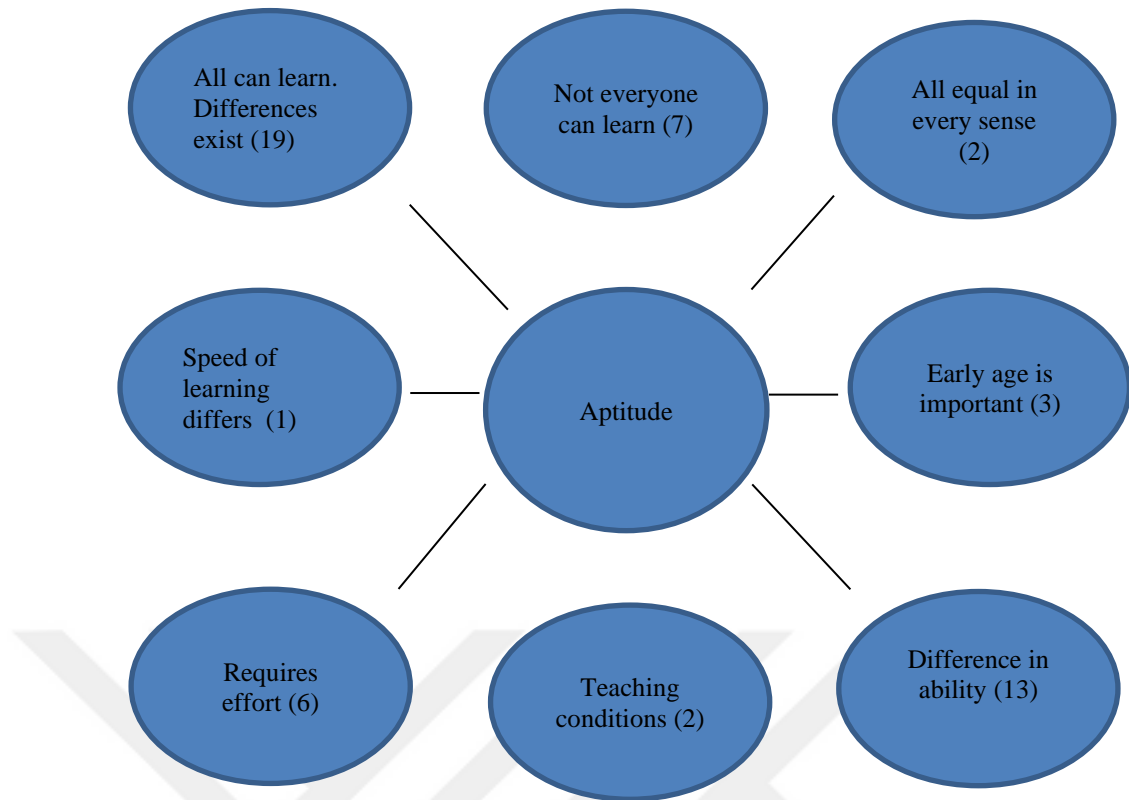
Figure 3: Answers Regarding Aptitude

20 of the participants agreed with the statement that "everyone can learn English" while 8 of them disagreed with the statement. Majority of the participants, whether agreed or not with the statement, argued that there are differences among learners.

P1: Everyone can learn English; however, the process of learning can be easier or harder.

P2: I believe in language aptitude. I think not everyone can learn English to the same degree.

P15: I think everyone is equal.

The amount of effort shown and differences in language aptitude seem to be important factors for the participants.

P10: I believe that everyone is equal as long as they show enough effort.

P28: Everyone can learn but everyone is not equal. Some have aptitude and they learn faster.

Some of the participants put emphasize on age in language learning. They believe that those who start learning English at an early age are more advantageous.

P17: To me, everyone can learn English but everyone is not equal. Some start to learn at an earlier age while some start a little later. Those who start to learn English later are a bit more disadvantageous.

4.7.4. Communication Strategies

For the fourth interview question that seeks to explore learners' beliefs in communication strategies, interviewees were asked the question "What kind of strategies do you use while learning English". The question focused on specific strategies learners employed. The answers were divided around the category of communication. The number in the bubbles shows the frequency of the answer.
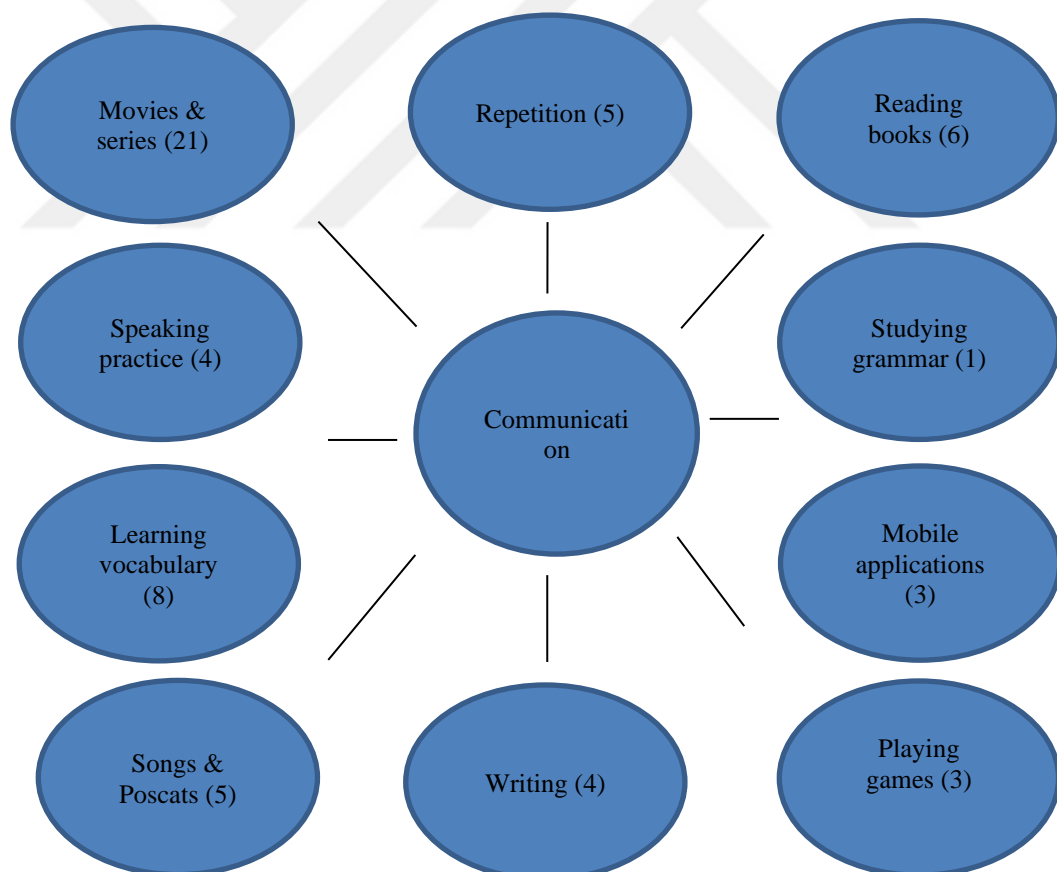
Figure 4: Answers Regarding Communication Strategies

From the responses given to the question, it seems that learners find watching movies and series with subtitles a great way to learn English. Most stated that watching videos with English subtitles, if possible, is very beneficial.

P15: By watching series with English subtitles, one can easily memorize the words as they are repeated so many times. When the same word is repeated continuously, it becomes easier to commit to memory.

P8: In my free time, when I don't feel like studying, I watch movies with Turkish subtitles. If they are easy to understand, I tend to watch with English subtitles.

P5: Watching movies with English subtitles is the most effective way. At least, I can learn the culture of the language and pronunciation of words.

Some participants emphasized self-study and repetition as effective ways of learning a language.

P2: While learning vocabulary, I repeat them by talking to myself.

Listening to songs and podcasts is one of the strategies learners employ as they learn English. They also favored writing short passages and reading books.

P6: I love listening to songs in English...Also I find it very useful to write short passages.

P9: ...I used to listen to podcasts, but now I don't. In the past, I listened to them.

P28: I generally read texts with questions. I also memorize words and write passages.

4.7.5. Nature of language learning

For the fifth interview question that seeks to explore learners' beliefs in nature of language learning, interviewees were asked the question "What is the best way of learning English in general" to understand their ideas regarding how languages are best learnt. The answers were divided around the category of nature. The categorization of the responses is presented in the figure. The number in the bubbles shows the frequency of the answer.
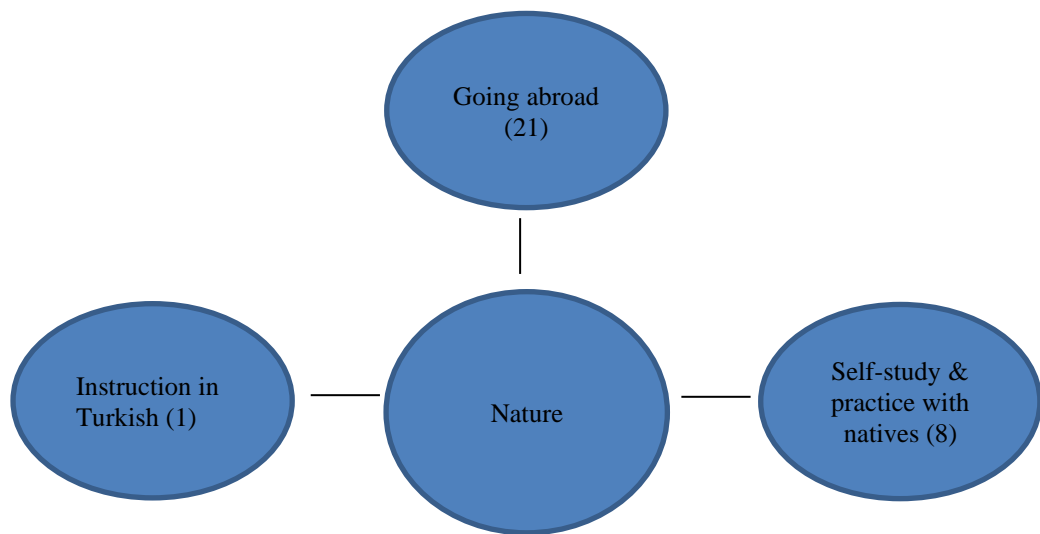
Figure 5: Answers Regarding Nature of Language

A majority of the respondents stated that going abroad (living or studying there) is the best way of learning a language. They also pointed out that living in an English speaking community would force them to communicate in the target language so that they would have no choice other than talking to other people.

P2: Going abroad and communicating with foreigners constantly is the best way.

P3: Only by living in a country where the mother tongue is English can people learn it.

P8: In fact, I can give you the best answer. The reason why we speak Turkish so well is because of the fact that we live among people who speak Turkish. To me, the best thing to do is to live among people who speak English and so that we are forced to communicate.

Some respondents also argued that it would be possible to learn English by communicating with foreigners by means of applications or interweaving English with life by constantly being occupied with the language.

P16: Talking to foreigners could help. There are many applications for it.

P25: If we embed English in our lives, it is possible to learn it. When one studies English like a school subject, he/she cannot learn it, especially in limited time.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this section, quantitative data results are explained with the help of qualitative data.

5.1. Research Question 1

There are five factors in BALLI which are beliefs about aptitude, difficulty of language learning, nature of language learning, communication strategies and motivations and expectations. The result of the study showed that among the factors presented in BALLI, motivations and expectations factor has the highest mean score which is parallel with Chang and Shen's (2010) and Lee's (2014) findings.

In this research study, the results showed learners strongly believe that children can learn a foreign language a lot easier compared to adults. This result is similar to results of other studies carried out in different contexts (Oh, 1996; Altan, 2006; Diab, 2006; Suwanarak, 2012). Participants' beliefs in children's aptitude and positive effect of young age in language learning are supported by other research studies (Donato, Antonek & Tucker, 1996). However, this popular belief may hinder learners' progress and may lead them to develop negative attitudes towards language learning (Bernat & Llyod, 2007).

Participants also believed that some people have special abilities in learning a language and those who already speak a language can learn another easier. This finding is consistent with many other studies (Bernat & Lloyd, 2007; Suwanarak, 2012; Öz, 2007). They also stated that everyone can learn a language; however, they didn't believe that they had any special skills in language learning. These results suggest that even though the participants believed in the existence of language aptitude, they didn't believe that they are equipped with any special skills. Similarly, they disagreed with the idea that Turks are good at learning languages, which is parallel with Altan's finding (2006). Horwitz (1998) attributes this situation to learners' misconceptions about language learning and finding themselves partly unqualified or not having necessary skills. In a similar way, they may believe that they lack intelligence (Mantle-Bromley, 1995). On the other hand, it can be said that participants do not seem to believe in the necessity of language aptitude in order to learn a language.

The study also showed that the participants held strong beliefs regarding facilitative effect of knowing a foreign language while learning another. This notion is also backed up by other studies (Swain, 1990; Selinker & Cohen, 1995; De Angelis, 2007). These studies showed that those who know a foreign language can pick up an additional language faster. This belief could be the idea that similarities such as vocabulary items in different languages may help learning process. On the other hand, participants disagreed with the idea that multilinguals are more intelligent, which is parallel with Diab's (2006) results. Studies about the connection between multilingualism and intelligence yielded different results, though. Darcy (1953) and Keshavarz & Astaneh (2004) found that the two variables are negatively correlated; however, some other studies found a positive correlation (Eisenstein, 1980; Thomas, 1988).

The participants also didn't believe that women are better than men at learning a foreign language. A similar result was found in Siebert (2003), Altan (2006) and Al Bataineh's (2019) studies. In this respect, according to learners, gender doesn't have an effect on language learning process. This can be partly verified because in terms of strategy use, there could be differences between men and women, which results in differences in language achievement (Pustjens, Van Damme & De Munter, 2006).

In response to difficulty levels of different languages, the participants stated that some languages are easier than others. Similar results were found in other studies (Diab, 2000; Hong, 2006). The learners may believe that closely related languages would be easier to learn (Odlin, 1989). Learners also found English a medium level difficulty language and argued that it would take 1-2 years to learn. In addition, they were confident that they would learn English eventually. These results were parallel with findings of Yang (1992), Truitt (1995), Kunt (1997) and Kim-Yoon (2000). However, an important point must be underlined. Mantle-Bromley (1995) states that if learners get disappointed in their expectations regarding, for example, the time it takes to learn a language, they experience cognitive dissonance. In other words, students who may not be able to learn English in two years could be frustrated and eventually give up.

Most of the participants also found speaking harder than writing and reading. Similar findings were found in other studies (Diab, 2006; Hong, 2006; Bernat & Lloyd, 2007). This may stem from the fact that conversations are spontaneous and also requires listening abilities. In addition, in classes where traditional methods are employed, little

importance is given to improve speaking abilities (Liyong, 2006). For that reason, the learners may not have had the chance to compare difficulty of all language skills. .

When beliefs about nature of language learning are examined, it can be seen that the participants disagreed with or were either not sure about the necessity of learning the culture of target language. Similar results were also found in some studies (Ariogul et al, 2009; Mudra, 2016). However, conflicting findings were also reported in some studies (Bernat & Lloyd, 2007; Yazıcı, 2014). One thing to consider here is that culture is an important element of language and must be integrated into curriculum, which makes learning more enjoyable and meaningful (Er, 2006).

The participants also strongly believed in learning English in a country where English is the mother tongue. This finding is coherent with other studies (Daif-Allah, 2012; Yazıcı, 2014; Al-Batanieh, 2018). The idea may stem from the notion that when someone lives in a foreign country, they have to learn the language in order to survive and integrate into the society.

While most participants valued vocabulary learning, they didn't give much importance to grammar and translation. This finding is similar to Park (1995), Altan (2006) and Al-Batanieh's (2018) results. These three traditional learning views are well entrenched in the minds of those who received education in classes where such methods are employed widely. Therefore, students who considered these as the only important components or strategies may have false beliefs about necessary knowledge for learning a language and may invest most of their time into them (Mantle-Bromley, 1995).

The majority of the participants attached importance to pronunciation and repetition. This result is supported by other studies as well (Yang, 1992; Park, 1995; Altan, 2006; Bernat and Llyod, 2007). As for pronunciation, caution must be exercised because striving for perfect pronunciation may leave learners tongue-tied and cause frustration. Emphasizing on repetition may show the strong inherent place of behaviorist approach to language learning. On the other hand, this may also be related to vocabulary learning as they think that exposure to lexical items repeatedly can increase its effectivity (Muller, 2018).

The learners had strong beliefs regarding tolerance in mistakes while learning English. They believed that mistakes are a natural part of learning process. In addition,

the learners also agreed with guessing unknown words. This finding is parallel with Diab's (2006), Bernat & Lloyd's (2007) and Al-Batanieh's (2018) findings. In this respect, learners didn't seem to agree with behaviorist approaches to language learning which favor error-free production (Benati & Angelovska, 2016).

A great majority of the participants' responses regarding communicating with native speakers indicated that the learners desired to engage with native speakers of English. Also, Ariogul et. al (2009) and Mudra (2016) found similar results in their research. This attitude is considered to be important especially on affective factors and facilitate language learning process (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998). On the other hand, a third of the participants stated that they feel timid while speaking English. Bernat & Lloyd's (2007) found the same result in their studies. This kind of hesitation in productive skills may stem from inhibitions like fear of syntax and vocabulary, prejudices and closed mind, fear of failure and other affective factors (Vemuri, Ram & Kota, 2013).

Most of the participants also put emphasize on making use of audio materials in their responses. Similar results were also found in other studies (Diab, 2006; Yazıcı, 2014). This strong idea of using audio materials in learning process may prove the increasing popularity of communicative language teaching techniques and the learners may have internalized them (Muller, 2018).

The respondents held strong beliefs in all items in motivations and expectations factor which is parallel with findings of many studies (Altan, 2006; Rieger 2009; Mudra, 2016; Al-Batanieh, 2018) . They expressed their desire to learn English to have a job which shows their extrinsic motivation. Even if such motivation is deemed to be inferior to intrinsic motivation, studies showed that it is necessary for long term language learning (Muller, 2018). They also stated that they wish to learn English to make friends who speak English, which suggests that the learners also have intrinsic motivation to learn English. In this regard, they embodied both types of motivation, which was also seen in other studies (Wang, 1996; Bernat & Lloyd, 2007).

5.2. Research Question 2

The result of this research study showed that there was a significant difference between males and females regarding their language learning beliefs. Öz (2007), Rieger

(2012), Nahavandi & Mukundan (2014) and Dada (2018) arrived at a similar conclusion in their studies. First of all, the difference may stem from the fact that males and females behave differently in terms of language learning as indicated by quantitative studies (Dörnyei, 2005). Also, behaviors and beliefs are under each other's influence (James; 1992). Therefore, it may be assumed that beliefs of males and females can be affected by their learning behaviors. Another assumption is that males and females are different in their communication strategies. The interviews conducted with the participants showed that males depended more on traditional strategies more than females did. They valued repetition to a great extent. Women, on the other hand, put more emphasize on speaking activities and interaction. Legato (2005) states that women, compared to men, make more use of activities that are important to interaction. In parallel with this argument, Nyikos (2008) points out that women tend to encourage their partners to talk more.

Between the genders, a significant difference was found in terms of beliefs in aptitude. The results of the interviews showed that women tended to believe in the existence of aptitude more strongly than males did. Males attributed learning English to effort and in some cases stated that everyone is equal in every sense. In addition, they also mentioned effect of extrinsic factors such as type of school and economic conditions. Carroll and Sapon (1959) conducted a research study by using a standardized aptitude test to evaluate the differences between genders in terms of language learning. The study showed that women were significantly different in some areas. To some extent, this can also be linked to social context. Beal (1994) argues that parents talk more to their daughters and prompt more responses than their sons. So, this attitude may have an effect on female understanding of communication from an early age.

In the study, genders differed on their motivations and expectations. Gu (2002) states that females attach more importance to language learning than man for their future prospects. Young and Oxford (1997) explains this with women's supportive manner towards themselves by setting up rewards and self-encouragement in the face of challenges. In this respect, they tend to be more motivated or have stronger beliefs. Furthermore, most participants in the study mentioned the necessity of learning a language for finding a job. However, in some cases only females mentioned learning a language for travel purposes or cultural interaction.

Also cultural elements must be taken into account when examining beliefs of learners. Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) argue that cultural background and society also have an effect on beliefs, and learners bring these beliefs into the classroom. To explain this, Daif-Allah's (2012) study can be utilized. In his study, he noticed that women, compared to men, were less motivated in language learning for occupational purposes. He argues that this difference stemmed from Saudi Arabia's closed society and women's fewer opportunities, compared to men, in finding a job. This result is in stark contrast with other studies (Mudra, 2016; Al-Batanieh, 2018) where women held stronger beliefs in learning English for occupational purposes. Therefore, the place where women are positioned in a society can also be influential in determining beliefs of genders.

5.3. Research Question 3

With respect to the third research question, which compares students who study less than 1 hour and more than one hour their overall beliefs, very little research has been done. However, it must be noted that the relationship between beliefs and attitudes are directly interrelated (Riley, 1996) and is a two-way street, which means they have effect on each other (James; 1992). In this research study, a significant difference was found between learners' study hours and their beliefs. Bandura (1986) states that one's judgements about themselves and the task determine the time spent and effort put in the face of challenges. In this sense, one possible explanation is that learners' beliefs could determine the amount of time put into learning or vice versa.

Those who study more than one hour had stronger overall language learning beliefs and the main difference was spotted in the factor of communication strategies. This result is in contrast with Lee's (2014) study where he found no statistical significant difference between learners' beliefs with respect to study hours. The difference between the studies may have resulted from the contexts because above mentioned research was conducted with participants whose ages ranged from 20 to 40 and the sample size was relatively small (n=84). On the contrary, in the current study, the sample size was relatively big (n=500) and the group was homogenous in terms of age ranging from 19 to 21. Pallant (2009) states that sample size can affect the result of a study significantly. Also, age is a factor that can affect a learners' personality, learning style or learning experience (Griffiths, 2008). Therefore, the result of Lee's (2014) study and the current study could have deviated from each other on these grounds.

As for the result regarding factor, communication strategies, Horwitz (1988) and Abraham & Vann (1987) state that there are connections between learners' beliefs and their choice of strategy. Furthermore, preconceived notions are likely to limit range of learners' strategy use. The interviews showed that those who study more seemed to employ relatively more strategies. They attached importance to main skills while those who study less than 1 hour seemed to focus on vocabulary and grammar. In this respect, those who study more may have had stronger beliefs regarding communication and strategy use. In other studies, the relationship was also found (Yang ,1999; Kim, 2011; Azar & Saeidi, 2013).

5.4. Research Question 4

The fourth research question in this study attempted to compare starter and elementary level students on their overall language learning beliefs. The result yielded no significant difference between the two groups. This conclusion was parallel with some studies (Lee, 2014; Juanías, 2016), however, in contrast with some others (Huang and Tsai, 2003; Abdolahzadeh and Nia, 2014). The different results may have stemmed from the learners' proficiency levels. In above mentioned studies, in which a significant difference was found, proficiency levels of students ranged from low to high. However, in the current study, the proficiency level differences were not much different as only starter and elementary level students participated in the research. Horwitz (1987) states that previous learning experiences as language learners affect beliefs to a great extent. In this respect, beliefs of the learners may not have shaped to a great extent by their learning experiences yet.

As for the factors difficulty, aptitude and nature, there were significant differences between the groups. Based on this, it can be said that starter level students perceived English harder compared to elementary level students. Huang and Tsai (2003) states that low proficiency learners may tend to find English harder as they experienced problems during the learning process. Starter level students attributed this to speaking and listening more than elementary levels did. The latter mentioned pronunciation as the hardest area of English. Most of them also stated that pronunciation is the main reason why speaking and listening are the hardest skills to achieve. Elementary level students also had stronger beliefs regarding aptitude, which may have stemmed from the fact that they believed they were equipped with special abilities in language learning. Horwitz (1988) argues that when learners have positive beliefs, they perceive their language

learning abilities in a positive light. During the interviews, they put more emphasize on individual differences and this could be the explanation regarding their dissimilar beliefs. Lastly, starter level students held stronger dispositions as to how languages are learnt. Mentle-Bromley (1995) suggests that the differences between proficiency levels can arise from prior learning experiences.

5.5. Research Question 5

In this research study, the fifth question sought to answer whether there was a significant correlation between learners' beliefs and their academic achievement. Tanaka and Ellis (2003), Loyo (2010), Lee (2014), and Hayati (2015) found no significant relationship; however, Mori (1999), Khodaday (2009) and Abdolahzadeh and Nia (2014) reported that the two variables correlated significantly. In the current study, no correlation was found between success and overall language learning beliefs. The difference between the results may have stemmed from several factors. One of the assumptions is that above mentioned studies were all conducted in different contexts. Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) argue that cultural background and individual differences have an effect on beliefs. In that sense, the participants' perceptions regarding language learning are subject to where they live and their personality to a great extent. In addition, majors of the participants may have had an effect on the difference as there are studies which reported major having an effect on language learning beliefs (Oxford & Nyikos, 1998; Chou, 2002; Peacock & Ho; 2003). Another thing to consider regarding beliefs and achievement is that there could be an indirect relationship between the two. As beliefs are mediated by learning experience, learners' beliefs may not reflect their actual behaviors (Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). In other words, what they say and what they do may not overlap. Therefore, differences in language learning beliefs may not reflect in achievement.

5.6. Research Question 6

The sixth research question sought to discover the possible relationship between the factors presented in BALLI and academic achievement. First, the results showed that beliefs in aptitude, difficulty of language and communication strategies predicted success. Learners who had stronger beliefs in the existence aptitude were more successful. Mercer and Ryan (2009) argue that learners' mindsets in relation to language learning and themselves may play a significant role in their achievement.

Therefore, it's possible that the learners had stronger beliefs in their potential and they benefited from those positive notions, which are also suggested by Yang (1999) and Peacock (2001). In addition, there are studies that are parallel with this finding (Bialystok, 2001; Suwanarak, 2012). Furthermore, most participants stated that individual differences exist and the process of learning a language requires effort. In this sense, those who value perseverance may also be those who study more and understand its value.

Secondly, learners' beliefs about language learning difficulty predicted academic success. In other words, those who perceived English as an easier language in general were more successful. This finding is similar to .results of some other studies (Mori, 1999; Angelianawati, 2012; Abdolahzadeh and Nia; 2014). Horwitz (1987) suggests that learners' perception and ideas regarding the difficulty of language learning are crucial in their commitment to language learning. Those who find a particular language easier also consider it to be achievable in turn they commit themselves more to the task and be more successful. However, one third of the participants in the interview judged English to be a difficult language and asserted speaking to be the hardest skill to acquire. So their negative notions could be the thing that held them back.

Lastly, beliefs in communication strategies predicted academic achievement. In other words, those who had stronger beliefs in using various strategies were more successful. This result was in parallel with some other studies (Abdolahzadeh& Nia; 2014, Yang, 2015). In this respect, the learners' beliefs may have reflected their actual use of strategy. In parallel with this assumption, Lee (2014) suggests that proficient learners tend to adopt various strategies in their learning. In the interview sessions, some of the participants stated that they made use of various strategies while some only employed traditional ones and focused on only sub-skills such as grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, it can be assumed that those who employed various strategies could be relatively more successful as their strategies were more diverse.

5.7. Research Question 7

5.7.1. Motivations and Expectations.

In the first interview question, learners were asked what their motivations are for learning English. Majority of the participants stated that they learn English for

occupational purposes. This result is similar to other studies (Bernat&Lloyd, 2007; Yazıcı, 2014; Mudra, 2016; Al Bataineh, 2019). In most cases extrinsic motivation is deemed to be inferior to intrinsic motivation (deCharms, 1968); however, in order to foster sustained learning, students may need to be persuaded that learning English could prove useful for their personal goals as well (Noels, Pelletier, Clément & Vallerand, 2000). Also, if learners learn a language only for pleasure, they may find it more time-consuming than they initially deemed and eventually quit (Horwitz, 1988). In this sense, instrumental motivation that participants had may serve them well in the long run. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation is also required as stated in Ramage's (1990) study that in some areas of language learning such as speaking and reading, students who had higher levels of intrinsic motivation were more successful. Therefore, students who learn English only for finding a job can be reminded of other opportunities that learning a language presents such as socialization, travel or living abroad, while those who learn English only for self-satisfaction or pleasure can be told about other more instrumental goals such as job opportunities or educational purposes.

5.7.2. Difficulty of Language Learning.

The learners were asked to what extent English is difficult and what part of it is so. More than half of the participants found English to be of moderate difficulty which is similar to findings in some other studies (Tercanlioglu, 2005; Bernat&Lloyd, 2007; Bataineh, 2019). Student judgements regarding difficulty of language is paramount as their expectations for and commitment to language learning depend on it. To be more specific, if students rate a language easy and cannot accomplish the task of learning the language in anticipated time, they may be discouraged, especially if their progress is not fast enough. Conversely, if learners believe that it may take a long time to learn a language, they may be discouraged even from the beginning (Horwitz, 1988). In this sense, it is crucial that learners hold realistic beliefs regarding nature of language learning as unrealistic ones inhibit the process of learning (Wenden, 2001).

In the interview sessions, students also judged speaking and listening as the most difficult skills to acquire which is similar to Hua's (2003) findings. As for the reason why speaking and listening are the most difficult to acquire, learners argued that it is because of pronunciation. In a study conducted by Derwing and Rossiter (2002) respondents stated that they had difficulty in speaking because of their pronunciation as they were asked to repeat their utterances several times as they were communicating.

Since listening and speaking activities are generally ignored or less valued in traditional classes (Liyong, 2006), learners may have had developed strong perceptions regarding difficulty of listening and speaking. Similarly, pronunciation may have been treated in the same way as pronunciation is the part where learners lack knowledge the most (Thornbury, 2005). However, caution must be exercised regarding pronunciation teaching because learners may develop unrealistic and unnecessary expectations regarding pronunciation such as attaining native-like pronunciation. This may cause frustration or a sense of failure in learners (Horwitz, 1988).

5.7.3. Language Aptitude.

The third interview question which was related to aptitude, sought to find what learners deemed in response to whether everyone can learn English and are equal. In general sense, majority of the participants believed in the existence of language aptitude even if their stated reasons were different on some levels. This finding is parallel with other studies (Daif-Allah, 2012; Bataineh, 2019). On the other hand, some participants argued that not everyone can learn English. Horwitz (1988) states that the concept of language aptitude may be the cause of a negative point of view as such learners tend to develop negative expectations or a feeling of incompetency. They may also doubt their abilities and eventually do poorly in learning process. In addition, some participants mentioned children as good language learners, which was also found in other studies (Oh, 1996; Altan, 2006; Diab, 2006; Suwanarak, 2012). This prevalent idea is a result of common wisdom (Horwitz, 1988) and these learners seemed to believe that optimal age exists and they missed the opportunity. Contrary to general opinion, adults are more effective learners (Scovel, 2000). This popular belief may hinder learners' progress and may lead them to develop negative attitudes towards language learning (Bernat & Llyod, 2007). Some participants also put emphasize on effort rather than sheer talent or gift in the course of language learning. The argument "hardwork over talent" was also explained in a key study conducted by Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer (1993). The researchers stated that hardwork is the element that explains expertise. Therefore, some students had more grounded and positive beliefs regarding language learning process in terms of aptitude.

5.7.4. Communication Strategies.

The fourth interview question explored the strategies learners employed while learning English. A majority of students stated that they watch movies or series or play games as a way learning English. The reason why learners valued videos above all else may have stemmed from the fact that media-based learning is favored by learners and they find it enjoyable as well (de Freitas & Griffiths, 2008). Also, Peacock and Ho (2003) found in their research study that high achievers tended to enjoy watching videos or movies to learn English. In addition, Kuppens (2010) stated that people may learn languages through games in order to be a part of online communities. The participants also favored learning English through songs. Medina (1993) found that music increased vocabulary learning to a great extent. Furthermore, previous studies indicated that successful learners often associated their achievement with various strategies they employed outside the classroom (Lamb, 2002). On the other hand, use of rote learning seems to be somewhat inherent in students learning strategies. Traditional methods such as memorizing vocabulary lists or studying explicit grammar rules were favored by some participants. However, Khuwaileh (1995) compared contextualized and decontextualized vocabulary items learning and found that in the long term learners could recall items in context better.

5.7.5. Nature of Language Learning.

The last interview question was regarding nature of language learning and the participants were asked the best way of learning English in general. The majority of the participants were in the opinion of going abroad. It's a common assumption among learners as it is thought to be an effective way of developing proficiency (Isabelli, 2004) and it supported by some studies (Isabelli, 2004; Coleman, 1997).On the other hand, Segalowitz and Freed (2004) reported that language contact had only slight impact on language proficiency. The contradictory results may have stemmed from the kind of input learners received, social environment or other factors (Magnan & Back, 2007).Therefore, even though going abroad has obvious advantages, it could be more limited than one assumes in terms of quality and quantity of input and interaction (DeKeyser, 2007). That is why learners' views must be shaped to some extent in order to help them develop more realistic and grounded beliefs regarding learning English abroad as their expectations may not be met.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION, PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS, FURTHER RESEARCH

6.1. Conclusion

The goal of this research study was to explore EFL students' language learning beliefs. Furthermore, the study aimed to discover the relationship between demographic variables and the learners' beliefs. In addition, the relationship between achievement and beliefs were investigated. According to results of the study, definition of beliefs could be made as "convictions based on context, time and several other factors".

In the research, the results showed that participants held strong overall beliefs regarding learning English. The learners believed in the existence of aptitude and positive effect of young age while learning a language. In most cases, they stated that they didn't have aptitude; however, they believed that they would learn English. They favored the positive effect of multilingualism, however, refuted any relationship between intelligence and multilingualism. The participants endorsed that some languages are easier and English is a medium level difficulty language. Furthermore, they also found some skills are harder to achieve than others such as speaking and listening. The participants also believed in learning English in a foreign country. While most participants valued vocabulary learning, they didn't give much importance to grammar and translation. Furthermore, they attached importance to pronunciation and repetition. The learners had strong beliefs regarding tolerance to mistakes while learning English and wished to communicate with native speakers. In addition, they valued using audio materials. English was seen as an instrument for finding a job, however, the learners also wished to communicate with foreigners for other purposes. The result of this research study showed that there was a significant difference between males and females regarding their overall language learning beliefs. Between the genders, a significant difference was found in terms of beliefs in aptitude, difficulty of language, communication strategies and motivations. In the research study, significant difference was found between overall language learning beliefs and study hours. In addition, study hours had an effect on communication strategies. Between proficiency levels no significant difference was found. However, proficiency levels differentiated in three factors; aptitude, nature and difficulty of language. Furthermore, no significant

correlation was detected between achievement and overall language learning beliefs. However, aptitude, difficulty and communication factors correlated with achievement significantly.

6.2. Pedagogical Implications

This research study articulates EFL learners' beliefs about language learning. Many researchers state that time and effort put into investigating beliefs led to minimization of negative beliefs (Wenden, 1991; Yang, 1992). In the light of the results, some pedagogical conclusions can be drawn. First of all, defining learners' beliefs may help educators understand factors that hinder learners' progress (Wenden, 2011). Riley (1997) and Barkhuizen (1998) state that learner beliefs are ignored by educators and never given enough importance. So, by exploring beliefs, some ill notions can be detected and eliminated, which may result in better learning outcomes. Similarly, Kumaravadivelu (1991) argues that when learners' personal approaches are understood, necessary interventions can be more fruitful.

Teachers can also open learners' beliefs up for discussion as some students' beliefs may have never been challenged before. Some learners may try the same method in language learning for several years, yet they end up in failure or frustration (Horwitz, 1987). Apparently, their views must be changed in regard to learning a language with new information. In the current study, some learners, for example, held strong beliefs regarding children's superiority in language learning, rote learning and vocabulary studies. In this respect, some of their perceptions must be discussed. Furthermore, teachers can encourage group discussion activities in order to raise awareness toward language learning (Wenden, 1991).

Teachers also should be aware of their students' beliefs and strategies as the two were found to be correlated (Park, 1995; Yang, 1999). Rubin (1987) argues that some learners are more successful than others in their approach to language learning and Horwitz (1987) states that students' approaches to learning comes from their notions to a great extent and misconceptions about language learning create less effective learners. In the current study, some learners favored traditional methods and stated to rely on them to a great extent. Therefore, teachers should change learners' less effective strategies such as translation or grammar based studies with more effective ones.

In addition, in order to keep students motivated towards learning English, various authentic materials can be used. As the current study suggests, the learners were interested in movies, podcasts and other audio-visual materials. Therefore, alternative sources can be utilized in order to meet students' expectations as its importance is paramount in shaping attitudes (Kormos & Csizér, 2008).

Richards and Lockhart (1996) state that beliefs about goals refer to reasons why a person learns a language and what their priorities in that particular language are. Since most of the students in the current study were found to learn English for occupational purposes, ESP courses may be utilized more. Therefore, syllabi can also be arranged by taking learners' needs into account.

Since beliefs take a long time to form and are harder to change after adulthood (Riley, 2009), on national level, students can be directed in the positive direction regarding language learning beliefs at an earlier age when they first start to receive English language courses.

6.3. Suggestion for Further Research

The current study investigated learners' beliefs at university level and the participants belonged to two proficiency levels. Another research study can be conducted at different institutions and levels as results may vary based on context. In addition, anxiety levels can also be measured in order to understand whether they have an effect on learning beliefs. To determine the real effect of beliefs on learning process, differences in variables such as educational, social and economic background can be minimized, that is to say a study can be conducted with homogenous groups so as to explore belief systems of learners and to what extent learners' beliefs alone affect their learning process and outcome.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Dil Öğrenimi İnançları Envanteri (Horwitz, 1987)

Aşağıdaki ifadeler bazı insanların yabancı dil, özel olarak İngilizce, öğrenimi konusundaki inançlarıdır. Anketteki 4. ve 15. maddeler hariç tüm maddeler kesinlikle katılmıyorum (1) ile kesinlikle katılıyorum (5) arasında bir değerlendirme ölçeği kullanmaktadır. Her bir ifadeyi okuduktan sonra ifadeyle ilgili fikrinizi belirten satırın altını (1, 2, 3, 4 ya da 5) "X" ile işaretleyin. Her satırın en üstünde yer alan rakamlar şunu ifade etmektedir:

Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum
1	2	3	4	5

Yaş: _____

Cinsiyet: Kadın ☐
              Erkek ☐

| İfadeler	Görüş				
	1	2	3	4	5
1.Yabancı dil öğrenmek çocuklar için yetişkinlere oranla daha kolaydır.					
2. Bazı insanlar yabancı dil öğrenme konusunda özel bir yeteneğe sahiptir.					
3.Bazı dilleri öğrenmek diğerlerinden daha kolaydır.					

4. İngilizce:
     a) çok zor bir dildir.
     b) zor bir dildir.
     c) orta zorlukta bir dildir.
     d) kolay bir dildir.
     e) çok kolay bir dildir.					

5. İngilizceyi iyi konuşmayı öğreneceğime inanıyorum.					
6. Türkler yabancı dil öğrenmede iyidirler.					
7. İngilizceyi mükemmel bir telaffuzla konuşmak önemlidir.					
8. İngilizce konuşmak için İngilizce konuşulan ülkelerin kültürlerini bilmek gereklidir.					
9.Herhangi bir şeyi İngilizce olarak doğru söyleyinceye kadar hiçbir şey söylememelisiniz.					
10. Bir yabancı dili konuşabilenler için başka bir yabancı dil öğrenmek daha kolaydır.					
11. Matematik ya da fen alanında iyi olan kişiler yabancı dil öğreniminde iyi değillerdir.					
12. İngilizce konuşulan bir ülkede İngilizce öğrenmek en iyi seçenektir.					
13. Tanıştığım, ana dili İngilizce olan bireylerle İngilizce pratik yapmaktan keyif alıyorum.					
14. İngilizce bir kelimeyi bilmiyorsanız kelimenin anlamını tahmin edebilirsiniz.					

15. Kişi günde bir saatini dil öğrenmeye ayırırsa hedef dili çok iyi konuşmak ne kadar vaktini alır?
     a) bir yıldan az
     b) 1-2 yıl
     c) 3-5 yıl
     d) 5-10 yıl
     e) günde 1 saatte dil öğrenemezsiniz					

16. Yabancı dil öğrenme konusunda özel bir yeteneğe sahibim.					
17. Yabancı dil öğrenmenin en önemli bölümü kelime öğrenmektir.					

|					
18. Çok fazla tekrar etmek ve pratik yapmak önemlidir.					
19. Kadınlar yabancı dil öğrenme konusunda erkeklerden daha iyidirler.					
20. Ülkemdeki insanlar İngilizce konuşmanın önemli olduğunu düşünmektedir.					
21. İnsanlarla İngilizce konuşmaktan çekiniyorum.					
22. Başlangıç düzeyindeki öğrencilerin İngilizcede hata yapmalarına izin verilirse bu öğrenciler için daha sonra doğru biçimde konuşmak zor olacaktır.					
23. Yabancı dil öğrenmenin en önemli bölümü dilbilgisi öğrenmektir.					
24. İngilizce öğrenmek istiyorum böylece ana dili İngilizce olan bireyleri daha iyi tanıyabilirim.					
25. Bir dili konuşmak, anlamaktan daha kolaydır.					
26. İşitsel materyallerle pratik yapmak önemlidir.					
27. Yabancı dil öğrenmek diğer dersleri öğrenmekten farklıdır.					
28. Yabancı dil öğrenmenin en önemli bölümü ana dilimden çevri yapmayı öğrenmektir.					
29. İngilizceyi çok iyi öğrenirsem iyi bir iş bulmak için daha iyi fırsatlarım olur.					
30. Birden fazla dil konuşan kişiler çok zekidir.					
31. İngilizceyi iyi konuşmayı öğrenmek istiyorum.					
32. Ana dili İngilizce olan arkadaşlarım olsun istiyorum.					
33. Herkes yabancı dil konuşmayı öğrenebilir.					
34. İngilizceyi okumak ve yazmak, konuşmak ve anlamaktan daha kolaydır.					

APPENDIX B: Interview Questions for Learners

1. Neden İngilizce öğreniyorsunuz? Sizi buna motive eden nedir?

2. Sizce İngilizce ne zorlukta bir dildir? Hangi kısmı en zordur? Niçin?

3. Herkes İngilizce öğrenebilir mi? Herkes bu anlamda eşit mi?

4. İngilizce öğrenirken ne çeşit stratejilerden faydalanıyorsunuz?

5. Genel anlamda İngilizce öğrenmenin en iyi yolu nedir?

APPENDIX C: Histogram of Overall Beliefs
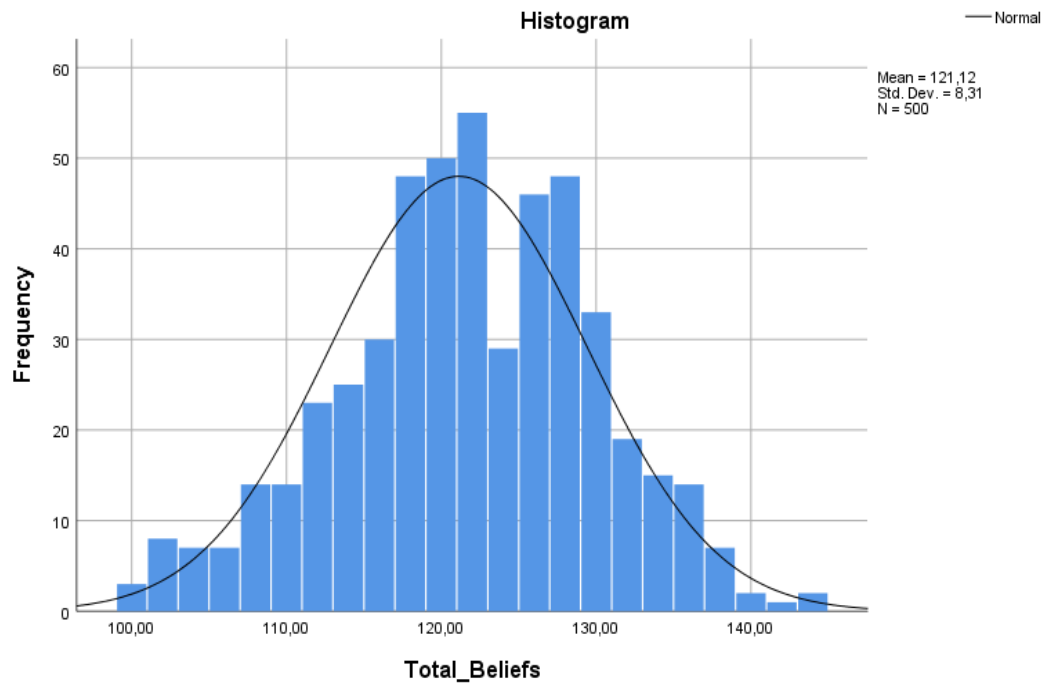
APPENDIX D: Q-Q Plot of Overall Beliefs

Normal Q-Q Plot of Total_Beliefs
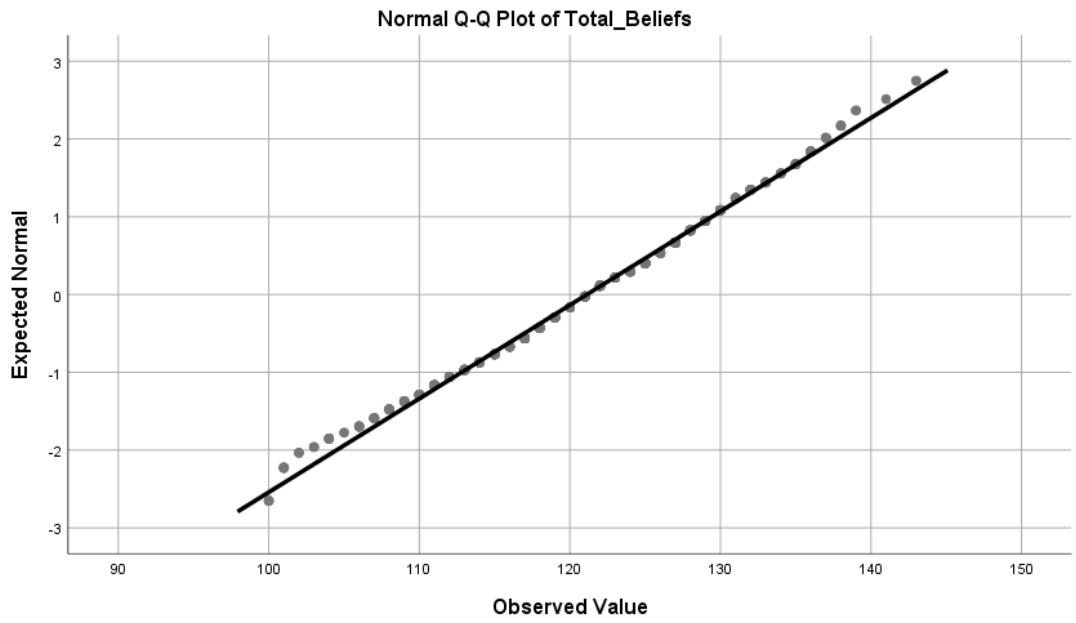
ÖZGEÇMİŞ

Kişisel Bilgiler

Adı Soyadı: Soner Çetin

Doğum Yeri ve Tarihi: Hatay / 1986

Eğitim Durumu

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Yüksek Lisans Öğrenimi: Ufuk Üniversitesi

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