

To my family and husband
who are the biggest supporters of my life...

The Background Factors That Influence Learners' English Proficiency

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ABSTRACT

THE BACKGROUND FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LEARNERS' ENGLISH
PROFICIENCY

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The Program of Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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This study was conducted to explore the relationship between language achievement and starting age of learning English as a foreign language, type of high school, languages known by the learners and spoken in their home environment and learners' attitudes towards language learning, and also to clarify other possible factors affecting language achievement. The participants of the study were the students of Medicine, Engineering and Law Faculties at Dicle University. To explore the effects of the mentioned factors on language achievement, a questionnaire was completed by 105 participants and the data to clarify the other possible factors affecting language achievement were obtained through interviews with twelve of the participants. The data derived from the questionnaires were analyzed with SPSS and the data obtained from the interviews were analyzed in a qualitative way.

The findings obtained from the quantitative analysis present the following results. The results showed that starting to learn English as a foreign language at an

early age does not have many advantages on learning. Type of high school is very important for English proficiency, because the students of Anatolian/Science High School have much higher proficiency in English. Knowing more than one language and being in a family environment where more than one language is spoken do not have a significant effect on English proficiency. There is not a correlation between attitudes towards language learning and language proficiency.

As the results of qualitative analysis, it was seen that practicing what is learnt in the classroom and having a connection with the foreign language out of the classroom (listening to English songs, watching English movies) are very important to gain a high proficiency in language. On the other hand, grammar-based instruction, experiencing the same teaching styles during the whole learning process, lack of environment to practice foreign language and a high anxiety level cause problems in the learning process.

Key Words: Foreign language, starting age, attitudes, bilingualism, intensity of language education.

ÖZET

ÖĞRENCİLERİN İNGİLİZCE YETERLİLİĞİNİ ETKİLEYEN FAKTÖRLER

Sevim Güneş

Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi Programı

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Bu çalışma dil başarısı ile yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenmeye başlama yaşı, lise türü, dil öğrenenler tarafından bilinen ve aile ortamlarında konuşulan diller ve dil öğrenimine yaklaşım arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmak ve dil başarısı üzerinde etkili olabilecek diğer muhtemel faktörleri belirlemek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın katılımcıları, Dicle Üniversitesi Mühendislik, Tıp ve Hukuk Fakültesi öğrencileridir. Bahsedilen faktörler ve dil başarısı arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmak için 105 katılımcıya anket uygulanmıştır; diğer muhtemel faktörlerin belirlenmesi için gerekli olan veri ise katılımcılardan 12'siyle yapılan görüşmeler sonucunda elde edilmiştir. Anketlerden elde edilen veriler SPSS ile görüşmelerden elde edilenler ise nitel olarak analiz edilmiştir.

SPSS analizinden çıkan bulgular, erken bir başlama yaşının yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreniminde çok etkili olmadığını, birden fazla dil bilmenin ya da aile ortamında birden fazla dil konuşulmasının İngilizce öğrenimi üzerinde büyük bir etkiye sahip olmadığını, dil öğrenmeye olan yaklaşım ile dil yeterliliği arasında bir korelasyon olmadığını, öte yandan lise türünün dil başarısı için son derece önemli

olduđunu ve Anadolu ve Fen Lisesi öğrencilerinin dil öğreniminde Düz Lise öğrencilerinden daha başarılı olduđunu ortaya koymuştur.

Görüşmeler sonucunda elde edilen verilerin nitel analizi ise sınıflarda öğrenilen bilgilerin pratik edilmesinin ve yabancı dil ile olan bağlantıyı sınıf dışında da devam ettirmenin (okul dışında İngilizce müzik dinlemek ya da film izlemek gibi) dil başarısı üzerinde olumlu etkiye sahip olduđunu; fakat dil bilgisi temelli öğretimin, öğretim süresi boyunca aynı yöntemlerin kullanılmasının, yabancı dili kullanabilecek bir ortamın olmamasının ve yüksek kaygı düzeyinin dil öğrenimi üzerinde olumsuz etkiye sahip olduđunu ortaya koymuştur.

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Yabancı dil, başlama yaşı, yaklaşımlar, iki dillilik, dil eğitiminde yoğunluk.

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LIST OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZET	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
LIST OF CONTENTS	x
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
Background of the Study	4
Introduction.....	4
Age.....	4
The Effect of the Intensity of Language Education on Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA)	6
Attitude	7
Languages Known by the Learners	8
Statement of the Problem	9
Research Questions	11
Significance of the Problem	11
Conclusion.....	12
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
Introduction	13
Age	13
What is the age issue about?	13
Research on Second Language Acquisition	15
Research on Foreign Language Acquisition and Effects of Intensity on FLA.....	18
The Effect of Attitude towards Learning English on Achievement.....	23
Languages Known by the Learners and Spoken in Their Home Environment.....	26
Conclusion.....	27
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	28
Introduction	28
Setting.....	29
Participants	30
Instrument.....	31
Procedure.....	32
Conclusion.....	33

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS	34
Introduction	34
Quantitative Analysis	35
1a) How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by the age they started learning English?	35
1b) How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by type of high school?	38
1c) How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by the languages they know and are spoken in their family, and by the other family members who know English?	39
1d) How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by their attitudes towards learning English?	42
Qualitative Analysis	42
Conclusion	44
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION	45
Introduction	45
Discussion of Findings	46
Pedagogical Implications	52
Limitations	55
Suggestions for Further Research	57
Conclusion	57
REFERENCES	59
APPENDIX A: ENGLISH QUESTIONNAIRE	64
APPENDIX B: TURKISH QUESTIONNAIRE	68
APPENDIX C: TURKISH SAMPLE INTERVIEW	72
APPENDIX D: ENGLISH SAMPLE INTERVIEW	74
APPENDIX E : PLACEMENT TEST	76

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1- The profile of participants.....	31
Table 2- The variables which were not included in the study.....	36
Table 3- Participants' starting time of learning English.....	37
Table 4- The times and numbers of participants' first effective education.....	38
Table 5- When learners started to have first effective education.....	39
Table 6- The number of participants and languages they know.....	41
Table 7- The number and names of languages spoken in participants' families..	42

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

As English is a global language, we come across its importance in most of the fields all around the world. The importance of English increases every passing day, as do the importance of the factors affecting English proficiency. This is also true in Turkey. The students who graduate from high school face some problems with English when they start university. In some departments, such as Medicine, Law and Engineering, there is a high intensity of English classes and this has a strong effect on students' ability to pass their classes. The students who do not have a good education in high school face many more problems than the ones who do. The students of other departments are more likely to face these problems after graduation, because it is often necessary to have a high proficiency in English in order to get a good job. The importance and necessity of English proficiency keeps the eyes on the effective factors, and a number of background factors influencing proficiency have been researched.

A particularly commonly research factor is that of the starting age of learning English (Abello-Contesse, 2008; Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Abu-Rabia & Kehat, 2004; Bongaerts, 2005; Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003; Larson-Hall, 2008; Singleton, 2005). In Turkey, English was added to the primary school curriculum in 1997 by the Ministry of Education, suggesting that the Ministry believes that learners benefit from starting to learn at a younger age. However, there are contradictory views about this factor. Many researchers think that starting to learn a second language at a late age causes some problems in the learning process (Perani et al., 1996) whereas others think that the learners who start to learn a

second language in later periods of life can also be very successful (Bongaerts et al., 1997).

Another factor thought to affect English proficiency is the intensity of language education (Garcia Mayo & Garcia Lecumberri, 2003; Larson-hall, 2008; Lengyel & Singleton, 1995; Munoz, 2006). A number of studies have considered the mediating effect of intensity of language education on the starting age of foreign language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2009; Garcia Mayo & Garcia Lecumberri, 2003; Larson-hall, 2008; Lengyel & Singleton, 1995; Munoz, 2006). In the Turkish context, this factor is an important one because students who study in different types of high schools have different intensity of English classes. For example Anatolian/Science high school students have 10 hours of English classes in a week in their 1st grade, but regular high school students have four hours of English classes weekly. If this is an effective factor in determining language proficiency, it may mean that some students are disadvantaged when they come university, because they are all exposed to the same university program regardless of their types of high school.

A third factor which is often thought to affect proficiency is that of learners' attitudes towards learning a foreign language. Research studies related to this factor have been conducted from different perspectives. Some studies looked at whether learners have positive or negative attitudes towards learning a foreign language (Abu-Rabia, 2003); some other studies focused on the correlation between attitude and language proficiency level (Clément, Gardner, & Smythe, 1980; Gardner & Masgoret, 2002; İnal, Evin, & Saracoğlu, 2003).

A final factor that will be researched in this study is the effect of other languages known by the learners and spoken in their home environment. Kirkici (2004) reviewed various studies to explore the effect of bilingualism on English. Some of these studies concluded that being bilingual has positive effects on learning a foreign language (Balkan; Cummins & Gulutsan; Peal & Lambert; Scott- all cited in Kirkici, 2004) and some others concluded the opposite (Appel & Muysken; Carrow; Grosjean; Kelly; Macnamara- all cited in Kirkici, 2004). This variable may be particularly important in the context of Diyarbakir, where this study will be conducted. Diyarbakir is one of the cities where more than one language is spoken; most of the children grow up as bilingual or they start to learn a second language after they start primary school. This may have an effect on students when they start to learn English.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between English proficiency and students' starting age of learning English, type of high school, languages known by the learners and spoken in their home environment, and attitude towards English. It will also explore other possible background factors that may affect foreign language acquisition.

Background of the Study

Introduction

Language teaching involves difficult decisions regarding when teaching should start, what the curriculum should include and which methods should be used (Güngör Aytar & Öğretir, 2008). To answer these questions, the factors that affect language learning should be known first. Some research studies about the factors effecting language proficiency have been carried out; the factors that have been researched include starting age of acquiring a second language (Abello-Contesse, 2008; Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Abu-Rabia & Kehat, 2004; Catling & Johnston, 2006; Chiswick & Miller, 2008), intensity of language education (Larson-hall, 2008), attitude towards learning a foreign language (Abu-Rabia, 2003; Gardner & Masgoret, 2002; İnal, Evin, & Saracoğlu, 2003). In addition to the factors mentioned, this study will also focus on the effect of languages known by the learners and spoken in their home environment. The effects of being multilingual on foreign language learning are discussed in Kirkici's review (2004), but to my knowledge, there are not any studies exploring the slightly different point of the effect of languages spoken in learners' home environment.

Age

Age is one of the issues on which various research studies have been done for years; it is believed by a lot of researchers that the earlier foreign language teaching/learning starts, the more effective it will be (Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Perani et al., 1996). Penfield and Roberts (as cited in Harley, 1986) state that the brain of a child is more plastic than an adult's. Before the age of nine to 12, s/he can learn two or three languages in an easy way, as s/he is an expert in learning to speak at these ages. However, after the age of 12, the brain becomes progressively

rigid in terms of language learning. Perani et al.'s study on brain processing (2006) found that some areas of the brain are shaped with early exposure to the language, but this shaping is not possible for learners who are exposed to a second language later in life. Similarly, Chomsky indicates that children learn the basic rules of a language before the age of five despite differences in language learning environment and intelligence (Güngör Aytar & Öğretir, 2008). It is stated that the first ten years of life are the most appropriate period for language learning. During this period, the child's receiving and producing a language are accomplished by both the left and right hemispheres of the brain; but in puberty, the left hemisphere becomes much more dominant (Bulut, 2003).

As it is stated above, age is accepted as a very important factor in the language learning process. Educators in many countries are aware of this fact and try to take it into account in designing their education systems. Sayınsoy (as cited in Bulut, 2003) indicates that in European Union countries, teaching English at early ages has been popular since 1985. In Turkey, students have started to learn English in 4th grade in primary schools since the 1997-1998 academic year, because starting to learn English after the age of 10 or 11 was seen as problematic. As the first step of designing new approaches for English, therefore, the authorities decided to teach English at a younger age.

To investigate the problems related to age, some research studies have been done in different countries, but most of these studies focus on specific areas of the language learning process such as the relationship between age and pronunciation (Theo Bongartes et al., 1997), or teaching vocabulary to children (Sun & Dong,

2004). This study will focus on the impact of starting age of learning English on the foreign language (FL) learning process as a whole.

In research studies, the age factor is considered in two different settings: EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language). Studies conducted in second language contexts have generally found that younger children learn a language more easily (e.g. Abrahamsson & Hytelténstam, 2009; Singleton & Lengyel, 1995), though some have also found that learners can have a high level of proficiency in L2 at any age (Abello-Contesse, 2008). From most of the studies conducted in EFL settings, on the other hand, it was concluded that an early start is not an advantage for foreign language learning (Garcia Mayo & Garcia Lecumberri, 2003; Larson-Hall, 2008; Munoz, 2006).

The Effect of the Intensity of Language Education on Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA)

I am not aware of any studies that researched the effect of intensity of language education directly. However, a number of studies have taken this factor into account as a variable modulating the effect of starting age of foreign language acquisition with the intensity of language education (Garcia Mayo & Garcia Lecumberri, 2003; Larson-Hall, 2008; Munoz, 2006; Oller, J. & Nagato, 1974).

The studies present similar results on this issue. Oller and Nagato (1974) concluded that starting to acquire a foreign language at an early stage of life does not have a positive effect on learning in the condition of having only one to two hours of language classes a week. Garcia Mayo and Garcia Lecumberri (2003) present similar results; starting to learn a foreign language at a young age does not produce positive

effect on achievement. The researchers also conclude that as the learners' exposure to the target language increases, the degree of achievement increases. In the study by Djigunovic and Vilke (as cited in Garcia Mayo & Garcia Lecumberri, 2003), it was seen that early beginners were better than later ones as long as some basic conditions such as an adequate intensity of and quality of exposure to the target language were met. Munoz (2006) suggests that starting age and the intensity of language education are not conclusive determinants of perception and production of FL sounds in a native-like way, but adds that this does not mean the length of exposure to foreign language is an irrelevant factor. Larson-Hall (2008) states that an early age is not a magical factor, but will be advantageous as long as the learners receive adequate language input. This is also the conclusion reached by Lightbown and Spada (2006) in their review of the field.

Attitude

Many different research studies have investigated the effect of attitude or motivation on second and foreign language acquisition over the years (Clement, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Clément, Gardner, & Smythe, 1977, 1980; Ely, 1986; Gardner & Masgoret, 2002). Gardner (1985), Ellis (2003), and Shirbagi (2010) state that attitude and motivation are not synonyms. Attitude is defined as "*a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event*" (Ajzen, as cited in Shirbagi (2010)).

Motivation, on the other hand, is explained in Dörnyei (2001) as concerning:

...the direction and magnitude of human behavior, that is: the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it, the effort expended on it. In other words, motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it, p. 8.

Many research studies conducted over the years have shown that attitude is an important factor for foreign language acquisition. As early as 1975, Gardner and Smythe indicated that attitude promotes motivation and motivation promotes second language achievement (as cited in Gardner & Masgoret, 2002). Similarly, Clément, Gardner and Smythe (1980) show that EFL learners who have a positive attitude towards learning a foreign language use the language more frequently and are more motivated to go on learning the language. A more recent study in the Turkish context, by Inal, Evin and Saracoglu, also shows that there is a positive correlation between attitude towards learning a foreign language and achievement (2003).

Languages Known by the Learners

Various studies about the effect of languages known by the learners reviewed in Kirikici's study (2004) present different results for the effect of knowing more than one language on learning a foreign language. As Kirikici (2004) stated most of the studies on this issue before the 1960's arrived at the conclusion that bilingualism has negative effects on child's mental, social and psychological development. As stated in Kirikici's study, Jespersen (1922) concluded that a bilingual child never reaches the perfectness of using two or more languages in the same level; Tireman (1954) expressed that only 54% of Spanish-English bilinguals can perform appropriately in their reading tasks. On the other hand, more recent studies have started to focus on the positive effects of bilingualism. As is cited in Kirikici (2004), the studies of Murray and Kourtzin, Grosjean, Roseberry-McKibbin and Brice, Hawson, and Gonzales and Yawkey indicate that bilingualism provides great contributions to children's language skills and mental skills.

Statement of the Problem

English learners in Turkey face a variety of problems in the process of learning English. In attempting to address deficiencies in the educational system, the Ministry of National Education decided to make education reforms and regulate the existing system in many ways in the 1997-1998 academic year. One of these reforms was about the curriculum of primary schools. With this new education system, English began to be taught in the 4th grade of primary school instead of the 6th grade (that is, at age 10, rather than at age 12). While this decision was based on a belief in the necessity of beginning English at early ages, clear evidence of the validity of this decision in the Turkish context has not been provided.

Another factor which is thought to have an important effect on English proficiency is 'type of high school'. In Turkey, there are different types of high schools such as Anatolian High Schools, science high schools, private high schools and regular high schools; these have different intensities of language education. Ministry of National Education has recently focused on new reforms for the education system of these schools. The duration for a regular high school was increased to four years from three years in 2005, and English started to be taught in a longer period of time in Anatolian/Science high schools. The students of these schools used to take 24 hours classes in their first year of high school, but they have 10 hours weekly in their first grade now. This study will provide evidence for the type of high schools, and clarify which type(s) of high schools present more effective language education.

Additionally, this study will look at the effect of attitude on language achievement. In many education institutions, the attitudes of the learners are not

taken into consideration in the learning process. This is also so at Dicle University. If a positive correlation is found between the attitude toward language learning and achievement, this evidence will guide the authorities to encourage the learners to develop positive attitudes which promote their motivation in the learning process.

In addition to the factors mentioned above which are traditionally associated with proficiency, this study will also look at the effect of languages spoken in the learners' home environment. In Diyarbakır, most of the people know more than one language; they acquire the second language by means of environment or they grow up bilingual. Most of the students, especially in suburbs, learn Kurdish in their home environment. After they start primary school, they start to learn Turkish, which is the language of education, and when they start 4th grade at primary school, they start to learn a foreign language, which is English. It is possible that the multilingual background of some students may represent either an advantage (because they have previously learned a second language) or a disadvantage (because they have had to cope with being educated in a second language) for learners.

Research Questions

1. How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by
 - a) the age at which they started learning English?
 - b) the type of high school they attended?
 - c) the languages that are known and spoken in their family?
 - d) their attitudes towards learning English?

2. What other background factor(s) influence students' English proficiency?

Significance of the Problem

To know the factors that affect foreign language learning is one of the most important steps of effective teaching. This study aims to identify the effect of starting age of learning a foreign language, type of high school, the languages known by the learners and spoken in their home environment, and attitudes towards learning English on students' language proficiency. Finding out the relationship between these factors and language proficiency will provide further evidence for the broader research and in particular for research on foreign language learning in Turkey. The results will provide empirical evidence either supporting or countering recent educational reforms for starting English education at an earlier age. This study will also look at the effect of 'type of high school' to clarify the effectiveness of high schools' language education systems; the results of this will be helpful to see which types of high schools are more effective in foreign language teaching and this will provide guidance for Ministry of National Education in terms of new reforms.

As another factor, the effect of attitude towards language learning on foreign language proficiency will be also explored. If a positive correlation is found between attitude and foreign language proficiency, new ways of increasing positive attitudes

that promote motivation can be explored and presented to the learners at the beginning of the learning process; these can be different activities presented according to the major of the students. As the last factor, the effects of languages known by the learners and spoken in their home environment will be explored. The effect of bilingualism or multilingualism has been researched before (Kirkici, 2004), though I am not aware of any such study in the Diyarbakir context. Moreover, as the effect of languages spoken in learners' home environment has not, to my knowledge, been explored before, this study will provide guidance for the studies conducted in multilingual societies and the education institutions of these societies.

The second research question, which explores other possible factors effecting foreign language proficiency, is also intended to guide authorities who are responsible for the education system. This question aims to uncover specific effective factors other than the ones mentioned above. This will be helpful in terms of indicating both the factors that have a positive effect and those that have a negative effect on language proficiency. In this way, an evaluation of current language education system will be made and new ways of language education may be presented.

Conclusion

In the next chapter, further information about the research studies which have been conducted to clarify the effects of background factors such as starting age, intensity of language education, languages known by the learners and attitude towards FLA will be presented.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A number of different background factors are thought to affect students' success in learning a foreign language. These include the age at which learning starts (Abello-Contesse, 2008; Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009) the interaction of starting age with intensity of language education (Dörnyei, 2009; Garcia Mayo & Garcia Lecumberri, 2003; Larson-Hall, 2008; Munoz, 2006) and students' attitudes toward language learning (Clement, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Gardner & Masgoret, 2002; Lambert, 2001). In this study, the correlation between the factors stated above and students' English proficiency and other possible factors effecting students' success will be studied. This review will discuss each factor in turn.

Age

What is the age issue about?

The effect of age on foreign/second language Acquisition is an issue on which a lot of empirical studies have been done over the years (Barry, Johnston & Wood, 2006; Chiswick & Miller, 2008; Dörnyei, 2009; Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003). It is commonly believed that young learners can acquire a second language in a more natural and easier way while older learners have to struggle to attain even moderate fluency (Harley, 1986), but contradictory beliefs also exist (Abello-Contesse, 2008).

As Scovel (2000) notes, children are generally thought to be better second language learners than adults. That is, younger learners learn in a quicker way than adults and the outcomes are better (Abello-Contesse, 2008). However, as Dörnyei (2009) has pointed out, it is also known by anybody who teaches a foreign language

to different age groups that a 15 or 30 (or even 60)- year-old learner is likely to make more progress in a school context than a 5-year-old child. It seems, therefore, younger learners do better in natural environments in which the learner may have a lot of contacts with native speakers. On the other hand, in a formal language learning environment like a school, where analytic skills and formal learning strategies may be more important, teenagers seem to do better than young learners.

Different explanatory hypotheses have been suggested for the perceived advantage of children in a naturalistic learning environment (Dörnyei, 2009; Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003).

In terms of biological causes of the age factor, 'myelination' is believed to be important. As Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003) indicate, myelin is a substance which exists in the glial cells and includes lipids and proteins. Cortical neurons myelinate in the brain; in this psychological-chemical process, the axons of the neurons are wrapped with myelin by glial cells. This process provides the neurons with nutrition and helps electrical signals conduct more rapidly, so transfer of information occurs at larger cerebral distances. By puberty, most areas of the brain have reached full myelination.

As cited in Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson (2003), Pulvermüller and Schuman (1994) describe the effects of myelination on language acquisition potential with reference to two systems of cortical connections between neurons. One of them uses apical dendrites and axons and it is far from the cell body and connects different cortical areas. The other one using basic dendrites is close to the cell body and local branches of the axons. These two systems were labeled the A-system and the B-

system by Braitenberg, 1978 (as cited in Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003). Neural connections form naturally and locally through the B-system before myelination of a certain area severs the connections between neighboring neurons. This, it is claimed, is why phonological and syntactic systems are acquired easier in an early period of life; that is, these aspects are acquired by means of connections within a limited cortical area (Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003).

Cognitive explanations are also given for the effect of age on SLA. Perhaps the most common such explanation is given in terms of the interference of general problem-solving mechanisms which are involved in older learners' learning process. As Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson (2003) stated, this explanation has been termed the fundamental difference hypothesis by Bley-Vroman (1989). It indicates that adult learners do not have access to the inborn language acquisition device, but have to rely on general problem-solving procedures (as cited in Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003).

Explanations for the greater success of young learners are also given in terms of motivation. Bialystok and Hakuta (1999) conclude that the motivation of children for native-like levels of second language is higher than adults as the children develop positive attitudes toward acquiring the L2 and the culture of the language which is being learned. A further effect of motivation is that young learners have more input compared to adults.

Research on Second Language Acquisition

Some researchers claim that any learners can gain native-like proficiency no matter at which age they start to acquire their second language, but some other

researchers believe that native-like proficiency is impossible after a certain period (Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009).

Long (1990) claims that there is a critical age of 12 for achieving native-like pronunciation (as cited in Bongaerts, 2005). Flege, Munro and MacKay (1995) conducted a study to evaluate Long's claim, the purpose of the study being to find out whether native-like pronunciation can be achieved after the critical age. The participants were 240 Italians who had immigrated to Canada. They had arrived in Canada at different ages (min=2, max=23). English sentences were read out by these participants and their pronunciation was evaluated by 10 native speakers. It was reported that 6% of immigrants who had arrived in Canada after the age of 12 had a native-like accent. In contrast, none of the participants who had arrived after the age of 16 had native-like accents. It was concluded that an early age of arrival (AOA) is advantageous to gaining a native-like performance in L2.

Contrasting results are presented by Bongaerts and his colleagues, who conducted similar studies with participants who were post-critical period second language learners (Bongaerts, 1999; Bongaerts et al., 1997, 2000). In the first study (Bongaerts et al., 1997), the participants were Dutch learners of English. Five participants were found to have a native-like performance on the given task, which was reading sentences. In the second study (Bongaerts, 1999), the participants were French learners of English and three performed like native speakers on the same task as the previous study. In the third study (Bongaerts et al., 2000), the participants of which were immigrants to the Netherlands with different L1 backgrounds, two performed in a native-like way. From all of these studies, it was concluded that the

learners who begin to learn a second language after a purported critical period can attain a native-like level in various linguistic domains (all cited in Bongaerts, 2005).

Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam (2009) also investigated whether late L2 learners can achieve a native-like level in L2. Their participants were 195 Swedish speakers who had begun their second language learning at various ages and who identified themselves as potentially native-like speakers of L2. One hundred and seven of these participants began to learn Swedish before the age of 12 and 88 began at 12 or later. They were selected with three advertisements in daily newspapers according to six different criteria: being Spanish native speakers, speaking Spanish fluently, being 19 years old or older, having lived in Sweden for ten years or more, having minimally a 12-year educational level (no less than senior high school), and having been exposed to Swedish spoken in the greater Stockholm area. The people who called for the advertisement had a 15-minute interview on the telephone; they were asked to speak about a certain subject for one minute. These speech samples were then used as stimuli in listening sessions, in which Swedish native speakers were asked to determine whether the respondents had a foreign accent. After the listening sessions with a large sample ($n = 195$; Age of onset (AO) < 1-47 years) and broad and detailed linguistic analysis with a small number of participants ($n = 41$; AO = 1-19 years), the results were analyzed. Most of the early learners and only a few of the late learners were perceived as native speakers of Swedish. However, only a small number of early learners and none of the late learners showed real linguistic nativelikeness when their performance was evaluated linguistically. It was concluded that an early starting age is an advantage for second language acquisition.

Research on Foreign Language Acquisition and Effects of Intensity on FLA

As indicated before, this study looks at the effects of background factors on learning English as a foreign language. However, the research studies mentioned above are all about learning English as a second language. Some important differences between learning language as a foreign language or a second language should be considered when studying the effect of starting age. The learners who learn English as a second language have many more opportunities to practice and improve the language as a result of their large amount of exposure to the target language. On the other hand, learners who learn English as a foreign language are exposed to the target language generally in a formal setting and in a limited amount. When looking at the effect of starting age in FLA settings, amount of exposure is an especially pertinent variable (Munoz, 2006). Singleton (1995) estimates that exposure to a FL in a formal setting for 18 years is nearly equal to one year of exposure in an L2 naturalistic setting (Singleton, 1995). This section is going to look at the research studies done to clarify the effect of age on learning English as a foreign language and its interaction with intensity of instruction.

In an early study, Oller and Nagato (1974) studied Japanese students who had started to learn English in primary school (one to two hours a week) or in junior high school. Those two groups were tested in the 7th, 9th and 11th grades by means of cloze tests. There were statistically significant differences between the two groups when they were in 7th and 9th grades, but not in the 11th grade. It was concluded that starting to learn a foreign language at an early age did not have a long-term advantage.

Perani et al. (1996) looked at the functions of the brain while learning a foreign language. Nine right-handed Italians who were born of Italian parents and had studied English for at least five years in a formal environment were the participants of the study. Their ages were between 21 and 32 and they had not been exposed to English before the age of seven and had not spent more than one year in an English-speaking country. All had an advanced level of English and none had knowledge of Japanese language. The participants listened to short stories in Italian, English or Japanese and at the same time, an assessment of their cerebral blood flow (CBF) was done with positron emission tomography (PET). Two control conditions were also run. In the first condition, Japanese tapes were played backwards (backward condition) and the participants listened. In the second condition, the participants listened to Italian and English stories and were asked questions about the meaning of these stories (attentive rest). The participants had eight correct responses in Italian and 6.5 in English out of ten questions about the stories listened to during PET scanning. This indicated that their comprehension was slightly better in Italian than in English. The scan data showed that some brain areas distinguish spoken language from non-speech input no matter whether the person has the knowledge of language itself or not and this ability is protected during adulthood, but on the other hand, as a striking result, it was seen that no areas in the brain were significantly more active while listening to English stories than while listening to an unknown language, which was Japanese in this study.

As a result of these findings, it was concluded that some areas of brain are shaped with early exposure to the first language and are not activated by the exposure to a second language learned later in life.

Garcia Mayo and Garcia Lecumberri (2003) explored the effect of the length of exposure to a foreign language setting on target-like performance in a grammaticality judgement task and whether earlier exposure would lead to more target-like performance in that type of task. The study was carried out in a foreign-language environment with two groups of participants (N= 60) who were from different age groups, were bilingual and were learning English as a third language. The participants were grouped in terms of number of hours of exposure and type of received instruction. They were also put into two groups according to their ages of first exposure to English (8-9 vs. 11-12). The participants were given a grammaticality judgement task with 17 sentences and asked to decide which ones were 'correct', which ones were 'incorrect' and to say 'do not know' for the ones they were not sure about. In terms of length of exposure to FL, it was concluded that the longer the exposure to the foreign language, the better subjects' performance was. Moreover, it was seen that older subjects who had been exposed to FL at the age of 11-12 were better than the younger subjects in the circumstances of controlled length of exposure. Thus, starting to learn a foreign language with formal instruction at an early age is not seen to produce significantly better results.

In a related study, Munoz (2006) attempted to determine the effect of different starting age of FL and variable lengths of exposure to the target language on different age groups' perception and production of English segments. The subjects were 281 students who were part of the BAF (The Barcelona Age Factor) Project, which is about changing the English instruction age from 11 years (Grade 6) to eight years (Grade 3) in both primary and secondary schools around Spain. They were Spanish and Catalan learners of English. The students were distributed in 11 groups

according to the starting age of learning the FL (8, 11, 14, 18+ or A, B, C, D) and the length of exposure to the TL in a formal setting (200, 416, 726 hours, or exposure Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3). None of the participants had been to an English-speaking country. All of them learnt English in a school setting. An auditory discrimination task and an imitation task were used. The former included 20 tape-recorded pairs of words in which the second word of each pair could be the same or different from the first one and the students were asked to say whether the pairs heard were the same or different. In the second task, which included 34 English words, the students were asked to repeat the word they heard. The results for age and exposure effects on the perception of FL sounds show that the older starters (11, 14, 18+) were better than the younger ones (8-year-old starters) in discriminating English vowels and consonants. This shows the advantage of a late starting age in an FL context. However, younger learners' rate of discriminating vowels and consonants increases when the length of exposure to the TL increases.

In a recent study, Jenifer Larson-Hall (2008) looked at whether a young starting age is advantageous in a situation of minimal exposure to instructed foreign language. Over 200 Japanese native speakers who were students of a national university in Japan were the participants of this study. These students can be accepted as the brightest students of Japan as it is very difficult to be accepted to the university that they were studying at. A grammaticality judgment test (GJT), a phonemic discrimination test and an aptitude test, and a background questionnaire about students' early experiences with English were used as the instruments of the study. It was found that age differences in terms of foreign language acquisition were advantageous only as long as a significant amount of input is received by the

learners. In this study, the substantial amount of language exposure refers to 1600-2200 hours of input which means six to eight hours in a week, if this amount is calculated over six years and 44 weeks per year. It was also concluded that the advantages of an early starting age emerge when total input increases. The results of the study were summarized as showing that an early age is not a magical ability that helps to learn a foreign language in a quick and native-like way in a minimal input situation, but it is a non-negligible factor that has a big role in improving language learning as long as the learners receive adequate input. (Larson-Hall, 2008).

In his review of the literature, Dörnyei (2009) concludes that these research studies provide evidence of older learners being better than younger in most formal learning environments. Similarly, Lightbown and Spada (2006) summarise the findings as follows.

When the goal is basic communicative ability for all students in an educational system, and when it is assumed that the child's native language will remain the primary language, it may be more efficient to begin second or foreign language teaching later. When learners receive only a few hours of instruction per week, learners who start later (for example, at age 10, 11 or 12) often catch up with those who began earlier. Some second or foreign language programmes that begin with very young learners but offer only minimal contact with the language do not lead to much progress (p.74).

The Effect of Attitude towards Learning English on Achievement

Effects of attitude on learning English as a foreign language is another sub-question of the first research question.

As stated in the background of the study, attitude is defined as “a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event” (Ajzen, as cited in Shirbagi (2010)).

Motivation, on the other hand, is explained in Dörnyei (2001, p. 8) as concerning:

...the direction and magnitude of human behavior, that is: the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it, the effort expended on it. In other words, motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it.

The effect of attitude on achievement in second/foreign language acquisition has been much discussed by researchers (Ellis, 2003; Gardner, 1985; Shirbagi, 2010). As stated in Lightbown and Spada (2006), though there is much evidence of a correlation between attitude and learning, it is not totally known whether success in language learning is produced by positive attitude or successful learning produces positive attitude, or other factors affect both.

In his motivation theory, Gardner (as cited in Dörnyei, 2001) indicates that motivation includes three components: motivational intensity, desire to learn the language and attitudes towards learning the language, and adds that a truly motivated individual displays all these components together and these help the learner to arouse adequate motivation to reach the goals of the learning process. Shirbagi (2010) says

that learning is not affected directly by attitudes, but that attitudes are in the position of instruments that develop motivation. Similarly, Ellis (2003) states that motivation involves attitude and other affective factors which influence the learners' amount of effort they spend for L2 learning, so studies are generally done considering the connection between attitude and motivation. In this section, research studies about motivation and attitudes toward language learning will be presented.

Over the years, nearly all of the research studies in this area have concluded that positive attitude has a positive impact on language achievement. Clément, Gardner and Smythe (1977) conducted a study to assess the motivational characteristics of 304 francophone students who were in 10th and 11th grades in Montreal. It was found that favorable attitudes are effective on students' motivation to learn L2.

Another study (Clément, Gardner, & Smythe, 1980) was conducted with the purpose of assessing the relationship between attitude, motivation, language aptitude, social factors and fluency in second language. The data were obtained from 223 subjects who were francophone 11th grade students from Montreal. It was found that an individual who has a positive attitude towards English tends to speak English frequently, is motivated to learn English and wants to continue to learn English.

As cited in Dörnyei (2001), the purpose of Dörnyei & Kormos' empirical study was to explore the effects of a number of motivational and social variables on L2 learners' engagement in an oral argumentative task. Forty six intermediate level Hungarian students studying English in Budapest were the participants of the study. Two self-report questionnaires, including questions about attitudinal/motivational

issues and a scale assessing the level of group cohesiveness in the students' learner groups, the participants' willingness to communicate and questions asking about the interrelationships among the learners, were used as the instruments of the study. The results concerning the motivational variables showed that they had a significant effect on learners' task performance.

A more recent article by Gardner and Masgoret (2002) reviewed research conducted by Gardner and associates to estimate how well motivation and attitude contributed to achievement in language. The attitude/Motivation Test Battery and three achievement measures including self-ratings, objective tests and grades were used to collect data from 10,489 individuals. As a result, it was concluded that the effect of attitude toward the learning situation is not as high as the effect of motivation.

A more recent study (İnal, Evin, & Saracoğlu, 2003) was conducted in a Turkish context to clarify the relationship between the students' achievement and their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language. The participants were 421 students from different types of high schools (Anatolian, Regular or Vocational high schools). A language Attitude Scale (LAS) designed by Saracoglu (1992) was administered to all participants to collect data about their personal information and their attitude towards learning English and the relationship between attitude and different variables such as gender, type of high school, being abroad, and bilingualism. The data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed in a quantitative way. A high positive correlation was found between students' attitudes and their achievements ($r= 0.42$).

Languages Known by the Learners and Spoken in Their Home Environment

I am not aware of any studies exploring the effect of languages spoken in learners' home environment, so the literature about the effect of bilingualism will take place in this section.

Kirkici (2004) reviewed the studies conducted on this issue. He notes that different research studies have reached different results about this factor. Carrow (1957) conducted research on Spanish-English bilingual children in Texas primary schools and concluded that monolingual children performed better in the reading, spelling, hearing exams in proportion to bilingual students. On the other hand, the studies of Roseberry- McKibbin and Brice (2000) and Hawson (1997) which were also stated in Kirkici (2004) concluded that bilingualism has a lot of advantages for children's language skills. By reviewing these studies, Kirkici (2004) stated that it is difficult to define the cognitive and (meta)linguistic effects of bilingualism, so more detailed and controlled research should be done to reach a more absolute conclusion.

The idea that bilingualism makes a positive contribution to children's mental and language skills started to gain currency following Peal and Lambert's survey in 1962, which revealed that if all the conditions of survey controlled equally, bilinguals perform better in the respect of intelligence and communication abilities. In this study, the participants were a group of monolingual and a group of bilingual 10-year old students obtained from 6 Montreal French Schools. The participants were given verbal and non-verbal intelligence tests. It was seen that bilinguals performed much better than monolingual group in both tests. In the same study, Peal and Lambert also examined the underlying reason for the issue of bilinguals' surpassing monolinguals and concluded that because the bilinguals have a wide

perspective of the rules of two languages, they can perform better skills than monolinguals.

Conclusion

As can be inferred from the studies reviewed above, an early age is an advantage in terms of second language acquisition, but the same cannot be said for foreign language learning, because older ages are seen to have an advantage in learning a foreign language, except in cases of intense input. The studies conducted for the effect of attitudes toward language learning show that attitude may have more impact on language learning when it promotes motivation. The research about the effect of languages known by the learners present mixed results; being bilingual may have either positive or negative effects on language achievement.

In the next part, the methodology of this study will be stated to show how the relationship between English proficiency and starting age of learning English, type of high school, languages known and spoken in the family and students' attitudes towards learning English will be clarified.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between students' English proficiency when they enter university and the age at which they started learning a foreign language, the type of high school they attended, the other languages that they know and/or are spoken in their families and their attitudes towards English. It also aims to explore what other factors may affect level of proficiency by the time students have entered university. The following research questions are addressed:

1. How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by
 - a) the age at which they started learning English?
 - b) the type of high school they attended?
 - c) the languages that are known and spoken in their family?
 - d) their attitudes towards learning English?

2. What other background factor(s) influence students' English proficiency?

This chapter will provide information about setting, participants, instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis.

Setting

This research was conducted at Dicle University, School of Foreign Languages, Diyarbakır, Turkey. The School of Foreign Languages is responsible for teaching English to preparatory class students and the students of other departments as well as providing public English courses, which students are free to attend. This study will deal with students from the faculties of Engineering, Medicine, and Law only.

Students in these faculties have eight hours English per week in their first year; as this is not a preparatory class, they take other classes related to their own major at the same time. At the beginning of each academic year, the students entering these departments take a placement test. Students are arranged into groups on the basis of the results of this test. Those whose score is under 40 start from elementary level and those whose score is over 40 start from pre-intermediate level. Most of the students start from elementary level. There are no students at higher levels.

There are 75 elementary level students and 50 pre-intermediate level students in the Medicine Faculty, 162 elementary level students and 27 pre-intermediate level students in the Law Faculty, and 192 elementary level students in the Engineering Faculty at Dicle University.

The students of the Medicine and Law Faculties have a mid-term exam and five quizzes each term and they have a final exam at the end of the year. They are required to get at least 60 from the final exam and the average grade of all their exams has to be at least 60 in order to pass the class. If they cannot achieve this score, they have a make-up exam after the final. Unlike the Medicine and Law

Faculties, the students of the Engineering Faculty have a mid-term exam, a final exam and 5 quizzes at the end of each term. A make-up exam for the students who cannot get the required score from the final exam is also applied at the end of each term. The assignments and participation of the students are also taken into consideration. After all these exams, if they are considered to be unsuccessful, they can go on to take their departments' classes, but they have to pass the English exam before graduation. For that reason, they subsequently continue to take the exams with the first grade students until they pass.

Participants

One hundred and fifty first year students from the faculties of Medicine, Engineering and Law were included in this study, because those were the only students who were present while administering the questionnaires. Only 105 questionnaires could be used as 45 of them were not answered seriously (see *Procedure*, below). The profile of the 105 participants who were included in the main analysis is given below:

Gender	Male- 65	Female- 40	
Age	Mean: 19.5, min:18, max: 24		
Department	Medicine- 25	Law- 44	Engineering- 36

Table 1- The profile of the respondents

The purpose of selecting students from the Medicine, Engineering and Law faculties is that the students studying in these departments all achieved high scores in the university entrance exam (ÖSS). They are aware of their responsibility and study hard. Most of these students graduated from Anatolian high schools though there are also students who graduated from regular high schools. Their ages of starting to learn

English varies and as they are from different parts of Turkey, they have some different features in terms of languages they know and spoken in their environment. Some of them started to learn English at the 4th grade in primary school (Age: 10) and some after 8th or 9th grade (Age: 14 or 15). These students had different intensity of English classes at high school. Anatolian, science or private high school students have more English classes than the ones who study in a regular high school. After starting university, these students have the same program for English classes.

Instrument

A semi-structured interview, a questionnaire and placement tests were used as the instruments of the study. The questionnaire was in two parts. In the first part, there are factual questions about students' starting age of learning L2, the type of schools they attended before university, how many languages they know and are spoken in their families, and whether they had had any other opportunities to improve their English. The second part includes questions about students' attitudes towards English. The questionnaire was not adapted from another one; I designed it according to the possible factors that may be effective on students' English learning. Firstly, I wrote all of the questions that appeared in my mind about the effective factors and I eliminated them according to their degree of importance. The questionnaires administered to the participants were Turkish, because it might be difficult for some of the students to understand an English questionnaire (See Appendix A for the English version of full questionnaire and Appendix B for the Turkish version of the questionnaire). The questionnaires were administered to the participants in the classrooms by their instructors.

The interviews were done with 12 participants; 6 of these students were the ones who had a score below 20 out of 100 in the placement test and 6 of them were the ones who had a score above 40 out of 100. The interviews were done individually and a silent environment was chosen to have a high quality in recording. The participants were asked one question which was indicated according to the group. The successful students were asked what they think about being successful in English and the other group is asked about the reasons of having problems in English learning process. Other questions were asked according to students' answers for the first question (see Appendix C for an example interview in Turkish and Appendix D for the one in English).

Students' English proficiency (the main outcome variable) was measured on the basis of the placement test that had been done at the beginning of the academic year to arrange the classes according to the level of the students. The placement test including 80 questions was mostly grammar-based; there were also reading passages. You can see the whole placement test in Appendix E.

Procedure

Before starting the research, the necessary permissions were obtained from Dicle University, School of Foreign Languages. The instructor of each class asked his/her students their starting age of learning English. The aim was to indicate if there would be enough variation to apply the real questionnaire. After seeing that there was an adequate number of students who had started to learn English at different ages, the questionnaire was applied after explaining the purpose of the study. Before entering the data into SPSS, the questionnaires were manually

screened. Some questionnaires included contradictions in the answers. For example, the first question asks whether they had studied English before they came to university or not, a student ticks 'No', and in the second question, they are asked when they started to learn English, and the student ticks the 'Primary School' option; it can be understood from his/her answers that the questions had been answered without reading; 45 questionnaires were excluded from consideration in this way.

After the data collection process, the data derived from questionnaires and the scores of the placement test were analyzed in a quantitative way with SPSS. After the data analysis process, interviews with 12 different students who have different levels of English were conducted to see what they think about their learning process. The interviews were done in Turkish, because it might be difficult for the students to express their opinions in English. They were recorded and transcribed. After the transcription, the data was analyzed read many times and repeated patterns were marked and then analyzed.

Conclusion

In this chapter the setting, participants, instruments and procedure of the study were presented. In the next chapter, the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews will be described and the results of the data analysis will be presented.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This thesis addressed the following research questions:

1. How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by
 - a) the age at which they started learning English?
 - b) the type of high school they attended?
 - c) the languages that are known and spoken in their family?
 - d) their attitudes towards learning English?

2. What other background factor(s) influence students' English proficiency?

For this study, a questionnaire and semi-structured interview were used to collect data. The questionnaire included questions about various factors to answer the first research question and semi-structured interviews were used to answer the second research question.

Not all of the variables in the questionnaire will be included in the data analysis as there was not sufficient variation among students (see Table 2). Since almost all students were found to be in a single category for these questions, they can be assumed not to be widespread factors affecting the variation in Dicle students' proficiency.

Did you attend prep class?	Yes-15	No-89
Have you ever been abroad?	Yes-5	No-98
Have you had private lessons or gone to a course for English	Yes-7	No-98
What was the type of primary school you attended?	Private-4	Public-101

Table 2- The variables which were not included in the study

Quantitative Analysis

In terms of my first research question, the questions about the relationship between proficiency and starting age, type of high school attended, languages the learners know and are spoken in the family, and attitude towards learning English were analyzed. I will describe the results for each factor in turn.

1a) How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by the age they started learning English?

Table 3 shows the stage of their education at which students started learning English. Since so few students were found in the pre-school, high school and university groups, these categories were merged to compare the students who started learning English at primary school and earlier vs. middle school and later.

Starting time of learning English	Frequency
Pre-school (6)	1
Primary School (7)	68
Middle School (12)	30
High School (15)	5
University (19)	1
TOTAL	105

Table 3- Participants' starting time of learning English

(The numbers in brackets refer to starting age)

Students' placement test scores were low overall ($M=27.92$, $SD=13.72$, $min=0$, $max=75$). It was found that the students who had started learning English at primary school or earlier ($N= 69$, $M= 29.10$, $SD=14.29$) had slightly higher scores than the ones who started at middle school or later ($N= 36$, $M= 25.66$, $SD= 12.42$), but the difference was not statistically significant ($t(103) = 1.22$, $p(\text{one tailed}) = .12$). The age at which Dicle University students started learning English does not therefore seem to be an important factor affecting their proficiency.

Since it was predicted that the majority of students would start learning English at about the same time, but that the quality of this education was likely to differ, the questionnaire also included a secondary question asking when they felt they had received their first *effective* English language education. As Table 4 shows, there were not many participants who had their first effective education in primary school or middle school, so I combined these two groups. Participants who did not

think that they had had an effective education at any period of their school lives were not included in the analysis.

The time of first effective education	The number of students
Primary School	6
Middle School	14
High School	49
University	33
Not Answered	3
TOTAL	105

Table 4- The times and numbers of participants' first effective education

For the effect of age of first effective education, I compared the students who felt that they had received their first effective education at primary/middle school vs. High School vs. university. (Table 5 shows the mean proficiency scores for each period.) An independent samples ANOVA showed that the overall difference between groups is significant ($F(2,99) = 7.29, p < .001$). Planned contrasts showed that students who received their first effective education at university scored significantly lower than those who received their first effective education at primary/middle or high school. There was a moderate effect size ($t(99) = 3.26, p(\text{one-tailed}) < .001, r = .31$). However, there was no significant difference between those receiving their first effective education in primary/middle school and those receiving their first effective education in high school ($t(99) = 1.1, p = .27$).

	Number	Mean	SD
Primary/Middle Sc.	20	28.65	13.43
High School	49	32.45	13.83
University	33	21.27	11.40

Table 5- When learners started to have an effective education

1b) How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by type of high school?

As indicated in previous chapters, the type of high school a student attends may have an impact on their proficiency. This is partly because they receive more intense language education and partly because the quality of their education is likely to be higher. The students studying at Anatolian/Science High Schools have to pass an exam and as the proficiency of the students is high, so is the quality of the education accordingly.

To examine this factor, the placement test scores of the students who studied at different types of high schools were compared. The questionnaire showed that only one student had studied in a private school, so this analysis will focus on the comparison between Anatolian/Science high schools ($N=73$) and regular high schools ($N=31$).

The results show that students who studied at Anatolian/Science High School ($N=73$, $M=31.9$, $SD=12.49$) were more successful in the placement test than the ones who studied at a regular high school ($N=31$, $M=18.5$, $SD=12.07$). The difference was statistically significant and there was a moderate-to-large effect size ($t(102) = 5.06$, $p < .001$, $r=.45$).

1c) How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by the languages they know and are spoken in their family, and by the other family members who know English?

I will analyze this question under three headings: languages that learners know; languages spoken in learners' families; other family members who know English.

1) Languages that the learners know

In Diyarbakır, most people know more than one language. The data derived from the questionnaires showed that Turkish, Kurdish, German, Zazaish, Georgian and Arabic are known by the students. I have decided to compare the students who know one language with the ones who know more than one language, because the number of students who know three or more languages is not enough for comparison (see Table 6). The results show that there is not a significant difference between students who know one language ($M=29.7$, $N=32$, $SD=14.10$) and those who know more than one language ($M=27.1$, $N=73$, $SD=13.56$, $t(103)=.887$, $p(2\text{-tailed})=.38$).

Number of languages known	N	Languages
1	32	Turkish
2	62	Turkish and Kurdish: 52 participants Turkish and German: 7 participants Turkish and Arabic: 2 participants Turkish and Zazaish: 1 participant
3	9	Turkish, Kurdish and German: 3 participants Turkish, Kurdish and Zazaish: 5 participants Turkish, German, Georgian: 1 participant
4	1	Turkish, Kurdish, German, Zazaish
5	1	Turkish, Kurdish, German, Zazaish, Arabic
TOTAL		105

Table 6- The numbers of participants and languages they know

2) Languages spoken in learners' families

As was previously noted, there are some families who speak more than one language. For this factor, I analyzed the relationship between students' proficiency levels and the languages spoken in their family. This question was included because some students do not know the languages spoken in their families or the languages they know are not spoken in their families. As it is seen in Table 7 there are not many participants whose family members speak 3 languages, so I compared the families in

which only one language is spoken vs. more than one language. The difference between the students whose family members speak only one language ($M= 30.12$, $N= 40$, $SD= 15.98$) and more than one language ($M= 26.56$, $N= 65$, $SD= 12.04$) was not significant ($t(103)= 1.29$, $p(\text{one tailed}) = .99$)

The number of languages spoken in the family	Number of Participants	Languages spoken in their families
1	40	Turkish: 32 Kurdish: 8
2	60	Turkish and Kurdish: 53 Turkish and Zazaish: 5 Turkish and Georgian: 1 Turkish and Arabic: 1
3	5	Turkish, Kurdish and Zazaish: 4 Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic: 1
TOTAL		105

Table 7- The number and names of the languages spoken in participants' families

3) The other family members who know English

The last heading of the third sub-section of the first research question is about whether there is someone else who knows English in their family or not. The data show that the difference between the students in whose family there is someone else who knows English ($M=30.1$, $N= 48$, $SD= 14.52$) and the ones who are the only person who knows English in the family ($M=26.01$, $N= 57$) was not significant ($t(103) = 1.56$, $SD= 12.82$, $p(\text{one tailed}) = .367$).

Id) How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by their attitudes towards learning English?

As the last factor, I analyzed the correlation between students' attitudes towards English and their English proficiency. In order to determine the effect of this factor, 15 questions about students' attitudes were included in the questionnaire. I checked the reliability of these 15 items; according to the reliability analysis, it was seen that the items in the questionnaire were reliable (Alpha: .7). It was seen that the attitudes of the participants towards learning English were positive ($M= 1.68$, $SD=.58$). However, no significant correlation was found between the attitude towards learning English and English proficiency, kendall's tau= $-.002$ ($p= .487$).

Qualitative Analysis

In order to determine what other background factors might affect proficiency, interviews were carried out with 12 students (six whose placement test scores were 20 or below out of 100 (1st group) and six whose placement test scores were 40 or over out of 100 (2nd group)).

These interviews were analyzed in a qualitative way. The students in the weaker group were asked the question 'What do you think about the sources of problems that you face in the English learning process'.

Most of these students believe that they have problems because of grammar-based instruction. They think that they do not have any opportunities to use what they learn in the classroom; they do not practice speaking in the lessons and they see these as the basis of the problems that they face in learning English. Another reason

commonly cited for problems in the English learning process was high anxiety levels. Interviewees said that having the same English program with the students who had a good quality of English education at high school causes anxiety amongst the students who did not; and another reason for having a high anxiety level is indicated as the way of assessing students' English proficiency. As the students' success is evaluated with their exam scores, the students feel anxious, because they know that they have to take a required score to pass the class and this causes high anxiety level which is stated to have a negative effect on language achievement. The interviewees also raised reasons related to the teachers. The interviewees said that they found the same teaching styles boring; they had started with learning 'Tenses' when they had first started to learn English and they were still taught 'Tenses' at university. It was also indicated that some teachers had not given the required importance to English classes when they were at primary/middle school or high school.

What the students in the stronger group said generally supports the points made by the first group. Most of them think that they are good at English because of having opportunities to use language and practice speaking during learning. According to them, giving more place to speaking in the lessons has a positive effect on learning English. They also believe that listening to English songs or watching movies in English also helped them to achieve high proficiency in English; they also believe that they could get rid of the disadvantages of being far from English while preparing for university entrance exam by means of English songs and movies. As it is known by the students that their diploma grade affects their university entrance exam score and they have a high intensity of English classes (especially the ones at Anatolian/Science High School), some of the students study more to have a high

diploma grade in order to enter the department they want. This reason seems to affect students' motivation for studying English that will affect their University Entrance Exam score.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the data derived from the questionnaires and interviews were analyzed; SPSS was used for the analysis of questionnaires and the interviews were analyzed in a qualitative way. In the next chapter, the summaries of the results and comments on the findings and implications will be presented.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The present study was conducted to clarify the effects of background factors on learning English as a foreign language amongst 105 students of the Medicine, Engineering and Law Faculties of Dicle University, Diyarbakır. The results were obtained by means of quantitative analysis of questionnaires applied to 105 participants and qualitative analysis of interviews done with 16 of those participants to determine the possible factors affecting foreign language learning.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by
 - a) the age at which they started learning English?
 - b) the type of high school they attended?
 - c) the languages that are known and spoken in their family?
 - d) their attitudes towards learning English?

2. What other background factor(s) influence students' English proficiency?

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study will be presented in terms of the research questions; previous studies will be referred to for the factors which have been studied before, but only the results of the present research will be presented for the factors which have not been researched before.

How is students' English proficiency when they start university affected by

a) the starting age of language learning?

As was seen in Chapter Four, I consider this factor under two headings: starting age of learning English and the age of first effective English education.

The results of the first sub-factor showed that the students who started to learn English at primary school are not significantly different from the ones who started to learn English at middle school or later in terms of placement test scores, though the former have slightly higher scores. This matches with the study of Oller and Nagato (1974), who also concluded that starting to learn a foreign language at an early age does not have an advantage. Garcia Mayo and Garcia Lecumberri (2003) also reached the same results. On the other hand, the results of the present study contrast with what is indicated in the results of Perani et al.'s study (1996). Their study was about the functions of the brain in the language learning process; they concluded that some parts of the brain are not activated at a late exposure to language, so starting language learning at an early stage of life has positive effects on learning.

What is concluded from this study might be a result of primary school students' not being ready for learning a foreign language in a classroom setting, so they do not gain any advantage over the students who start to learn foreign language later. As another possible reason, not giving enough importance to English at

primary school can be stated, because most of the primary school students are not aware of the importance of a foreign language for their future. Before starting to study English, the children may be informed about the existence of other languages and the advantages of knowing a foreign language.

The results for the second sub-factor show that there is also not a significant difference between the students who had their first effective language education at primary/middle school vs. at high school. A significant difference was found between the students who had their first effective language education at university and those who had their first effective education at high school; the latter ones have better scores. Surprisingly though, there was only a moderate effect size ($r=.31$).

Amongst these students, therefore, it seems that starting to learn English at a young age makes little difference to proficiency by the time they reach university. Perhaps more worryingly, the difference between students who felt that they had had NO effective schooling in English before university and those who had was, though significant, not a large one, showing that even the pre-university education that students think is effective does not make much difference.

b) the type of high school they attended?

As indicated in previous chapters, the type of high school refers to intensity and quality of language education in the present study; the students who graduated from science/Anatolian high schools were compared with those who graduated from regular high school. It was seen that Science/ Anatolian high school graduates have a higher proficiency in English than regular high school graduates. Moreover, there was a moderate-to-large effect size for this variable ($r=.45$), indicating that the type

of high school attended has a far greater effect on proficiency at university than does starting age.

The intensity of English education in different types of high schools may be one of the important factors that affect students' English proficiency, because the Anatolian/Science High School students have more English classes than Regular High School students. The quality of teachers may be another reason for this difference. The teachers who want to work at a(n) Anatolian/Science High School have to pass an exam; this increases the quality of teachers in these schools. The students also have to pass an entrance exam to study at these schools; this affects the quality of the students. Highly qualified teachers and high qualified students may result in high proficiency in English.

The research studies done related to the factor of intensity of study are generally integrated with starting age (Garcia Mayo & Garcia Lecumberri, 2003; Larson-Hall, 2008; Munoz, 2006), so I will not refer to previous studies for this factor.

c) the languages that are known and spoken in their family?

The effect of languages that are known and spoken in the family was researched under three headings: the effect of languages known by the learners, the effect of languages spoken in the family and the effect of other family members who know English. The results show that none of these variables had a significant effect of students' proficiency.

The purpose of investigating this factor was to see whether knowing more than one language or being in an environment where more than one language is spoken has an effect on learning English as a foreign language. This is perhaps

unsurprising, given the variety of results found in previous studies. As Kirkici (2004) reviews, some of the previous studies concluded that knowing more than one language has positive effects on foreign language proficiency (Balkan; Cummins & Gulutsan ; Peal & Lambert; Scott); some others' conclusions present results which are in contrast (Appel & Muysken; Carrow; Grosjean; Kelly; Macnamara). A major implication of previous research in this area is that results can change dramatically according to the other factors that are controlled for. It may be, therefore, that to uncover the effect of other languages in the Diyarbakir context other factors need to be controlled for. This could be a project for further research.

d) their attitudes towards learning English?

In order to clarify the effect of attitude towards learning English on achievement, the results derived from the questionnaires were used. Surprisingly, these results show that there is not a positive correlation between the learners' attitudes towards learning English and achievement. This result does not match with of the majority of previous research (Clément, Gardner, & Smythe, 1977; Clément, Gardner, & Smythe, 1980; Gradner & Smythe, 1975; Gardner & Masgoret, 2002; İnal, Evin, & Saracoğlu, 2003), which has generally found that there is a high correlation between students' achievement and their attitude towards learning English.

The absence of a correlation between attitude towards English and achievement may result from the stage that the students are at. In the interviews, it was indicated by almost all of the students that they want to learn English especially for their future jobs, but that the students do not give adequate importance to English classes. This is because they think that the stage they are in is not early enough to

improve English. Also, as indicated before, the participants of this study are university students. They have many other responsibilities as a result of the department they are studying in. The lessons related to their own majors are really difficult, so they cannot spend much time on English. Because of these reasons, students' positive attitudes may not have an effect on their English proficiency. To me, attitude becomes an effective factor on achievement as long as it increases students' motivation and studying, which does not seem to be the case for these participants; this is also stated in previous studies (Clement, Gardner and Smythe 1977; Clément, Gardner, & Smythe, 1980).

What other background factor(s) influence students' English proficiency?

As indicated in Chapter Four, the results derived from semi-structured interviews were used to address this question; two groups of six students were included in the interviews. As the result of the interviews, different background factors which are effective on foreign language proficiency were found. The factors that affect English proficiency in a positive way were as follows:

- practicing English
- watching English movies
- listening to English songs
- the effect of English grades on diploma which has an important effect on university entrance exam (the students who studied in Anatolian/Science High Schools have more English classes; this means the grades of English lessons are important for the university entrance exam, so the students in these high schools study more).

The factors that affect English proficiency in a negative way were as follows:

- grammar-based education which is frequently applied by the teachers
- the quality of English teachers
- high anxiety level
- lack of environment where English/ what is learnt in the classroom can be practiced.
- same teaching styles during the whole process.

As written above, the students who have high proficiency owe their success to practising what is taught in the classroom. Most of the students who indicated this situation are Anatolian/science high school graduates; so this may be related to the intensity of language education they have at high school. The teachers of regular high schools may not find enough time to spend on practicing. In most of the schools in Turkey, the teachers are required to finish a specified textbook before the end of the academic year; this may hinder teachers' flexibility in the classroom.

Another possible factor that causes problems in the English learning process is grammar-based instruction. This is the result of exam types implemented for passing classes or being accepted as successful for academic purposes. In almost all of these exams, grammar is the most assessed skill. The students start to see grammar as the only skill of language. Because of the exam types, the teachers also feel the necessity of prioritizing grammar and this situation creates a vicious circle.

Pedagogical Implications

The results show that starting to learn a foreign language at an early period of life did not make this group of students much better. This result keeps the eyes on primary education in Turkey. As indicated before, the starting age of learning English was changed from 12 (6th grade) to 10 (4th grade); but as a result of this study, it is seen that there is not an advantage of starting to learn English earlier as long as there is not adequate language input. So, if the Ministry of National Education wants to benefit from an earlier starting age more, it should consider more intensive language education. Otherwise, there will be no point to start language education at an early age.

The results for ‘Type of high school’ which is considered as representing ‘intensity and quality of language education’ in the present study are the ones that present the most significant effects. As mentioned before, different high schools have different intensity and quality of language education. If we really want to have a high quality in education, the intensity or the amount of language input should be enough and of high quality, so regular high schools should have the same intensity and quality as the Anatolian/science high schools, because the success of these schools in language education are observable. As can be seen, type of high school has a much larger effect than the starting age. No matter what the starting age of a learner is, the language education which is qualified and presents enough language input can close the gap. This should be considered by policy makers.

The positive effects of practicing English and negative effects of grammar-based instruction are stated by both of the groups (the ones who have a high proficiency in English and who face problems) in the interviews. This should be considered by the teachers and more time should be spent on practicing what is

learnt. To spend enough time may not be possible in every school, especially at high schools, so this point is again related to the benefits of intensity of language education. Again I would argue that intensity of instruction in regular high schools should be increased.

Another reason for teachers' not being able to spend enough time on the activities they want to do in the classroom is the requirement of finishing a specified textbook. In my opinion, the teachers should have flexibility in the classroom. In fact they seem to have this, but as the common exams include the topics or vocabulary from the units of textbook, the teachers have to finish a certain number of units by the exam time. This hinders teachers from giving place to enough additional activities in the lessons. I am in favor of using a textbook, but the teachers should not stick to them too rigidly. Certain subjects can be taught in the same order but with different ways. This would be useful for considering different learning styles. The teachers should determine their teaching style in a way that can match with students' learning styles.

As is known, English is learnt as a foreign language by the students and they cannot find a naturalistic environment to use English in Turkey; the teachers should encourage students to have a connection with English out of the classroom; this may be via English movies, books or songs or internet to communicate with native speakers.

As high anxiety level is another factor that affects achievement in a negative way, the teachers should avoid the teaching styles that may cause a high anxiety level. In Turkey, the way of assessing students' achievement, which is generally written exams, is one of the factors that cause a high level of anxiety, because

achievement is generally assessed by means of a certain number of exams; because the teachers have to set exams as an obligation of rules indicated by Ministry of National Education. As the students who do well enough in the exams are accepted as successful, some of the students study only to pass the exams. Students' achievement can be evaluated via assignments given during the term. This would help the students to learn without exam anxiety.

Another problematic aspect of the exams is not covering all of the language skills. Speaking and listening skills, which are very important for being able to use a language, are generally ignored, especially at primary/middle schools and regular high schools. Starting from the first year of English education (4th grade at Primary School), all of the language skills should be assessed for a student's achievement.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are generally about the data collection process. The first limitation is about collecting quantitative data. The questionnaires prepared for this study were implemented to 150 students, but only 105 of them could be used as the others were not answered in a correct way; that was realized during manual checking and omitted. Given this low rate of completion, it seems probable that others also did not answer the questionnaires seriously but were not noticed. This might not have affected the age, other languages and type of high school factors as these are factual questions that have simple answers; but this situation might have affected the results of attitude questions and this may be why I could not find (surprisingly) any relations between attitude and achievement.

The second one is about collecting data through the interviews. A small number of students ($N=12$) were included in the interviews; because most of the students were not attending to the classes at that time to prepare for the exams of their own majors (Medicine and Engineering) and none of the Law Faculty students were included in the interviews; because the term was over for them at the time of interviews.

A further limitation is about the participants' starting age of learning English. There were five stages, which were pre-school, primary school, middle school, high school and university. The number for each stage was not enough, so I compared these groups as the students who started to learn English at primary school or earlier vs. at middle school or later. It would be better to have enough number for each stage.

Finally, the students taking part in this study generally had very low scores in the placement test. They are very good at the lessons related to their own major; it is therefore possible that the participants are not good language learners. This may be a bias in the sample which limits the generalisability of the findings to weaker learners.

Suggestions for Further Research

This research investigated the effect of starting age of learning English, languages known by the learners and spoken in their home environment, type of high school and attitudes toward learning a foreign language on proficiency and other possible background factors that may be effective on foreign language learning. I looked at these factors one by one, but these factors may interact and affect each other. Further research can be carried out to explore the interaction among the background factors.

The data for this study was collected from three departments of Dicle University (Medicine, Law and Engineering); so such a study can be done with a larger sample of participants and as mentioned in the 'Limitations of Study' section, there were not enough students in each stage to group students according to their starting age of learning English. To study with a larger number of sample participants would be useful to have adequate number for each stage.

The participants of this study did not have high scores from the placement test. It would provide more reliable data for the factors especially the age to include the learners who had high scores from the placement test.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the discussion of findings, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

The present study provided information on the effects of starting age of learning English, type of high school (intensity of language education), languages known by the language learners and spoken in their home environment and attitudes

toward learning English on language achievement, and other possible factors that may be effective on English proficiency.

The findings presented the following results:

Starting to learn English as a foreign language at an early age does not give students a large advantage.

Type of high school is very important for English proficiency, because the students of Anatolian/science high schools have much higher proficiency in English.

Knowing more than one language and being in a family environment where more than one language is spoken do not have a significant effect on English proficiency.

There is not a correlation between attitudes towards language learning and language proficiency.

As the results of qualitative analysis, it was seen that practicing what is learnt in the classroom, having a connection with the foreign language out of the classroom (listening to English songs, watching English movies) are very important to attain a high proficiency in language learning. On the other hand, grammar-based instruction, the same teaching styles during the whole learning process, lack of environment to practice the foreign language and high anxiety level cause problems in the learning process. These results of this study may be helpful for the Ministry of National Education in terms of new reforms of education system and the finding may also provide guidance to the ways of language teaching for English instructors and education authorities in Turkey.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ENGLISH QUESTIONNAIRE

THE BACKGROUND FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LEARNERS'
ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Dear Students,

This questionnaire was prepared to collect data for the thesis which is conducted in MA TEFL Program at Bilkent University. This study aims to collect data for the background factors effecting learning English as a foreign language.

There are factual questions in the first part of the questionnaire and the questions about learners' attitudes toward learning English are placed in the second part of the questionnaire.

There is no correct or wrong answer in the questionnaire. Your answers will be kept completely confidential. I really appreciate your sincere consideration.

Sevim DEMİRTAŞ
Bilkent University
MA TEFL

sevimdemirtas@gmail.com

Name: -----

Surname: -----

Gender: Male Female

Age: -----

PART I

1. Did you have English classes before starting University?
 Yes No

2. If yes, when did you first start to study English?
 Pre-school Primary School Middle School High School

3. In which period of your English learning process you think you had the first effective education?
 Pre-school Primary School Middle School High School (
) University

4. Did you have prep class?
 Yes No

5. If yes, what time?
 Middle School Prep High School Prep University Prep

6. If you have English classes in Middle School, how many hours did you have in a week?

7. If you have English classes in High School, how many hours did you have in a week?

8. What type of a primary school did you attend?
 Private School Public School

9. What type of a high school did you attend?

Anatolian/Science High School Private High School
Regular High School

10. Have you ever had private English lessons or gone to a course for English?

Yes No

11. Have you ever been to abroad?

Yes No

12. How many languages do you know? Which ones?

13. How many languages are spoken in your family environment? Which ones?

14. Is there anybody else who knows English in your family?

Yes No

15. If yes, how much of an effect do you think it has on learning English?

1- No influence

2- A small influence

3- No idea

4- A normal influence

5- A very important influence

PART II

	Totally Agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Totally Disagree
16. I like studying English.					
17. I like listening to English songs.					
18. I try to speak English about any subject when I am alone.					
19. To be able to make English sentences makes me happy.					
20. I like watching English movies.					
21. I'm interested in English out of the classes at University.					
22. Anything related to English attracts my attention out of the school.					
23. I look for the meaning of an English vocabulary that I see anywhere.					
24. I compare the structures/rules of English I get during learning process with those of the language(s) I speak.					
25. I want to improve my language skill in a country where English is spoken as native- language.					
26. I think what I learnt at school will be useful in the future.					
27. I study English only to pass the exams.					
28. I find English lessons boring.					
29. I do not do any extra things to reinforce what I learn at school.					
30. I don't want to be concerned with English unless it is necessary.					

Thank you for your cooperation. ☺

APPENDIX B: TURKISH QUESTIONNAIRE
ÖĞRENCİLERİN İNGİLİZCE YETERLİLİĞİNİ ETKİLEYEN
FAKTÖRLER

Sevgili Öğrenciler,

Bu anket Bilkent Üniversitesi, MA TEFL Programı'nda yürütülen tez çalışmasına bilgi toplamak için hazırlanmıştır. Bu çalışma İngilizce öğrenimi üzerinde etkili olan faktörler hakkında bilgi toplamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anketin ilk bölümünde temel sorular yer almaktadır. İkinci bölümünde ise İngilizceye karşı öğrenci tutumlarına yönelik sorulara yer verilmiştir.

Ankette doğru ya da yanlış cevap bulunmamaktadır. Bütün cevaplar gizli kalacaktır ve kişisel gizliliğiniz çalışmadan çıkacak tüm sunulan ve yayınlanan verilerde korunacaktır.

Sevim DEMİRTAŞ
Bilkent Üniversitesi
MA TEFL Programı

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Adı: -----

Soyadı: -----

Cinsiyet: Bay Bayan

Yaş: -----

1. BÖLÜM

1. Üniversiteye başlamadan önce İngilizce dersi gördünüz mü?
 Evet Hayır
2. Evet ise, İngilizce öğrenimine ilk olarak ne zaman başladınız?
 Okul öncesi İlkokul Ortaokul Lise
3. İngilizce öğrenme süreciniz içerisinde ilk olarak iyi bir eğitim aldığınızı düşündüğünüz dönem hangisidir?
 Okul öncesi İlkokul Ortaokul Lise
 Üniversite
4. Hazırlık okudunuz mu?
 Evet Hayır
5. Evet ise ne zaman?
 Ortaokul Hazırlık Lise Hazırlık Üniversite Hazırlık
6. Ortaokulda İngilizce dersi gördüyseniz haftada kaç saat?

7. Lisede İngilizce dersi gördüyseniz haftada kaç saat?

8. Ne tür bir ilköğretim okulunda okudunuz?
 Kolej Devlet Okulu
9. Ne tür bir lisede okudunuz?
 Anadolu/Fen Lisesi Kolej Düz Lise

10. İngilizce için özel ders aldınız mı ya da kursa gittiniz mi?
 Evet Hayır

11. Hiç yurtdışında bulundunuz mu?
 Evet Hayır

12. Kaç dil biliyorsunuz? Sıralar mısınız?

13. Ailenizde kaç dil kullanılıyor? Sıralar mısınız?

14. Ailenizde sizden başka İngilizce bilen var mı?

Evet Hayır

15. Varsa bunun İngilizce öğrenimi üzerinde ne ölçüde olumlu bir etkiye sahip olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?

0- Etkisi yok

1- Önemsiz ölçüde etkili

2- Kararsızım

3- Etkili

4- Çok etki

2. BÖLÜM

	Kesinlikle katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum
16. İngilizce öğrenmekten zevk alıyorum.					
17. İngilizce müzik dinlemeyi seviyorum.					
18. Yalnızken herhangi bir konu hakkında İngilizce konuşmaya çalışıyorum.					
19. İngilizce cümle kurabilmek beni mutlu ediyor					
20. İngilizce film izlemeyi seviyorum.					
21. Okul dışında da İngilizce ile ilgileniyorum.					
22. Okul dışında gördüğüm İngilizce ile alakalı şeyler dikkatimi çekiyor.					
23. Herhangi bir yerde gördüğüm İngilizce kelimenin anlamını sonradan öğrenmeye çalışıyorum.					
24. İngilizce öğrenim sürecimde edindiğim bilgileri kullandığım dil(ler) ile karşılaştırıyorum.					
25. Ana dili İngilizce olan bir ülkede dil becerimi geliştirmek istiyorum.					
26. Edindiğim bilgilerin ileride işime yarayacağını düşünüyorum.					
27. İngilizceye sadece okul sınavını geçebilmek için çalışıyorum.					
28. İngilizce derslerini sıkıcı buluyorum.					
29. Okulda öğrendiğim bilgilerin kalıcı olmasını sağlayacak herhangi bir şey yapmıyorum.					
30. Zorunlu olmadıkça İngilizce ile ilgilenmek istemiyorum.					

Katılımınız için teşekkürler ☺

APPENDIX C
Türkçe Görüşme Metni Örnekleri

(Öğrenci= Öğrn; Öğretmen= Öğrt)

Seviye Tespit Sınavı'nda 40'dan yüksek alan bir öğrenci

Öğrt: İngilizce başarın üzerinde etkili olan faktörler konusunda ne düşünüyorsun?

Öğrn: İlkokuldan beri İngilizce görüyorum. İngilizce dersleri en çok ortaokul da faydalı oldu; iyi bir temel oluştu.

Öğrt: Neden?

Öğrn: Çünkü derste konuşmaya çok yer veriyorduk. Tabi ki dil bilgisi de anlatılıyordu ama daha çok pratiğe dayalı olması İngilizce becerimin gelişmesine çok katkıda bulundu. Kelime bilgimi çok geliştirdim.

Öğrt: Bunun dışında olumlu yönde etkisinin olduğunu düşündüğün başka faktörler var mı?

Yabancı dizi izlerim, şarkı çok dinlerim. Dinlediğim şarkının sözlerinde geçen kelimelerin anlamlarına mutlaka bakarım.

Seviye Tespit Sınavı'nda 20'den düşük alan bir öğrenci

Öğrt: İngilizce öğrenim sürecini olumsuz olarak etkileyen faktörler konusunda ne düşünüyorsun?

Öğrn: Bence en büyük eksiklik öğrenilenlerin uygulanmasına yeterince yer verilmemesidir. Dil bilgisinde iyi sayılırım ama diğer yönlerden problem yaşıyorum; çünkü her dil becerisine aynı önem verilmiyor. Kitabı bitirmek için bazı bölümler

atlanabiliyor. Dilin kullanılabileceđi bir ortam olması da ok nemli, mesela ben ilkokula bařlarken hi Trke bilmiyordum ama o evrede bulunmam kısa srede Trke đrenmeme yardımcı oldu. Bunun yanında btn bařarımızın sınavla llmeye alıřılması da beni daha fazla kaygılandırıyor ve bu da hem sınav ncesi hem de sınavdaki performansını olumsuz ynde etkiliyor. Bir de řu an İngilizceye ok zaman ayıramam da sıkıntı yařamamda bir etken. nk tıp okuyorum ve dersler ok ađır. řu an sadece dersten geebilmek iin alıřıyorum

APPENDIX D
English translation of interview transcripts

(Teacher= T, Student= S)

A student whose placement test score was over 40.

T: What do you think about the factors affecting your achievement in English Proficiency?

S: I have been taught English since Primary School; but the most effective language education was at Middle School, I had a good foundation then.

T: Why?

S: Because we spent much time on speaking. Grammar was also taught, but as the language education was mostly practice-based, it contributed to my English proficiency and word knowledge a lot.

T: Is there any other factor that affects your English proficiency in a positive way?

S: I watch English movies and listen to English songs; I always look at the meaning of the words of the songs.

A student whose placement test score was below 20

T: What do you think about the factors affecting your English learning process in a negative way?

S: I think, the biggest problem is not spending enough time on practice. To me, I'm good at Grammar, but I face problems with the other skills; because all of the language skills are not given the same amount of importance. The teachers

sometimes skip some parts in order to finish the textbook. It is also important to have an environment to be able to use the target language; for example when I started to Primary School I didn't know Turkish. Since I was in the naturalistic environment of Turkish, I learnt it in a short time. Besides, assessing language achievement with the exam scores makes me more anxious; the exams affect the performance both pre and during the exam in a negative way. Another reason for facing problems in English learning is related to the time allotment. I study Medicine and the lessons are very difficult, so I study just to pass the class.

APPENDIX E
ENGLISH PLACEMENT TEST
2010-2011

NAME AND SURNAME :
DEPARTMENT AND NO :

Choose the best alternative

1. I work as a teacher and my wife, too.

- a) do b) working
c) work d) does e) is

2. What is your home town ?

- a) situated b) age
c) like d) located
e) place

3. I'm afraid I here for your birthday party.

- a) have not to be b) am not being
c) will be not d) can't be
e) won't

4. Would you like help?

- a) a b) an
c) me d) no e) some

5. They go to the cinema.

- a) tomorrow b) much
c) today d) seldom e) rare

6. He hasn't played since he the accident.

- a) had b) has had
c) has c) had had e) have

7. This is the best tea I've tasted.

- a) never b) ever
c) already d) still e) for

8. I'm looking the summer holiday.

- a) before b) forward
c) for d) forwarding
e) forward to

9. This beer tastes

- a) badly b) lovely
c) well d) normally
e) nicely

10. In life can make a mistake; we're all human.

- a) anyone b) some people
c) not anybody d) someone
e) nobody

11. She knows that she to pay now.

- a) had better b) needn't
c) should d) ought e) can

12. If he about it, I'm sure he'd help.

- a) had know b) knew
c) has known d) knows
e) known

13. They said they come, but they didn't.

- a) can b) will
c) may d) might e) are

14. They were hard questions that I had no chance.

- a) such a b) some
c) such d) quite e) as

15. Mum gave her job when I was born.

- a) in b) up
c) off d) away e) out

16. It's all right, we hurry. We have plenty of time.

- a) mustn't b) shouldn't
c) can't d) needn't
e) need to

17. You have a terrible fever! call a doctor?

- a) Did I b) Do I
c) Must I d) Will I
e) Shall I

18. Joanna looks in her new dress.

- a) nice b) nicely
c) like nice d) such nice
e) nice that

19. Mr Haines wants to his office.

- a) that you come b) you come to
c) you come d) you to come
e) you came

20. There are around to start a cricket team.

- a) enough young boys
b) boys enough young
c) young boys enough
d) enough youngest boys
e) boys enough

21. These bottles of plastic.

- a) are making
- b) are make
- c) are made
- d) made are
- e) made

22. Do you know where ?

- a) did I put the keys
- b) put I the keys
- c) I put the keys
- d) I the keys put
- e) put the keys

23. Magda knows a lot about lions, but she a live one.

- a) doesn't ever see
- b) hasn't ever seen
- c) hasn't ever saw
- d) didn't ever see
- e) hasn't never seen

24. We wash the curtains year.

- a) three times a
- b) once
- c) three every
- d) every couple
- e) three time a

25. The loudspeakers won't work unless you those cables.

- a) connected
- b) connect
- c) don't connect
- d) can't connect
- e) will connect

26. You should give

- a) to your mother this letter
- b) this letter your mother
- c) letter this to your mother
- d) this letter to your mother
- e) this to your mother letter

27. Let's think something nice.

- a) after
- b) in
- c) for
- d) to
- e) about

28. The TV's too loud. Please,

- a) it turn down
- b) turn it up
- c) turn it down
- d) turn down it
- e) turn up it

29. It's a pity you here last night.

- a) -
- b) aren't
- c) 'll not be
- d) 'd not be
- e) weren't

30. What about for a walk?

- a) to go
- b) I going
- c) going
- d) go
- e) to going

43. Have you had to eat?

- a) too many
- b) some more
- c) to many
- d) enough
- e) many

44. I my boyfriend since Christmas.

- a) didn't see
- b) haven't seen
- c) don't see
- d) hasn't seen
- e) haven't been seen

45. Who was the woman ?

- a) talked to you
- b) that did you talk to
- c) that you talked
- d) that you were talked to
- e) that you were talking to

46. Is than his father?

- a) Matt taller
- b) taller Matt
- c) Matt more tall
- d) Matt as tall as
- e) the tallest

47. She was 29 on her birthday, she?

- a) didn't
- b) hadn't
- c) hasn't
- d) wasn't
- e) was

48. is it from here to Berlin?

- a) How long way
- b) How long
- c) How far
- d) How many
- e) How tall

49. I drink beer than wine.

- a) would like more
- b) prefer
- c) had better
- d) would rather
- e) had rather

50. I gave her earrings for Christmas.

- a) a pair of
- b) a set of
- c) one
- d) a
- e) an

51. Would you like some more tea? There's still left.

- a) few
- b) a few
- c) a little
- d) little
- e) less

52. She didn't want the job,

- a) however well-paid was it
- b) however it was well-paid
- c) for how good pay might it be
- d) however good pay it was
- e) however well-paid it was

Answer the questions between 64-66 according to the following text.

Every summer many people, girls and women as well as boys and men, try to swim from England to France or from France to England. The distance at the nearest points is only about twenty miles, but because of the strong currents the distance that must be swum is usually twice as far. The first man to succeed in swimming across the Channel was Captain Webb, an Englishman. This was in August 1875. He landed in France 21 hours 45 minutes after entering the water at Dover. Since then there have been many successful swims and the time has been shortened. One French swimmer crossed in 11 hours and 5 minutes.

Answer the following THREE questions according to text

64. Swimming the Channel is not as easy as it might seem ____.

- a) as the distance between the two counties is far too much.
- b) and it always takes more or less 20 hours.
- c) and only two people have managed to do it so far.
- d) so few people even try to swim it.
- e) for there are very strong currents.

65. The first time anyone swam across the Channel ____.

- a) was in the last century.
- b) was when England and France organized a swimming competition.
- c) no one really believed him.
- d) he was helped by favorable currents.
- e) he reached Dover just before 10 in the evening.

66. The time Captain Webb needed to swim across the Channel ____.

- a) was unbelievably short.
- b) has since been nearly reduced to half
- c) still remains a record.
- d) was thought to be far too long.
- e) hasn't been equaled by any French swimmer.

Answer the questions between 67-70 according to the following text.

When you buy something these days, you have so many ways of paying for it. Just think of them! However, you may be surprised to learn that there have always been lots of methods of payment. In very early times, people used to exchange one thing for another - an ox or a cow for rice or grain, for example. This system of exchange was called 'barter', but there were lots of problems. Well, how many heavy bags of rice would you give for a cow ... or a TV, or a car? And how would you carry the bags of rice?

The ancient Greeks solved these problems. In the 7th century B.C. they introduced coins made of fixed amounts of gold and silver. Business became much easier, because people could now exchange money for the things they required.

Coins last a long time, but they are heavy, and so eventually, governments solved the problem by introducing banknotes. So cash became easier and lighter to carry.

Nowadays, of course, more and more people are paying for things with cheques and credit cards instead of in cash. What is the reason for this?

Answer the following FOUR questions according to text

67. What is '**barter**'?

- a) changing money
- b) changing cheques
- c) changing things
- d) paying with money
- e) paying in cheques

68. When you buy some things these days,

- a) you can pay only one way
- b) you have to use cash
- c) there are many ways to pay
- d) you must barter
- e) you must use credit cards

69. In paragraph three **they** refers to.....

- a) cash b)ATMs c) cheques
- d) gold and silver e) coins

70. In paragraph 4 **this** refers to.....

- a) paying for things with cheques and credit cards
- b) paying for things in cash
- c) going shopping
- d) changing an ox or a cow for rice or grain
- e) doing business

Fill in the blanks appropriately.

LANGUAGE

Is language, like food, a basic human ____71____without which a child can be starved and damaged at a critical period of life? In the thirteenth century, Frederic II made a frightening experiment to find a/an ____72____to this question. He was hoping to discover what language a child ____73____if he heard no language at all so he told the mothers in the experiment to keep silent. The results of the experiment show that hearing no language at all ____74____very harmful for a child.

All the babies in the experiment died before the first year. Was the deprivation of language the only reason for ____75____death? Obviously, there was more than language deprivation here. What was missing was good mothering. Without good mothering, in the first year of life especially, the capacity to survive is seriously affected.

71. a) need b) document c) visit
d) shower e) meeting

72. a) question b) problem c) harm
d) damage e) answer

73. a) will b) speak c) spoke
d) would speak e) speaking

74. a) be b) being c) was be
 d) can be e) has to be
75. a) its b) their c) his
 d) her e) our

Fill in the blanks appropriately.
--

“ ___76___ I ask the waiter for the bill, darling, when you ___77___ your coffee?”
 “Yes I think you ___78___. I ___79___ this film for such a long time that I wouldn’t like to miss any of it.”
 “Waiter! The bill, please. Oh dear, I haven’t got my wallet. I must have left it in my other jacket. I wish I ___80___ it before we came out.”
 “Good heaven! Now I suppose they’ll make us wash up”

76. a) Shall b) Will
 c) Am I going d) Ought
 e) Am I
77. a) will finish b) shall finish
 c) will have finish d) have finished
 e) are finish
78. a) had rather b) would rather
 c) should rather d) would better
 e) had better
79. a) am looking forward to seeing
 b) am looking forward to see
 c) have been looking forward to seeing
 d) have been looking forward to see
 e) am looking forward to have seen
80. a) would check b) have checked
 c) would have checked d) will check
 e) had checked

GOOD LUCK!