MA THESIS

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON EFL LEARNERS' BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

GÜLÇİN ARSLAN

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
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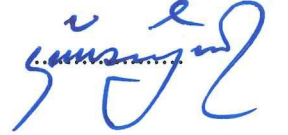
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ÖZET

YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENMEYE İLİŞKİN İNANÇLARI ÜZERİNE İRDELEYİCİ BİR DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, yoğun yabancı dil (İngilizce) öğrenimi gören Türk öğrencilerin dil öğrenmeye ilişkin inançları hakkında daha fazla bilgi sahibi olmaktır. Bu çalışma ile öğrencilerin yabancı dil öğrenmeye dair inançlarının yabancı dil başarıları, yaşları ve cinsiyetleri ile bir ilişkisi olup olmadığı ortaya konmak amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma Anadolu Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksek Okulu'nda yapılmıştır. Nicel Araştırma Yöntemlerinden Tarama deseni kullanılarak yapılan bu çalışmanın verileri Horwitz (1987) tarafından geliştirilen ve Razı (2009) tarafından Türkçe 'ye çevrilmiş olan Yabancı Dil Öğrenmeyle ilgili İnançlar Anketi kullanılarak 263 hazırlık sınıfı öğrencisinden toplanmıştır. Araştırmanın verileri SPSS kullanarak analiz edilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgulara göre öğrencilerin cinsiyeti, yaşı ve yabancı dil seviyeleri ile dil öğrenmeyle ilgili inançları arasında anlamlı bir ilişki görülmemiştir. Ancak bulguların detaylı analizi bu değişkenler arasında girift ilişkinin varlığını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Sonuçlar tartışılarak teorik ve pedagojik sezdirimlerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: İnançlar, Yabancı Dil Öğrenmeye dair İnançlar, Öğrenci başarısı

ABSTRACT

AN EXPLARATORY STUDY
ON EFL LEARNERS' BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

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The purpose of this exploratory study is to explore Turkish prep school EFL learners' beliefs about language learning. It aims to investigate the relationship between learners' age, gender, and foreign language proficiency levels, and their beliefs about language learning. The study was conducted at Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages with the participation of 263 students. The data were collected using "Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)" which was developed by Horwitz (1987), and translated into Turkish by Razı (2009). The statistical analyses of the results through SPSS indicated no statistically significant relationship between Turkish prep school EFL learners' age, gender, foreign language proficiency level, and their beliefs about language learning. Yet, close scrutiny of the relationship between learners' gender, age, and language proficiency level, and their beliefs about language learning have revealed subtle and intricate relationships. The results are discussed and theoretical, and pedagogical implications are offered.

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ABBREVATIONS

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
L2	Second Language/ Foreign Language
FL	Foreign Language
TL	Target Language
LLB	Language Learning Beliefs
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0.Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the study 'An Exploratory Study on EFL Learners' Beliefs about Language Learning'. It starts with background information, and statement of problem of the study. Then, the purpose, and significance of the study are presented. Lastly, these are followed by the limitations of the study, and assumptions.

The last fifty years have witnessed paradigm shifts and consequent historic breakthroughs, and innovations in teaching English as a foreign and/or second language. Language teaching methods, from language-centered to learner-centered and to learning-centered ones to the post-method era, have shifted their focus and interest to answer one simple question: How can people learn a foreign and/or second language more quickly and efficiently? Applied linguists, researchers, and language teachers alike have sought to answer the same question. In their quest for an answer, many studies and research has recently focused on the language learner.

It has already become axiomatic to see language learner as one of the most important components of language learning experience. Knowing language learners, identifying their individual differences and personality traits play a key role in answering the question posed above. Understanding language learners involves knowing their characteristics, identifying their unique personalities, their needs and aspirations, strategies, motivations, strengths and weaknesses. Designing courses to meet and cater for these features is an integral part of the design and implementation of effective language instruction (Horwitz, 1999). As Stevick (1980) underlined, "success depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analysis, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom" (p.4). As seen, the primary focus of most recent studies has been learner beliefs: what goes on inside the learner.

1.1. Background of the Study

Foreign language learning has become an essential part of many people's lives around the world due to a variety of reasons, which are already common knowledge. Individuals endeavor to learn a foreign language, sometimes sacrificing a long time. Yet in most cases, they may not be able to become proficient language users like their peers despite being having instruction under similar circumstances. Although there are many variables to be taken into consideration while looking into the diversity in their language learning achievement, individual differences should be taken into consideration too. One of the critical elements of these differences is the beliefs an individual holds related to language learning. As Yang claimed, beliefs are prognosticators of learning process (1999). This makes beliefs an area of research which deserves attention of language educators.

Language learning beliefs are the deeply held knowledge by language learners about various factors concerning their own language learning process (Wenden, 1991). These beliefs can be formed through personal experience; they could also be formed through influence from other people (Li, 2010). Learner beliefs, argues Horwitz, (1999) have the potential to influence both language learners' experiences, their actions as well as the outcome of this process. In addition to these important interplay between learner beliefs and language learning, learners' preconceived beliefs about language learning also have an impact on their use of language learning strategies (Horwitz, 1987; Wenden, 1986). Likewise, beliefs are considered to be essential as they direct the performance and judgements of the learners and they are part of their process of making decisions and actions (Richardson, 1996). As such, learners' belief about language learning has been of concern to researchers since 1980's, particularly the diversity between low achievers and high achievers (Altan's, 2006).

Given this crucial relationship, examination of the connection between learners' beliefs about language learning and learner variables and the impact of learner variables on their beliefs about language learning could provide language teachers with a better understanding of their "expectation of, commitment to success in and satisfaction with their language classes" (Horwitz, 1988, p283).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The concept of learner beliefs has gained importance as their effects are observed in classrooms and the achievement of the learners is taken into account. Beliefs have to do with actions and learning process of individuals and this makes beliefs a matter of great concern for all disciplines related to education (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen, 1988). So, investigation of learner beliefs displaying both promoting and preventing characteristics have been of great significance. From this standpoint, probable precautions for teachers have been proposed in order to foster constructive beliefs and get rid of destructive ones in learning process (Bernat, 2005)

Although the significance of the concept has been pointed out by many researchers, there is still ambiguity about the scope of learners' beliefs. This makes the research on this topic far more challenging. Identifying the beliefs of learners requires exploring the identity of the learners (Riley, 1989) which is one of the reasons why beliefs are addressed as 'a messy construct'. Another reason for that label of the term beliefs is 'paradoxical nature' of beliefs (Pajares, 1992). Despite the importance of language leaning beliefs of learners on their language learning process, it is no mystery that we, foreign language teachers, have no or limited idea about it. Therefore, the present study has been designed to provide insight in a distinct cultural context on learners' beliefs about language learning in a foreign language learning environment in a Turkish university setting.

1.3. Research Questions

This exploratory study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between Turkish prep school EFL learners' gender and their beliefs about language learning?
2. Is there a relationship between Turkish prep school EFL learners' age and their beliefs about language learning?
3. Is there a relationship between Turkish prep school EFL learners' foreign language proficiency level and their beliefs about language learning?

1.4. Aims and Scope

This study focuses on the relationship between Turkish prep school EFL learners' gender, age, and language proficiency level and their beliefs about language learning and investigates the impact of learners' gender, age, and language proficiency level on their beliefs about language learning. The participants of the study are prep school students of Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages. The participants, who range in age 17 to 40, have different levels of language proficiency, which was ascertained through a standard placement test given at the beginning of Fall Semester of 2018-2019 academic year. They had 24 to 26 hours of intensive English instruction depending on their proficiency level. The data will be collected using an inventory "Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)" which was developed by Horwitz (1987) and translated into Turkish by Razı (2009) (Appendix 1)

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is highly related to the role of language learning beliefs in language learning. The aim of the study is to explore language learning beliefs of EFL learners in Turkey and to provide a better insight into the factors that affect language learners and contribute to the design of a more efficient language learning and teaching instruction.

What makes learner beliefs about language learning so important is their undeniable role in comprehending the strategies learners use and planning convenient language teaching environment states Horwitz (1999) in underlining the importance of beliefs in language learning and teaching process. As is widely acknowledged, successful and efficient design and delivery of intensive language instruction requires knowing language learners, their features, needs, and interests and designing and implementing instructional programs, strategies, techniques, and materials that cater for them. One of the important features of language learners are their deeply held beliefs about language learning. Needless to say, these strongly-held beliefs shape learners' approach to the language learning process. Given this reality, it is a must for language teachers to be aware of their learners' beliefs about the language learning process and to step in when needed to help language learners modify their

beliefs and make necessary amendments conducive to efficient and effective language learning. By underlying the importance of the relationship between language learners' gender, age, and proficiency level and their beliefs about language learning, this study aims to contribute to our having a better understanding of the role of learner beliefs about language learning in the language learning process and have a chance to lead to a more efficient learning environment by raising language teachers and learners' as well as policymakers' and material designers' consciousness on this issue.

1.6 Limitations and Assumptions

The study was carried out at Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages with the participation of 243 students in the spring semester of 2018-2019 academic year. Since as many numbers of learners as possible were aimed to be reached for the quantitative research design, it could be assumed that the participants of the research are representative. The assumption is that learners are able to understand items properly and accordingly answer the questions sincerely and honestly. Being conducted at only Anadolu University is the chief limitation of this study. Needless to say, a study with participants from various prep schools from both public and private universities would provide with a more comprehensive and reliable picture of the issue. Moreover, a study with an even number of more participants from various prep schools would definitely be more comprehensive. Also, the data were collected using a questionnaire, which is another limitation of the study. Data collected through a variety of means—qualitative as well as quantitative—would provide a better picture.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, an overall framework of the concept of language learning beliefs, and their relationship with learner variables such as gender, age, and language proficiency will be introduced, and a brief review of recent studies will be presented. It is common knowledge that putting the language learner at the forefront of the language learning process and creating, designing and shaping the language instruction process from top to bottom to cater for the learner's needs and interests is of paramount importance for successful language learning. Learner's needs undoubtedly involve physical issues as well as learner specific cognitive, emotional and psychological ones. One of the latter's dimension is learner beliefs about language learning process and everything related to it.

2.1. Beliefs

2.1.1. Definition of beliefs

Dewey has stated that beliefs indicate what an individual puts an emphasis on and values even if 'the beliefs are not made by reality'. Dewey has named beliefs as "the original Mr. Facing both-ways" as you can comprehend that the speaker is both in doubt and in an effort to persuade when s/he says "I believe" (2013).

Various definitions of beliefs abound in the literature with subtle nuances. Pajares has stated that this is caused by the complex structure of the belief itself and various comprehension of beliefs by different researchers (1992). These barely noticeable differences result from the dimensions scholars prefer to focus on. Some researchers have paid attention to the essence, the nature of the issue; some others have concentrated on the manifestations of it. Consider, for instance, Schwitzgebel, who focuses on a manifest feature of learner belief and defines beliefs as attitudes which people presume them to be accurate (2015). However, for Richardson (1996), beliefs are "as psychologically-held understandings, premises or propositions about the

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world that are felt to be true" (p. 103). On the other hand, Rokeach referred to beliefs as "beliefs are predispositions to action" while explaining the distinction between beliefs and attitude (1968). Regardless of the various definitions of beliefs, it is commonly acknowledged that beliefs are fundamental notions in every discipline that considers behavior and learning of human (Sakui & Gaies, 1999). In underlying the importance of this, Gabillon (2005) Gabillon has expressed that beliefs are effective on how people behave and this makes beliefs essential to be investigated by the researchers interested in behaviour and learning.

2.1.2. Origin of beliefs

When it comes to investigate the origin of beliefs it is more likely to see some factors as attributed to have a role in forming beliefs. Beliefs, according to Foss and Reitzel (1988), are grounded in culture and experience. Looking at beliefs from a different perspective, Barcelos (2012) claims that beliefs are personal and occur within individual's experience. As for the origin of beliefs, Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) mention factors such as family and home background, cultural background, classroom and social peers, interpretations of prior repetitive experiences, and individual differences. Ellis (2008) also considers past experience as a factor which determines learners' beliefs.

Dewey has considered that people conceive their surroundings and its occurrences; and continuously interpret them via their beliefs. He has defined beliefs as a component of our experience as well as a barrier or supporter of knowledge. He has also stated that beliefs depend on thoughts, traditions, and customs instead of proof and this causes beliefs not to be an optimal form of thought (1983). In the words of Dewey, we hold beliefs about the issues that we are self-assured although we don't have certain acquaintance or about the issues we consider them to be true at that time yet it may be interrogated later on (1933).

2.2 Learning Beliefs

According to Horwitz (1987), opinions and assumptions of learners which have been concluded previously are to be described as beliefs of learners concerning SLL or FLL. Instead of giving one single definition of beliefs, Horwitz suggested terms such

as 'preconceptions' (1985), 'preconceived ideas' (1987), and 'preconceived notions' (1988). There are different definitions of 'beliefs' based on the literature review (as cited in Çokcalişkan, 2018, p.9).

> Learners' intuitive implicit (or explicit) knowledge made of beliefs, myths, cultural assumptions and ideals about how to learn languages. This knowledge, according to learners' age and social economic level, is based upon their previous educational experience, previous (and present) readings about language learning and contact with other people like family, friends, relatives, teachers and so forth. (Barcelos, 1995, p. 4).

> "Expectations in the minds of teachers, parents and students concerning the entire second language acquisition task." (Gardener, 1988, p.110).

> "Learners' entering assumptions about their roles and functions of teachers and teaching materials" (Holec, 1987, p.152).

> "Opinions which are based on experience and the opinions of respected others, which influence the way they (students) act" (Wenden, 1986, p. 5).

Breen suggests that one of the elements in the learning progress is beliefs in addition to perceptions, attitudes, and metacognitive knowledge (2001). As well as metacognitive knowledge, beliefs have been defined (as cited in Bernat, 2005): mini-theories (Hosenfeld, 1978), insights (Omaggio, 1978), culture of learning (Contazzi & Jin, 1996), learner assumptions (Riley, 1980), implicit theories (Clark, 1988), self-constructed representational systems (Rust, 1994), conceptions of learning (Benson & Lor, 1999), act as very strong filters of reality (Arnold, 1999, p. 256). On the other hand, Victori and Lockhart (1995) define belief as "General assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing language learning, and about the nature of language learning and teaching" (p. 224).

2.2.1 Origin of Learners' Beliefs

Beliefs and attitudes are illustrated according to new experiences and information and defined to be associated with sociocultural knowledge (Alexander et al. 1991). A related view comes from Alexander et al. (1991), who place beliefs and attitudes within the domain of sociocultural knowledge, on the basis of which new

experiences and information interpreted. Victori and Lockhart (1995) indicate that language-learning beliefs are broad assumptions of learners about their own identity, essence of language learning and the factors affecting them.

Similar to how beliefs occur, learners' beliefs are also caused by various factors such as background knowledge, experience, cultural background and individual differences. There are various views about how beliefs arise and the factors that cause this divergence is social, cognitive and personal. Gabillon (2005) has stated that learners form beliefs about learning, teaching and both learners' and teachers' roles, as they are involved in education culture intentionally or unintentionally. Although beliefs which people hold differ considerably, there are some common referencing to the source of beliefs. Victori and Lockhart (1995) have indicated that language-learning beliefs are broad assumptions of learners about their own identity, essence of language learning and the factors affecting them. Beliefs and attitudes are illustrated according to new experiences and information and defined to be associated with sociocultural knowledge (Alexander et al. 1991). Beliefs and attitudes are placed within the domain of sociocultural knowledge, on the basis of which new experiences and information are interpreted (Alexander et al. 1991).

2.2.2 Importance of Learners' Beliefs about Language Learning

There are a large number of studies on beliefs of individuals in the field of education due to its effect on learning, so it is essential to view them in the right way. In several studies, it is argued that beliefs lead to some changes in our perception, attitudes, achievement, and performance. According to the research on learner beliefs, mental images about the nature of the language learning process make us form learning attitudes. This makes learners have a positive attitude about some language areas in accordance with their belief in the most beneficial way of language learning (Benson, 1999). Accordingly, perceptions of learners and teachers as well as the actions of students in the classroom are formed according to learning beliefs (Aragao, 2011). Besides, beliefs are proven to be directly related to learning experience and achievements (Cotterall, 1999). Due to the effects of learners' beliefs on learning as suggested, research on learners' beliefs has gained great importance as Hall (2011) emphasizes that investigating learners' beliefs contribute teachers to have a better understanding of learners' behaviors and what happens in the classroom.

Huang (2006) has also concluded that in order to improve a foreign language, a crucial factor is learner beliefs about language learning inclusive of the difficulty of languages in comparison, amount of time to achieve fluency, appropriate age to begin learn a foreign language, the function of grammar, vocabulary knowledge, interaction and other phases of language learning progress. Breen (2001) has supported this opinion as he has suggested that one of the elements in the learning progress is belief in addition to perceptions, attitudes, and metacognitive knowledge.

Riley (1996) also underscores that the attitude and motivation of learners are affected by learner's beliefs regarding language and language learning. This makes it even more essential for us to comprehend the beliefs of both learners and teachers. Learning beliefs tend to shape students' and teachers' perceptions as well as influence what students do in the classroom (Aragao, 2011; Barcelos, 2000, 2003). We can benefit from the insights regarding beliefs as Sakui (1999) states that the results of the studies on learners' beliefs have indicated the importance of insights on this issue as teachers can make use of them both in planning and program processes in order to increase the success of their teaching.

As Cotterrall (1999) states, one of the personal characteristics of people which causes various approaches to second/foreign language learning is their beliefs about language learning. Therefore, analysis of beliefs is beneficial as it provides teachers with information about varied learner types to be taken into consideration. Similarly, Sakui and Gaies (1999) have underlined the importance of beliefs as they are fundamental notions in the behavior and learning of humans.

Similar to Horwitz's approach to the definition of language learning beliefs, Victori and Lockhart (1995) defined them as common premises that students have as learners, about factors affecting language learning and about the nature of language learning. Furthermore, Yang (1999) defined language-learning beliefs as predictors of learners' learning process. According to Horwitz (1988), who is one of the pioneers in the research of learners' beliefs about language learning, what makes the concept of beliefs essential to be looked into by educators is the fact that they indicate the judgments and assumptions of learners regarding language learning.

2.2.3 Characteristics of Learners' Beliefs

According to Pajares (1992), judgments, opinions, and attitudes are generally confused with beliefs. However, Nespor (1987) differentiates these two; while beliefs are fixed, knowledge usually alters. Similarly, Aragao (2011) suggests that core beliefs are associated with self-concepts and are not simple to evolve. This is also approved with the study of Kern who studied with 180 French learners to check whether beliefs of students differ in the beginning and end the semester at the University of Berkeley. The findings seem to indicate that new methods that students encounter do not cause an automatic change in their beliefs (1995). On the other hand, Biggs notes that beliefs are specific to the learning setting rather than being valid for all circumstances (1992). A similar inference was made by Benson and Lor who define beliefs as sensible to context (1999). Contrary to the old view of beliefs to be permanent and constant, beliefs have been revealed to be active and changeable (Amuzie & Winke, 2009).

The relationship between learners' beliefs and experiences and learning background is neglected due to the theory that beliefs are fixed cognitive images (Barcelos, 2003). Amuzie and Winke (2009) claim that this belief has started to be questioned as learners' beliefs are subject to alter by time and in different situations like study-abroad context.

Based on the literature reviewed, beliefs present the following characteristics (as cited in Barcelos, 2000)

1. They guide action, but they are also influenced by action (Dewey, 1906/1983, 1933; Richardson, 1996; Rokeach, 1968; Peirce 1877/1958).

2. They are organized in a structure in which each belief has a specific domain (Rokeach, 1968).

3. They are more difficult to change, the earlier they are incorporated (Munby, 1984; Pajares, 1992).

4. They are socially constructed and culturally transmitted (McAlpine, Eriks-Brophy, & Crago, 1996).

5. They are part of our interpretive ability of making sense of our social world and responding to the problems we face (Dewey, 1933).

6. They have to be inferred from statements, intentions, and actions (Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968).

7. They are dynamic (Furhan, 1988; Kalaja, 1995; Woods, 1996). According to Furhan, "beliefs not only change over time, but may be expressed differently in different situations" (p. 10).

As reported by Epstein, interdisciplinary research proposes that learners' beliefs are strongly related to elements which make and individual unique to himself/herself such as identity, character, self-efficacy, self-concept (1990). Riley (1989) has discussed that beliefs of students reveal their world and identification, as some beliefs on learning and language itself are peculiar to culture.

2.2.4. Classification of Learners' Beliefs

In the words of Tanaka and Ellis (2003), there is a disagreement among researchers about the categorization of beliefs. Not surprisingly, we have different beliefs about language learning as Sakui reveals that learning belief consists of 'beliefs about the nature of language, about the language-learning task, about likely outcomes, about learners' personal language learning strengths and limitations' (1999, p. 474). However, as for the categorization of foreign language learning beliefs, Tanaka (1999) reviewing the research, categorized learner beliefs in two main dimensions:

1. Beliefs about self as a language learner: These beliefs include self-efficacy, confidence, aptitude, and motivation of the learners.
2. Beliefs about approaches to language learning: This dimension may consist of beliefs about analytical and empirical learning (cited in Tanaka & Ellis study, 2003:65).

Richards and Lockhart have made a classification of beliefs about language learning and concluded that there are eight types of beliefs of learners (1996):

1. Beliefs about the nature of English: Learners have a sense of difficulty of language compared to others, and they find some of the aspects of language learning more challenging.
2. Beliefs about speakers of English: Learners develop an attitude towards native speakers as a result of their connection with them or other sources such as media. Cross-cultural varieties are another element in the attitude of

learners of the language. The opinions and attitudes about the native speakers may be effective in the preference of interaction of individuals.

3. Beliefs about the four language skills: Learners may have assumptions about four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. These beliefs may be regarding the difficulty of the skills or perceived importance of the skills for language learning.

4. Beliefs about teaching: As a result of the school experience of learners which has taken long years and from different teachers, they generally have certain expectations and accurate opinions about how teachers should teach.

5. Beliefs about language learning: Students also hold beliefs about how languages are learned. They might give more importance to specific classroom activities or approaches. They have assumptions about the language learning strategies as well.

6. Beliefs about appropriate classroom behavior: Students have several assumptions about how it is suitable to act during classes. These assumptions are mostly related to their culture and not parallel to the teacher's all the time.

7. Beliefs about self: Learners hold certain beliefs about their own ability of language learning or an aspect of language specifically. They may believe they can hardly learn vocabulary items or they are not good at speaking. These beliefs have an effect on their use of the opportunities of practicing and learning.

8. Beliefs about goals: Students have different priorities in language learning. For instance, for some pronunciation must be acquired necessarily while some others don't find pronunciation important. This may be derived from the different social background of the learners.

Barcelos (2000) classifies the studies on beliefs into three approaches: The Normative Approach, the Metacognitive Approach and the Contextual Approach.

1. The Normative Approach: Language learning beliefs are regarded as prejudices, incorrect conceptions and views. They are investigated through Likert-scale questionnaires. The most widely used scale was developed by Horwitz (1987, 1988) called the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI).

2. The Metacognitive Approach: Foreign language learning beliefs are viewed as constant and fallible. Semi-structured interviews and self-reports are used to reveal learners' beliefs about language learning. Wenden's (1986, 1987) studies are examples of this approach.

3. The Contextual Approach: Foreign language learning beliefs are seen as the reflections of language learning in a society. Diaries, case studies, interviews, journal, narratives, and classroom observations are used to define learners' beliefs about language learning. Beliefs are viewed as context-specific; the approach aims to evaluate students' beliefs in their own contexts (Barcelos, 2000). Wenden (1987) later categorized beliefs into three groups: the use of the language, beliefs related to learning about the beliefs, and personal factors.

2.3. Effects of Learners' Beliefs on Language Learners

Difference in the level of motivation depending upon learner beliefs is observed as positive beliefs lead to maintain motivation and solve problems and negative beliefs lead to diminish in motivation and increase in anxiety (Kern, 1995; Oh, 1996). It is also probable that students depend on less adequate learning strategies as they hold inaccurate, uninformed and unfavorable beliefs and this causes a negative attitude and prevent learners from being autonomous (Victori & Lockhart, 1995).

Cotterall (1999) concludes that learner beliefs must be taken into consideration and acted accordingly by teachers when they observe their students having low self-confidence. Being aware of the beliefs of learners enables teachers design their classroom and teaching facilities accordingly. Teachers who are knowledgeable about their learners' beliefs might promote or question certain beliefs and this will contribute to their teaching in both ways.

There is some other research, which puts forward the correlation between beliefs and learner behaviors (Amuzie & Winke, 2009). Cotterall (1999) aimed to demonstrate the relationship between learners' beliefs and motivation, while Wenden (1999) searched the relationship between beliefs and self-regulation. Furthermore, Yang investigated beliefs and strategy use (Yang, 1999). According to Yürük (2008), beliefs of learners have an impact on their motivation and attitude irrelevant to the

source of the beliefs. According to Richards and Lockhart (1996), a broad range of matters are involved in belief systems of learners and may have impact on language learners' motivation level, anticipation of language learning, how they perceive the difficulty of a language and which learning strategies they may prefer.

2.3.1. Relationship between Learner Beliefs about Language Learning and Achievement

According to Stevick (1980), rather than the teaching materials and techniques in the teaching environment, that goes on inside the learner is the determinant of achievement. This opinion is also supported by the study of Ehrman and Oxford (1995), who concluded that the belief in the ability of learning a language and proficiency level are closely related to each other as a consequence of their study with a large number of adult learners in intensive language training. Therefore, in order to investigate the factors that make an individual successful, we ought to comprehend the beliefs and knowledge of learners about their own learning and enable the learners look into their beliefs and the effects of them on their learning approach (Wenden, 1986). Similarly, Cotterall (1999) argues that achievement and experience of language learners depend on language learning beliefs.

As for learning a foreign language, İnozu (2011) stated that beliefs have capability to affect students' both future practices and involvements in language learning. Therefore, beliefs are implied to have a significant role during the language learning process. Learners are affected by their beliefs either directly or indirectly. According to Horwitz (1987), foreign language learners often adopt different thoughts or impressions about language learning, and these predisposed notions may affect the language learners' learning experiences both positively and negatively.

2.4 Approaches to the Investigation of Language Learning Beliefs

Barcelos (2003) groups existing research into three categories of approaches: the normative approach, the metacognitive approach, and the contextual approach. Ellis (2008) came up with metaphor analysis which is an additional approach to these three categories. Within the scope of this approach, learner beliefs are recognized in

an indirect way via metaphors utilized by the learners in order to illustrate their own learning (e.g., Ellis, 2002; Kramsch, 2003).

2.4.1 The Normative Approach

The term 'normative' is defined as culture related studies by Holliday (1999). In normative approach, learners' behaviors are interpreted as a result of their culture. Thus, this approach is widely used by the researchers who share consensus that beliefs can be evaluated as notions giving idea about upcoming behaviours of learners as Rokeach (1968) has stated. Within this context, Barcelos has stated that language learning beliefs are regarded as prejudices, incorrect conceptions and views. When examined in the normative approach, beliefs have been revealed to be the measure of learners' subsequent actions, autonomy, and performance (2000).

In this approach, prearranged expressions are utilized in order to deduce what learning beliefs a learner holds. Making use of Likert-scale questionnaires is characteristic of this approach and the most widely used scale was developed by Horwitz (1987, 1988) called the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI). Besides, the researchers using BALLI (Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Su, 1995; Tumposky, 1991; Yang, 1992; Kern, 1995; Oh, 1996; Mori, 1999; Diab, 2000; Bernat, 2004; Altan, 2006;), there are some researchers preferring to adopt it for their investigation Mantle-Bromley, 1995. On the other hand, some other researchers have designed instruments for the same purpose (Campbell, Shaw, Plageman, & Allen, 1993; Cotterall, 1995, 1999; Kuntz, 1996; Mori, 1997; Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Victori, 1992).

Regarding the use of questionnaires to explore learner beliefs, Barcelos (2000) commented that possible misconception of the isolated statements is a pitfall and having some sort of beliefs do not indicate how they behave in a particular situation.

2.4.2. The Contextual Approach

In this approach language learning beliefs are considered to be indication of context and social aspects of the learner. The studies in this approach focus on the relationship both between context and beliefs, and between beliefs and actions of the learners (Woods, 1997). The tools used in this approach are diaries, case studies,

interviews, journals, narratives, and classroom observations. In the words of Kramsch ethnography, and metaphors are useful to this approach as well (2003). This approach is seen as more beneficial than normative and meta-cognitive approach since the context and opinions of the learners are taken into consideration. The pitfall of this approach is that it is time-consuming and applicable to a small number of students.

2.4.3. The Meta-cognitive Approach

The starting point of meta-cognitive approach in language learning beliefs is meta-cognitive knowledge which belongs to meta-cognitive theory of Flavell (1979). According to meta-cognitive theory, what people believe or know is a result of their cognitive process. As Barcelos concluded that in this approach, it is possible to discover 'the experience-based nature of beliefs' (2000). The objective of meta-cognitive approach is raising awareness of learners about the effect of their beliefs on their learning and develop their capacity of learning upon reflection on their actions. In order to discover beliefs about language learning, as in Wenden's (1986, 1987) studies, semi-structured interviews and self-reports are utilized Wenden (1986, 1986a, 1987) conducted studies supporting this definition. The supposition of Wenden is that learners can express their beliefs as a result of their reflection on their learning process. According to Wenden (1986a) learners can mention '(a) the language, (b) their proficiency in the language, (c) the outcome of their learning endeavors, (d) their role in the language-learning process, and (e) the best approach to language learning' (as cited in Barcelos, 2000). Other than Wenden, Goh (1997) and White (1999) have also studied on beliefs within the scope of meta-cognitive approach. Observations and diaries are also used to explore learning beliefs in this approach.

To point out the advantages of meta-cognitive approach, Barcelos explained that interviews allow learners (2000) to express their opinion about their own learning which is a benefit of this approach. On the other hand, there are some disadvantages of this approach as well. One of them is beliefs' being considered as stable although Kalaja (1995) has noted beliefs can alter.

Barcelos (2000) listed advantages and disadvantages of the approaches to language learning beliefs research as below:

Table 2.1

Features, Advantages, and Disadvantages of the Three Approaches (Barcelos, 2000)

	Normative	**Metacognitive**	**Contextual**
Methodology	Likert-scale questionnaires.	Interviews and self-reports.	Observations, interviews, diaries, and case studies.
LLB definition	LLB are seen as synonymous with preconceived notions, misconceptions, and opinions.	LLB are described as metacognitive knowledge: stable and sometimes fallible knowledge learners have about language learning.	LLB are part of the culture of learning and representations of language learning in a given society.
Relationship beliefs/actions	LLB are seen as indicators of future students' behaviors, autonomy, and effectiveness as language learners in a cause-effect relationship.	LLB are seen as good indicators of learners' autonomy and effectiveness in language learning, although it is admitted the influence of other factors, such as purpose.	LLB are seen as context-specific, i.e., students' beliefs are investigated within the context of their actions.
Advantages	Allows investigating beliefs with large samples, at different time slots, and at outside contexts.	Students use their own words, elaborate, and reflect about their lang. learning experiences.	Beliefs are investigated taking into account students' own words and the context of their actions.

Disadvantages	Restricts respondents' choices with a set of predetermined statements that be different from students' interpretations.	Beliefs are inferred only from students' statements, and are seen as a mental and abstract phenomenon.	More suitable with small samples only. It is time-consuming.

2.5 Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)

Horwitz (1988) realized the presence of beliefs about language learning and their effects on the learners. She indicated that it was highly probable that these beliefs would impact the achievement of language learners. She intended to find out what beliefs are common among language learners due to the absence of past research and the requirement of a better comprehension of beliefs about language learning. Therefore, she would be able to provide valuable information regarding the diversity of beliefs about language learning and their probable outcomes to teachers and researchers in the field. Horwitz designed instrument in 1985 in order to discover beliefs of language teachers. BALLI (1985) consists of 27 items, and four themes for foreign language teachers: foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning and language learning strategies. Secondly, she directed her attention to ESL students and designed second version of the BALLI (1987) which includes five major fields comprising 34 statements. In the second place, she focused on the beliefs of language learners and developed BALLI (1987) which consists of five themes and 34 items. Then, for English-speaking learners of a foreign language, she designed the third and last version of BALLI (1988). All the questionnaires utilize Five-point likert scale items ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree and provide descriptive data about language learning beliefs.

Horwitz as a leading researcher on language learning beliefs has searched both learners' and teachers' beliefs in second and foreign language learning and. She has developed Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) and it has been used by other researchers who study on language learning beliefs. BALLI has 34 items aiming to investigate beliefs of learners in five chief themes:

1. Beliefs about the difficulty of language learning

2. Beliefs about Foreign Language Aptitude

3. Motivation and Learner Expectations

4. Language Learning Process

5. Learning Strategies

2.5.1. Beliefs about Difficulty of Language Learning

The items in this theme are related to:

- General difficulty of language learning

- Relative difficulty of the target language

- Optimism about language learning

- Estimates of time it will take to learn a language

Horwitz stated that beliefs regarding the difficulty of language learning is essential as it shapes the supposition and engagement of learners regarding language learning. On condition that a learner finds the target language comparatively easy, it is more probable that they get disappointed as their improvement is not as fast as they have expected. On the other hand, if learners believe it will take an exceptional amount of time to learn the language, this causes them make minimal efforts as this is disappointing for them (1988).

2.5.2 Foreign Language Aptitude

The items in this theme are related to:

- Child superiority

- General aptitude

- Personal aptitude

In the words of Horwitz, the items in this theme are aimed to address presence of general skill and capacity for successful language learning. There are items revealing the definitions of good or bad language learners. It is possible that an individual has unfavorable prospects concerning language learning and this may be caused by the

doubt of personal potential of her/himself. Another reason for a negative outlook is her/his opinion that the group she/he belongs to is disadvantageous. Both rationales result in poor expectation about their language learning process (1999).

2.5.3. Beliefs about the Nature of Language Learning

The items in this theme are related to:

- Language study compared to other subjects

- Primacy of vocabulary learning

- Primacy of grammar study

- Primacy of translation

According to Horwitz, the importance attached to vocabulary or grammar knowledge will lead to a great amount of time to be spent on vocabulary lists or grammar rules. This may cause neglect of studying on other areas of language. Similarly, when translation is overrated, it will prevent learners from deducing the meaning directly from text which would lead second language fluency, as Krashen has proposed. Moreover, the learners who hold grammar, vocabulary and translation in high regard will not have holistic learning strategies correlated with successful language learners.

2.5.4 Beliefs about Language Learning and Communication Strategies

The items in this theme are related to:

- Importance of accent

- Beliefs about guessing

The students are likely to find it difficult to participate in communicative activities which are widely used in language classes although they seem to give weight to some of the approaches of them. Most teachers who use communicative approach in their teaching have come across learners who demand more correction and practice. On the other hand, the learners whose priority is communication will probably get frustrated when they are corrected frequently during their conversations. Both situations derived from the disagreement between learners and teachers will probably hinder confidence, and fulfillment of learners.

2.5.5. Motivation and Expectations

The items in this theme are related to desires and opportunities which learners think of in connection with (Horwitz, 1988). Finding a job or getting promotion is one of the reasons to learn a foreign language. Another factor that encourage learners is the perceived significance of the target language. The beliefs included in this theme indicate us whether the learner has intrinsic instrumental or integrative motivation to learn the target language. The expectations of the learners from the target language determine the permanence of language learning motivation as well. However, learners' motivation decrease in short term when the difference between expectations of the learners and reality is dramatic.

2.6. Studies on Beliefs about Language Learning

Beliefs regarding language learning have been examined since the 1980s (Cısdık, 2014). Papalia suggests that the number of research on language learning beliefs has increased significantly for the last decades (1978).

In one of these studies, Yang (1999) investigated language beliefs of university students and their relation to strategy use and Horwitz (1999) concentrated on the similarities and differences of language learning beliefs across cultural groups. In two other studies conducted abroad, Peacock (1999), who was interested in whether language beliefs affect proficiency, and Matsuura et al., (2001) examined undergraduate students' beliefs about learning and teaching communicative English. In another study, Liao and Chiang (2004) examined how learners' beliefs are related to their strategy use in Taiwanese context. They found that the participants had medium use of language learning strategies and that all the categories of beliefs about language learning proposed by Horwitz (1988) were found to be closely linked to the participants' medium use of LLSs as well.

Similarly, Amuzie and Winke (2009) investigated the impact of studying abroad on learner beliefs. Specifically, their study, which was conducted with the participation of 70 English language learners, aimed to find out whether studying in the US had an effect on their beliefs. They looked into learners' beliefs before and after they studied in the US, using both quantitative and qualitative data—questionnaires and

interviews. They found a correlation between the duration of study abroad and change in beliefs, underlying the impact of the duration of exposure on beliefs. In other words, the longer the learners studied abroad, the more their beliefs changed.

In another study, Chang and Shen (2010) investigated the 250 Taiwanese students' beliefs about language learning, their language learning strategy use as well as the relationship between them. Additionally, the researchers explored the differences in the beliefs about language learning and language learning strategy considering participants' gender, extracurricular English learning and length of time in learning English. The results of their study showed that the participants adopted various beliefs about language learning but generally all the participants saw that motivation was the most influential factor affecting their achievement in learning. Also, the participants were found to be medium users of language learning strategy and compensation strategies were found to be most frequently used ones.

Similarly, Zare-Ee, A. (2010) conducted a study with 203 undergraduate EFL learners at an Iranian University in order to reveal the effects of learners' beliefs on the learning strategies used. In his study, he concluded that language learning aptitude has positive influence on both cognitive learning strategies and memory. Furthermore, memory, cognitive and social learning strategies have positive correlation with the beliefs of nature of language. Not only the learning strategies but also language proficiency of learners is also influenced by the learners' beliefs.

In another study on the same issue, Suwanarak (2013) investigated participants' beliefs about language learning, and their LLS use. The researcher asked the subjects to rate themselves as low and high achievers as well. Then, relationship was explored among beliefs, learning strategies and achievement with the help of correlation studies. The study revealed that the participants hold different beliefs about language learning. For example, 72% of the participants agreed that learning English was easier than learning any other learning in the world whereas 9% of them saw English as a difficult language to learn. Additionally, 81% of the participants were found to be medium users of the LLSs and affective strategies were found to be the least preferred strategies of all categories of strategies. More than half of the participants rated them as low achievers in English. Suwanarak (2013) found that the participants rating themselves as high achievers of English used various LLSs while students who

rated themselves low achievers showed lower use of learning strategies. As for the relationship, a significant relation was found among beliefs, learning strategies, achievements in learning English and the researcher concluded that beliefs affected participants' LLS preferences to some extent.

Similarly, Saeb and Zamani (2013) conducted a comparative study exploring LLS use and beliefs about language learning of two groups of students: students at high school and students studying at an English institute. Significant differences were found between high school students and students attending English institutes in terms of beliefs about language learning and LLS use. They found that students studying at the institute used significantly more memory, cognitive, compensation, and meta-cognitive and social strategies. Also, a statistically significant difference was found between the two groups regarding their beliefs about language learning. The differences between the two groups were significant regarding beliefs about the difficulty of language learning, motivation and expectations. The results also revealed that institute students had stronger language learning beliefs than high school students.

2.7 Studies on Beliefs about Language Learning conducted in Turkey

Similar studies, the recent ones of which are presented in chronological order below, have been carried out in Turkey too. In one of the early studies on this issue, Yüzbaşıoğlu (1991), who conducted the study with 20 students learning English for Academic purposes at Bilkent University, examined the relationship between the metacognitive strategy use and beliefs about language learning. The researcher found that the participants' beliefs have an impact on the way they approach the task, allowing the researcher to conclude that beliefs create only one aspect among many possible things that affect metacognition. In another study done a couple of years later, Halaoğlu (1999) looked into the relationship between beliefs about language learning and achievement. The results of the study showed that beliefs about language learning and achievement were not correlated to each other significantly.

Aktas (2001) investigated whether language-learning beliefs of learners and teachers differed according to learners' gender, major, educational background and English proficiency level and according to teachers' gender and teaching experience. The

study, which was conducted with the participation of 1004 students and 59 teachers of English at Anadolu University, School of Foreign Languages, demonstrated that almost all the learners believed that languages differ in terms of difficulty and half of the students found English to be of medium difficulty. The majority of the students were hopeful that they would be able to speak English one day. In regard to language learning aptitude, a large majority of the learners believed that learning a foreign language was easier for children. They saw no relationship between gender and language learning. Half of the students also believed that some people have innate ability to learn a foreign language and half of them believed they have the ability to learn a foreign language. Interestingly enough, the students believed Turkish people are not good at language learning. The vast majority of the students believed that learning a foreign language in the country of the target language is important. The students thought that language learning was different from studying other school subjects; grammar and vocabulary are still essential for them in language learning process. Almost all of the students agreed that practice and repetition contributed to language learning greatly and they were not hesitant to make mistakes while guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary from the context.

Another aspect of Aktas's (2001) study was on whether beliefs varied according to gender, the major, educational background and English proficiency level. The female learners viewed English more difficult and they believed more time is needed to learn it. In regard to the relationship with gender and language learning, she observed that gender did not play a major role in language learning. Additionally, a difference in the perception of language difficulty according to educational background was revealed. Private high school graduates found English of medium difficulty, whereas others considered English as difficult. Regarding the relationship difference according to language proficiency level, the beginner level students perceived English as a difficult language while the advanced level students regarded it as of medium difficulty. Both the beginner and advanced level learners of English believed some languages are easier than others and starting to learn a foreign language at earlier ages is essential. Another finding of the study is that the beginner level students were more hesitant to speak in English with native speakers. Most of the advanced learners underlined the importance of aptitude in learning a language while the lower level learners did not. Evaluating the overall findings, the researcher

concluded that the beginner level learners hold counterproductive language learning beliefs but these beliefs may turn out to be positive as the students spend more time in learning a language.

Öz (2005) examined beliefs about language learning of 470 EFL learners in secondary education to determine what beliefs they held about learning language, how these beliefs were organized and whether there were significant differences in their beliefs according to some variables, such as gender, age, grade level, etc. The findings of this study indicated that Turkish EFL learners had a broad range of conceptions both similar to and different from those reported in the current literature. Another study that focused on the relationship between language learning beliefs and gender was carried out by Tercanlıoğlu (2005) at Atatürk University. The participants of this study (118 pre-service EFL teachers) found motivation and expectations as important in learning a foreign language.

Altan (2006) also carried out a research study with 248 foreign language-major university students of five different universities. The participants of this study were majors of English, German, French, Japanese, and Arabic. The results indicated a strong correlation between majors and leaner beliefs. For example, 95% of the students studying Japanese believed that Japanese was difficult to learn whereas 70 % of the students studying English saw English as an easy language to learn. Considering the beliefs about Foreign Language Aptitude, the researcher found that the great majority of the participants saw themselves as having specific abilities to learn a foreign language. As for the learning and communication strategies, participants ranging from 58% to 77% were aware of the importance of meaningful practice and repetition. Finally, a great number of the participants associated language skills with career opportunities in terms of finding a good occupation.

In a similar study, Arıoğul, Ünal and Onursal (2009) investigated 343 English, German, and French students' beliefs about language learning. The results contradicted with those of Altan's (2006) in that all the learners of these three languages held negative and counterproductive language learning beliefs about the language they were learning; beliefs that are not conducive to learning a language successfully in the long run. The participants suggested that the teachers should apply and discuss productive instructional practices in order to help them cope with

these negative beliefs.

In another study, Razı (2009) investigated the relationship between language learning beliefs and learning strategy use of 135 participants at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University in 2008-2009 academic year. Her results indicated that learners' beliefs and learning strategy uses influenced each other for the changes in beliefs affected strategy use at the same time. The researcher also found that learners had strong prejudgments and hesitations about language learning. For example, they believed that young learners learn a foreign language easily and better; people who have learnt English well have a special ability or are intelligent in learning a language; and females can learn language better. The research observed that the students' beliefs about the difficulty of language learning differed most after they had had language learning strategy training.

In a similar vein, Büyükyazı (2010) examined language-learning beliefs of 156 EFL students and 19 EFL teachers in the Department of Foreign Languages at Celal Bayar University. The findings of this study revealed that learners had a broad range of conceptions both similar to and different from those reported by their teachers. In a study with a different scope, Dogruer, Menevis and Eyyam (2010) looked at the issue from a different perspective: from teachers' perspective. The study showed that teachers perceived aptitude to be the strongest factor that influenced learners.

Kayaoğlu (2013) investigated the relationship between good and poor language learners' beliefs about language learning. He examined 146 Turkish university students at different levels of proficiency in the target language and reported that proficiency level in the target language had a bearing on language-learning beliefs.

Similarly, Göçmez (2014) examined language-learning beliefs held by distance foreign language learners, and their readiness for autonomous learning with 947 first-year distance learners of Gazi University Distance Education Vocational School. She found that the participants generally held positive beliefs and they were extrinsically motivated to learn the foreign language. In a similar study with preparatory class students, Geyimci (2015) looked into 218 preparatory class university learners' beliefs about language learning, and their strategy use. The results of this study revealed that the learners had strong motivations, and they believed in the importance of learning English and were less afraid of speaking English with English speakers.

Moreover, the students believed that repetition and practice had an important role in learning a language and English was important to get a better job in the future.

In another study, Genç, Kuluşaklı and Aydın (2015) investigated the relationship between EFL learners' beliefs about language learning according to gender, self-reported academic achievement, and the type of high school that they graduated from. The results underscored the existence of a dynamic relationship between gender, self-reported academic success, and the type of high school.

Looking at the issue from high school students' perspective, the same year Kaplan (2015) investigated 175 high school students' beliefs about language learning, their strategy use and possible relationship between them. His findings indicated that almost half of the students regarded English as of medium difficulty and they believed they would be able to speak it well. The participants also believed that children are able to learn to speak a foreign language more easily than adults. With regard to the nature of language learning, the majority of them believed the importance of learning the language in a country where it is the mother tongue. In terms of learning and communication strategies, the students were seen to be highly willing to learn English. Most of them were found to employ repetition and practice while learning a foreign language and they believed that practicing English is essential to learn it well.

In his study, Munis (2017) aimed to investigate the relationship between epistemological and foreign language learning beliefs of 157 males and 145 female freshmen studying at Şırnak University, using the EBQ (Epistemological Beliefs Questionnaire) and the BALLI questionnaires and interviews. According to the results of this study, most of the students underlined the difficulty of learning a foreign language and that they would be able to speak English finally. Students also believed that English is a language of medium difficulty and speaking it fluently requires up to five years. The majority of the students believed that they had the ability to learn a foreign language. As is the case with one of the findings of Kaplan's (2015) study, the participants of this study also saw that learning a foreign language was easier for children and the difficulty level did not change according to gender. The participants also believed that everyone could learn a foreign language and learning a foreign language would require vocabulary, translation, and grammar.

More recently, Şevik, Yalçın and Bostancıoğlu (2018) conducted a research study including 296 university vocational school students of a state university. The findings revealed that the participants had a range of beliefs both similar to and different from those revealed by previous research on learner beliefs about language learning. Dere (2018) also investigated language-learning beliefs of language learners and whether there was a relationship between learning beliefs and epistemological beliefs. 155 EFL students who were enrolled in Foreign Languages School, Fırat University participated in the study. According to the results of his study, English was considered to be of medium difficulty. Another finding of his study was that students believed it is possible for everyone to learn a foreign language and aptitude for language learning is not a determinant of achievement and success.

In another recent study, Cokcaliskan (2018) explored high school students' beliefs about learning English as a foreign language and possible relationships between language learning beliefs and gender and success. The researcher found no relationship between beliefs about language learning and gender. The students believed that everyone could learn to speak another language, which demonstrates that foreign language aptitude is not a necessity despite its importance in language learning. In terms of the likely correlation between language learning beliefs and success, the researcher found that students with a high level of English proficiency had more positive beliefs about language learning. Another finding is that the students believed they could not learn a foreign language well without having the opportunity to use it outside the classroom. In regard to beliefs about the nature of language learning, the majority of the students saw grammar and vocabulary as the most important elements in learning a foreign language. The researcher concluded that there was not a significant difference between male and female learners in terms of their language learning beliefs.

As the results of the studies conducted so far in Turkey have underlined, the relationship and interplay between and among language learning beliefs and learner variables such as gender, age, proficiency level, educational background, language learning experience, field of study and so on are grift and intricate, which make it hard to reach conclusive and generalizable conclusions. The contradictory results of these studies call for new and comprehensive research on the same issue.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study aims to examine the relationship between prep-school Turkish EFL learners' language-learning beliefs and variables such as the age, level and gender of the participants. In this chapter, information about the setting and the participants, the instruments, data collection and analysis procedures are presented.

3.2. Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at Anadolu University, School of Foreign Languages with the participation of 243 students towards the end of the spring semester of 2018-2019 academic year. Although the study began with 262 participants, 20 of them were excluded from the study at the data collection stage, so the data were collected from 243 participants (Male=145, Female=97), whose ages ranged from 17 to 40. The participants who were from different majors had different levels of English proficiency: A success: 10, A: 54, B: 63, C: 74 and D: 42. The participants' English proficiency level was ascertained through an official placement test administered at the beginning of the fall semester 2018-2019 academic year. The participants who were from intact classes had intensive English ranging from 24 to 26 hours a week. The participants were chosen through non-random convenience sampling technique for practical causes such as ease of access (Dörnyei, 2011).

3.3. Data Gathering Instruments

Language learning beliefs of the participants were identified using Horwitz's BALLI (1987), which is comprised of five different themes with 34 items in total. These five themes are: language learning difficulty (Items 3, 4, 6, 14, 24, and 28); language learning aptitude (Items 1, 2, 10, 15, 22, 29, 32, 33, and 34); the nature of language learning (Items 5, 8, 11, 16, 20, 25, and 26); learning and communication strategies (Items 7, 9, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, and 21); and motivations and expectations (Items 23,

27, 30, and 31). The inventory, which has been commonly used in previous studies, strengthens our conviction of it as a good choice. However, it should be underlined that the variables in this piece of survey were not factor-analyzed by Horwitz. All the same, the literature on BALLI (e.g. Yang, 1992; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2006) provides empirical and statistical support for Horwitz's separation into themes and choice of themes.

First, the survey was translated into Turkish. Three language professionals, who were unaware of the content and the purpose of the study, translated the items back into English. After the back-translation was completed, two professionals from the same field revised the items in terms of clarity, conciseness and wording. Then Cronbach's alpha of the survey was examined to ensure that the scales used were internally consistent and reliable. Streiner (2003) states that if a scale is trying to measure one construct, such as epistemological or language learning beliefs as is the case in the current study, the items are needed to measure the whole domain and not any other construct in order to retain content validity. He adds that the items' measuring the same construct brings about a high correlation between the items. As this high correlation corresponds to a good internal consistency, it is desirable for researchers to interpret the results of a scale which has high correlations among its items. Cronbach's alpha is a widely-used measure of a good internal consistency. While George and Mallery (2003) state the alpha values should be between 0.7 and 1.0, Streiner warns that the values higher than 0.9 could point to redundancy of the items. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha is sensitive to the number of the items included in a scale. After this calculation was over, the survey (Appendix 1) was administered in Turkish, giving the participants enough time to respond to the items.

3.4. Data Gathering and Analysis Procedures

The study was conducted in the spring semester of 2018-2019 academic year. Prior to conducting the study, the formal procedure was followed for conducting the study, and all the necessary permissions were obtained from the administration of the school. A total of 243 students, 145 males, 94 females, from the School of Foreign Languages, were given the survey by the researcher herself and her colleagues in their class time. The students, who were informed about the purpose, content and

confidentiality of the study, completed the questionnaire voluntarily during the first 15 to 20 minutes of their class time.

In this survey study, Statistic Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.00 was used to analyze the data quantitatively. First, descriptive statistics were computed for each variable to analyze the frequency distribution of the participants' responses to each item of language learning beliefs. Then, medians, means and standard deviations were computed to analyze language learning beliefs in general and for each proficiency level. In addition, non- parametric statistical tests were run to investigate the relationship between language learning beliefs and variables such as gender, age, and proficiency level of the participants.

4.0. Introduction

In this chapter, the analysis of the data is presented followed by findings and interpretations of these findings

Table 4.1.
Descriptive statistics for the research group

Gender	N	%	Age	N	%	Level	N	%
Male	145	59.7	**17-20**	186	76.5	**A Success**	10	17.3
Female	97	39.9	**21-24**	50	20.5	**A**	54	22.2
			25-25+	7	2.8	**B**	63	25.9
						C	74	30.5
						D	42	4.1
Total	242	99.6		243	100		243	100

Table 4.1 presents descriptive statistics for the research group. The data of the study were collected through "*Belief about Language Learning Inventory*" developed by Horwitz (1987) and adapted into Turkish context by Razı (2009). Although the questionnaire was first administered to 262 participants, the analysis was done with 243 participants (Male=145, Female=97), excluding 20 data sets in the outlier analysis. The participants ranged in age from 17-40 as shown above and were in five different foreign language proficiency levels (A Success, A, B, C and D).

4.1. Relationship Between Gender and Language Learning Beliefs

The first research question aimed to investigate the relationship between gender and the participants' foreign language learning beliefs. In other words, this research question looked into whether gender has an impact on learners' language learning

beliefs. In order to investigate this, three tests; Test of normality, Mann-Whitney U Test and Independent Samples of T-Test were run as seen below.

Table 4.2 below presents the results test of normality for the gender variable. As is known, in cases when the sample size is greater than 35, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test (McKillup, 2012) can be used; if not, the Shapiro-Wilk test (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965) can be used. It is clearly observed that the sampling sizes for both groups are greater than 35. Hence, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test results were run. Since the gender variable is categorized as binary (male-female), the analysis performed for this variable should be either parametric (*Independent Samples T-test*) or nonparametric (*Mann Whitney U Test*).

Table 4.2.
Test of normality results by gender

	GENDER	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
		Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**
Foreign Language Aptitude	Male	.077	145	.033
	Female	.111	97	.005
Language Difficulty	Male	.088	145	.008
	Female	.092	97	.040
Motivation and Learner Expectations	Male	.109	145	.000
	Female	.130	97	.000
Language Learning Process	Male	.088	145	.008
	Female	.103	97	.013
Learning Strategy	Male	.075	145	.045
	Female	.092	97	.042
BALLI (total)	Male	.067	145	.200
	Female	.057	97	.200

In order to decide whether the data are normal, the significance values of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test should be higher than .05 for each sub-dimension (gender). When they were examined, it was observed that the data of none of the factors, except for BALLI (total), are not normally distributed (p < .05). Therefore, the nonparametric "*Mann Whitney U Test*" were computed for all the factors in

BALLI scale and the parametric "*Independent-Samples T Test*" will be performed for BALLI (total).

Table 4.3.
Mann-Whitney U Test results by gender

	GENDER	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Foreign Language Aptitude	Male	145	112.07	16249.50	5664.500	.010
	Female	97	135.60	13153.50		
	Total	242				
Language Difficulty	Male	145	125.72	18229.50	6420.500	.249
	Female	97	115.19	11173.50		
	Total	242				
Motivation and Learner Expectations	Male	145	118.33	17158.50	6573.500	.384
	Female	97	126.23	12244.50		
	Total	242				
Language Learning Process	Male	145	121.28	17586.00	7001.000	.953
	Female	97	121.82	11817.00		
	Total	242				
Learning Strategy	Male	145	116.52	16895.50	6310.500	.175
	Female	97	128.94	12507.50		
	Total	242				

In Table 4.3, the analysis of the results about gender and its relationship with language learning inventory sub-factors is shown. When the findings are examined, it is seen that the participants' foreign language aptitude beliefs differ according to their genders (U=5664.500, p<.05). In other words, female participants (X=135.60) have greater foreign language aptitude than males (112.07). While there is a difference between genders for other factors, it is not statistically significant [(LD, U=6420.500, p>.05), (MLE, U=6573.500, p>.05), (LLP, U=7001.000, p>.05), (LS, U=6310.500, p>.05)]. Despite lack of significant difference between the groups for these factors, the results for "*language difficulty*" factor are in favor of the males; but the results of "*motivation and learner expectations*" and "*learning strategy*" are in favor of the females.

Table 4.4.
Independent Samples T-Test results by gender

			Group Statistics		*Independent Samples t Test*		
	Gender	*N*	*X*	*Sd*	*t*	*df*	*Sig.*
BALLI	Male	145	121.3370	9.68684			
(total)	Female	97	123.2074	9.96014	-1.455	240	.147
	Total	242					

Table 4.4 above continues the analysis of the gender variable. As can be seen in the table, there is a slight difference between the groups in terms of mean values (Male= 121, 3370; Female=123, 2074). However, this finding is not statistically significant, as the findings do not significantly differ across the groups (p > .05).

4.2. Relationship Between Age and Language Learning Beliefs

The second research question looked into the relationship between the participants' age and their foreign language learning beliefs. In other words, this research question investigated whether there is a meaningful relationship between learner age and their language learning beliefs. In order to investigate this, four tests; Test of normality, Kruskal Wallis Test, Test of Homogeneity of Variances, and One-way ANOVA, were run.

Table 4.5 below displays information about Test of Normality according to age. As there were variables of different numbers, both Kolmogorov Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk Test results were viewed together

Table 4.5.
Test of normality results by age

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov			**Shapiro-Wilk**		
	AGE	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**
Foreign	18	.140	42	.036	.965	42	.215
Language	19	.139	85	.000	.953	85	.004
Aptitude	20	.148	58	.003	.951	58	.021
	21	.120	29	.200[*]	.968	29	.502
	22	.171	7	.200[*]	.954	7	.767
	23	.171	10	.200[*]	.965	10	.837
	24	.225	4	.	.941	4	.660

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
Language	18	.129	42	.077	.953	42	.080
Difficulty	19	.099	85	.037	.979	85	.167
	20	.118	58	.043	.980	58	.455
	21	.160	29	.057	.954	29	.237
	22	.203	7	.200*	.916	7	.437
	23	.169	10	.200*	.891	10	.174
	24	.388	4	.	.789	4	.084

Table 4.5.
Test of normality results by age (continued)

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	AGE	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**
	24	.388	4	.	.789	4	.084
Motivation and	18	.178	42	.002	.932	42	.015
Learner	19	.129	85	.001	.949	85	.002
Expectations	20	.156	58	.001	.959	58	.047
	21	.154	29	.078	.900	29	.010
	22	.165	7	.200*	.966	7	.865
	23	.263	10	.048	.909	10	.273
	24	.250	4	.	.945	4	.683
Language	18	.117	42	.165	.974	42	.452
Learning	19	.111	85	.012	.964	85	.018
Process	20	.100	58	.200*	.975	58	.264
	21	.123	29	.200*	.952	29	.207
	22	.170	7	.200*	.984	7	.976
	23	.196	10	.200*	.868	10	.095
	24	.283	4	.	.863	4	.272
Learning	18	.122	42	.120	.975	42	.470
Strategy	19	.076	85	.200*	.991	85	.855
	20	.130	58	.016	.969	58	.150
	21	.102	29	.200*	.967	29	.483
	22	.160	7	.200*	.980	7	.959
	23	.223	10	.172	.922	10	.377
	24	.267	4	.	.904	4	.454
BALLI (total)	18	.103	42	.200*	.979	42	.640
	19	.062	85	.200*	.984	85	.395
	20	.106	58	.167	.971	58	.170
	21	.112	29	.200*	.953	29	.217
	22	.209	7	.200*	.946	7	.692
	23	.218	10	.195	.914	10	.307
	24	.268	4	.	.890	4	.383

When the Sig. values of all the groups were checked, it was found that the data are not normally distributed for the factors "*foreign language aptitude, motivation and learner expectation and language learning process*" (p <.05). On the other hand, the data are normal for the factors "*language difficulty, learning strategy* and *BALLI (total)*" (p < .05). Since the variables consist of more than two units (seven different age groups), the parametric one-way ANOVA analysis (for the ones normally distributed) and nonparametric Kruskal Wallis Test (for non-normal data) were computed for these data sets.

Table 4.6.
Kruskal Wallis Test results by age

AGE	N	Foreign Language Aptitude Mean Rank	Motivation and Learner Expectations Mean Rank	Language Learning Process Mean Rank
18	42	128.40	118.74	116.61
19	85	118.08	122.64	116.44
20	58	115.88	107.13	112.28
21	29	108.24	124.74	117.24
22	7	127.71	137.43	165.00
23	10	124.70	107.35	127.65
24	4	74.88	113.00	147.88
Total	235			

Table 4.6.
Kruskal Wallis Test results by age (continued)

	Foreign Language Aptitude	Motivation and Learner Expectations	Language Learning Process
Chi-Square	3.516	3.077	4.844
df	6	6	6
Asymp. Sig.	.742	.799	.564

Table 4.6 presents Kruskal Wallis Test results for the factors (*foreign language aptitude, motivation and learner expectations* and *language learning process*), which did not show normal distribution in the test of normality. When the Asymp. Sig. values of the factors were examined, it was observed that they are greater than .05 for all the factors. Therefore, the H_1 hypothesis (there is a significant difference between the groups) was rejected, concluding that the participants' beliefs about *foreign language aptitude, motivation and learner expectations* and *language learning process* do not differ meaningfully in terms of their ages. Although there is no systematic decrease or increase across age groups, the mean rank values of the participants point out that the youngest participants have higher foreign language aptitude than the oldest ones.

Table 4.7.
Test of homogeneity of variances

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Language Difficulty	1.621	6	228	.142
Learning Strategy	.819	6	228	.556
BALLI (total)	1.767	6	228	.107

One of the important findings illustrated in the table is that twenty-two-year-old participants have either the highest or one of the greatest mean ranks across the factors analyzed in the test. The reason behind this finding can be either the number of participants in this age or the participants' interest in foreign language learning.

In Table 4.7, results of the test of homogeneity of variances, one of the assumptions to compute one-way ANOVA analysis for groups, are displayed. According to Levene test results, it is seen that the sig. values of the groups are greater than .05 [(LD=.142, p >.05), (LS=.556, p > .05), (BALLI (total) =.107, p > .05)], so the assumption of the homogeneity of the variances are provided. Therefore, one-way ANOVA analysis was performed for the groups as seen below.

Table 4.8.
One-way ANOVA results by age

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Language Difficulty	Between Groups	41.294	6	6.882	.984	.437
	Within Groups	1594.901	228	6.995		
	Total	1636.195	234			
Learning Strategy	Between Groups	24.750	6	4.125	.397	.880
	Within Groups	2368.253	228	10.387		
	Total	2393.003	234			
BALLI (total)	Between Groups	672.440	6	112.073	1.164	.326
	Within Groups	21947.209	228	96.260		
	Total	22619.650	234			

According to the results of one-way ANOVA analysis as seen in Table 4.8, it was seen that there is no significant difference across age groups s in terms of beliefs about *language difficulty, learning strategy* and *overall understanding* since the significance values are greater than .05 for all the groups [(LD, F (6,228) =.984; p=.437), (LS, F (6,228) =.397; p=.880), (BALLI (total), F (6,228) =1.164; p=.326)]. The results highlight that the findings are not meaningful concerning age variables and descriptive statistics of the one-way ANOVA analysis presented in the following table clarifies the findings more.

Table 4.9.
Descriptive statistics of one-way ANOVA analysis by age

		N	X	Sd	SE	Minimum	Maximum
Language Difficulty	18	42	19.2387	2.82017	.43516	13.00	24.00
	19	85	18.8348	2.72630	.29571	13.00	27.00
	20	58	18.3518	2.37540	.31191	12.00	24.00
	21	29	18.5054	2.70259	.50186	14.00	24.11
	22	7	20.4273	3.40886	1.28843	15.00	24.00
	23	10	18.5991	2.31926	.73341	16.00	22.00
	24	4	18.9092	.25818	.12909	18.53	19.11
	Total	235	18.7858	2.64429	.17249	12.00	27.00
Learning Strategy	18	42	27.2320	3.49552	.53937	20.00	35.00
	19	85	27.3406	3.25271	.35281	19.00	36.00
	20	58	26.8582	3.02135	.39672	20.00	36.00
	21	29	26.6808	3.17475	.58954	20.00	33.00
	22	7	28.1429	4.14039	1.56492	21.00	34.00
	23	10	27.4707	2.42954	.76829	22.50	32.00
	24	4	27.8829	2.58441	1.29220	25.53	31.00
	Total	235	27.1594	3.19789	.20861	19.00	36.00
BALLI (total)	18	42	123.1431	10.43239	1.60975	100.00	143.00
	19	85	122.6392	9.78487	1.06132	103.00	149.00
	20	58	120.3135	8.82460	1.15873	97.00	138.00
	21	29	120.4274	10.79911	2.00535	93.38	135.99
	22	7	128.9718	14.22541	5.37670	104.00	146.00
	23	10	122.2772	6.92868	2.19104	107.56	135.00
	24	4	120.8517	5.54114	2.77057	113.00	125.53
	Total	235	122.0251	9.83184	.64136	93.38	149.00

Descriptive statistics in Table 4.9 reveals similar findings to that of the Kruskal Wallis Test. Like this test, the descriptive statistics show that twenty-two-year-old participants have superior beliefs about *language difficulty, learning strategy* and

overall understanding compared to the participants from other age groups. As noted earlier, this finding might be related to the number of participants in this age group, their interest in foreign language learning, their background in foreign language learning process etc.

4.3. Relationship between Proficiency Level and Language Learning Beliefs

The final research question investigated the relationship between the learners' proficiency levels and their foreign language learning beliefs. In other words, this research question explored whether there is a meaningful relationship between learners' proficiency levels and their language learning beliefs. In order to investigate this, four tests; Test of normality, Kruskal Wallis Test, Test of Homogeneity of Variances, and One-way ANOVA were run.

As is the norm, first Test of Normality was carried out to see to what extent the three components of the survey were distributed normally across the levels. Considering the results of the test of normality by levels as presented in Table 4.10, it can be inferred that data of the factors "*foreign language aptitude, motivation and learner expectations, language learning process* and *learning strategy*" are not normally distributed (p<.05).

Table 4.10.
Test of normality results by level

	LEVEL	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Foreign Language Aptitude	A SUCCESS	.185	42	.001	.960	42	.148
	A	.111	54	.093	.969	54	.171
	B	.109	63	.059	.970	63	.134
	C	.136	74	.002	.964	74	.034
	D	.207	10	.200	.858	10	.073
Language Difficulty	A SUCCESS	.104	42	.200	.978	42	.582
	A	.098	54	.200	.956	54	.048
	B	.104	63	.087	.960	63	.040
	C	.093	74	.183	.985	74	.505
	D	.228	10	.149	.942	10	.574
Motivation and Learner Expectations	A SUCCESS	.157	42	.011	.937	42	.022
	A	.150	54	.004	.930	54	.004
	B	.112	63	.048	.957	63	.029
	C	.152	74	.000	.933	74	.001
	D	.172	10	.200	.944	10	.596
Language Learning Process	A SUCCESS	.114	42	.194	.960	42	.147
	A	.089	54	.200	.982	54	.577
	B	.115	63	.037	.966	63	.082
	C	.107	74	.035	.979	74	.260
	D	.189	10	.200	.889	10	.166
Learning Strategy	A SUCCESS	.119	42	.144	.971	42	.367
	A	.091	54	.200	.974	54	.282
	B	.121	63	.023	.973	63	.180
	C	.070	74	.200	.989	74	.748
	D	.154	10	.200	.937	10	.516
BALLI (total)	A SUCCESS	.072	42	.200	.990	42	.976
	A	.102	54	.200	.975	54	.312
	B	.107	63	.069	.981	63	.437
	C	.062	74	.200	.988	74	.731
	D	.168	10	.200	.938	10	.527

In other respects, the data are normal for the factor "*language difficulty*" and the entire scale (BALLI-total) (p >.05). For this reason, Kruskal Wallis Test was computed for the first group and one-way ANOVA analysis was be performed for the second group.

Table 4.11.
Kruskal Wallis Test results by level

LEVEL	N	Foreign Language Aptitude Mean Rank	Motivation and Learner Expectations Mean Rank	Language Learning Process Mean Rank	Learning Strategy Mean Rank
A SUCCESS	42	113.40	121.08	144.18	128.99
A	54	114.50	115.57	122.50	119.68
B	63	112.53	120.13	119.24	125.97
C	74	134.54	132.95	115.34	121.27
D	10	165.45	91.25	92.80	85.60
Total	243				

Table 4.11.
Kruskal Wallis Test results by level (continued)

	Foreign Language Aptitude	Motivation and Learner Expectations	Language Learning Process	Learning Strategy
Chi-Square	8.628	4.308	6.737	3.387
Df	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.071	.366	.150	.495

Table 4.11 shows Kruskal Wallis Test results for the factors (*foreign language aptitude, motivation and learner expectations, language learning process* and *learning strategy*), which did not show normal distribution in the test of normality by levels. When the Asymp. Sig. values of the factors are examined, it is observed that they are greater than .05 for all the factors. Therefore, the H_1 hypothesis (there is a

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significant difference between the groups) is rejected and it was deduced from the findings that the participants' belief about these factors did not significantly differ based on their levels in English. For further information, mean rank values were examined and it was found that the participants in the D level considered themselves as people who had higher foreign language aptitude than the ones in other levels. For the factor "*motivation and learner expectations*", the participants in C level had the greatest mean rank. This might be an indication of high motivation for the target language and expectations and opportunities that will come true when the target language is learned.

Concerning the mean rank values of the participants for the factor "*language learning process*", there is a systematic decrease from A Success to D level. Since the items in this factor were mainly about the importance of grammar and vocabulary knowledge in the language learning process and knowing about the target society or living in a country where the target language is spoken, it can be concluded that the participants in A Success level supported the ideas in this factor. However, the ones in D level rejected these ideas and adopted a different perspective for the language learning process. For the factor "*learning strategy*", the participants in A Success level showed the highest support to the ideas expressed by the items of this factor, but the ones in D level were on the negative side. When the items are carefully examined, it is seen that the learners supporting this factor generally do not want to speak until they have the prerequisite competency in the target language, do many practices and exercises, feel nervous while speaking with other people in the target language but they are enthusiastic about talking with native speakers. Taking into consideration that the participants in A Success level had the highest mean rank in this factor, they might be considered as a group which holds similar characteristics to the ones defined in the factor.

Table 4.12. *Test of homogeneity of variances*

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Language Difficulty	1.426	4	238	.226
BALLI (total)	.892	4	238	.470

As stated previously, homogeneity of variances is one of the assumptions which is required to compute one-way ANOVA analysis. According to Levene Test results, the significance values of both variables are higher than .05 05 [(LD=.226, p >.05), (BALLI (total) =.470, p > .05)], so one-way ANOVA analysis was computed.

Table 4.13. One-way ANOVA results by level

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Language Difficulty	Between Groups	62.618	4	15.655	2.322	.057
	Within Groups	1604.514	238	6.742		
	Total	1667.132	242			
BALLI (total)	Between Groups	338.922	4	84.731	.880	.476
	Within Groups	22904.632	238	96.238		
	Total	23243.555	242			

Table 4.13 displays results of one-way ANOVA according to the levels. According to the analysis of the results, it is observed that there is no significant difference across levels in terms of beliefs about *language difficulty* and *overall understanding* since the significance values for both are higher than .05 [(LD, $F_{(4,238)}$=2.322;p=.057), (BALLI (total), $F_{(4,238)}$=.880;p=.476)]. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the significance value of *language difficulty* is quite close to the optimum degree, so the descriptive statistics presented in Table 4.13 will show explicit lines between groups.

Table 4.14. Descriptive statistics of one-way ANOVA analysis by level

		N	X	Sd	SE	Minimum	Maximum
Language Difficulty	A SUCCESS	42	18.8796	2.54087	.39206	12.00	24.00
	A	54	18.2884	2.60571	.35459	13.99	24.00
	B	63	18.3808	2.55053	.32134	13.99	24.00
	C	74	19.2453	2.43979	.28362	13.00	25.00
	D	10	20.3000	3.97352	1.25654	13.00	27.00
	Total	243	18.7887	2.62469	.16837	12.00	27.00
BALLI (total)	A SUCCESS	42	123.0453	11.69626	1.80477	97.00	149.00
	A	54	120.9110	9.35578	1.27316	100.00	141.00
	B	63	120.9081	9.75027	1.22842	93.38	146.00
	C	74	123.4415	8.77106	1.01962	104.00	145.53
	D	10	121.6000	11.28618	3.56900	107.00	143.00
	Total	243	122.0781	9.80040	.62870	93.38	149.00

Even though the results are not statistically significant, the descriptive statistics give detailed information about the participants' beliefs in these variables. As expected, the ones in D level have the highest mean value in the factor "*language difficulty*", which could be related to their rank of them among the research group. Since they are in the lowest level among the groups, they might think that language learning is hard and so they may face difficulties in the process, and so they got higher score in this factor. When the findings of *BALLI (total)* is examined, it can be said that there is no hierarchical increase or decrease among the groups. Based on this finding, it can be inferred that the participants' proficiency levels do not have a significant impact on their language learning beliefs in the entire scale.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.0. Introduction

This study investigated the relationship between prep school Turkish EFL learners' beliefs about language learning and learner variables such as age, gender, and English. Language Learning Inventory by Horwitz (1987

) was used to collect the data from the participants. In this chapter, the analyses of the results are summed up, discussed and interpreted in relation to the relevant literature and the conclusions about the research questions are presented and discussed. This chapter ends with implications and suggestions for further research.

5.1. Discussion and Conclusions

One of the important conclusions of this study is that there is no statistically significant relationship between the participants' gender and their language learning beliefs. In other words, the participants' gender has no impact on their language learning beliefs. This observation supports that of Aktaş (2001), who detected no relationship between gender and learning beliefs.

This finding is also in synch with that of Çokcalişkan (2018), who found no relationship between gender and language learning beliefs, either. However, subtle differences have been detected between the participants' gender and the components of their language learning beliefs. For one thing, the female participants were seen to have greater language aptitude than their male counterparts. This finding casts doubt to the already complicated issue in that while it supports some earlier findings, it contradicts with some of them. For one thing, these findings both supports and contradicts with Altan's (2012) observation that a great majority of his participants—85%--believed that they did possess a special aptitude for foreign language learning. In other words, the great majority of his participants had fairly positive assessments of their own language learning abilities. Only one third of his male and female participants thought that they did have foreign language aptitude. This contradiction may result from the fact the participants were ELT majors, who most probably were

more conscious of language and language learning process. These findings also seem to contradicts with the findings of Şevik, Yalçın and Bostancıoğlu (2018) which show that only a minority of the participants (18%) believed that they had foreign language aptitude. However, the researchers of this study underscore that their findings are self-contradictory. On the other hand, this finding partly confirms Şevik's (2013) finding which indicated that a great percentage of his participants (81%)—Turkish university prep school EFL learners—believed that they did have foreign language aptitude. It was also seen that the male participants saw language learning more difficult than the female students did. Similarly, the female participants had higher motivation and expectations of language learning and were eager to employ language-learning strategies more than the male students did. This finding is in synch with Bacon and Finnemann's (1992) findings too. They investigated the impact of gender on language learning beliefs and found that female participants reported a higher level of motivation and strategy use in language learning than male students did. In other words, the participants who had higher expectations and motivation were seen to be more willing to use language-learning strategies. It can also be the case that the students who used language-learning strategies more had higher level of motivation to learn the target language and expectations of it.

Another conclusion of the study is that no relationship was found between the participants' age and their beliefs about foreign language aptitude, motivation and expectations, and language learning process. Although the participants' beliefs about foreign language aptitude, motivation and expectations and language learning process did not differ significantly according to the ages of their participants, the younger participants were observed to have higher language aptitude than the older ones did. It seems that the younger ones seem to find language learning easier and more interesting. In fact, most of the previous studies support the argument that children can learn a foreign language more easily than adults can (see Aktaş, 2001; Altan, 2006; Razı, 2009; Kaplan, 2015; Munis, 2017) Similarly, no significant relationship was found between age and components of language learning beliefs such as language difficulty, language learning strategy, and overall understanding. However, a subtle difference was noticed in that the 22-year-old participants had higher beliefs about language learning difficulty, learning strategy, and overall

understanding. As underlined before, this observation could be related to the participants' age, their interest towards language learning and their language learning experience.

The final conclusion of this study is related to the relationship between the participants' proficiency levels and their language learning beliefs. As was the case with the other learner variables, the participants' English proficiency level was found to have no statistically significant relationship with their beliefs about language learning. In other words, the learners' language learning beliefs did not differ in relation to their proficiency levels. However, as was the case with the other two research questions, subtle relationships have been noticed. For one thing, the participants with higher language proficiency considered themselves to have higher foreign language aptitude. In other words, it seems that language-learning aptitude seems to increase as the proficiency level increases. Another important observation was made regarding the participants in level C in that they were seen to have higher motivation toward learning language and expectations of it. When it comes to the relationship between proficiency level and language learning process, it was seen that the participants with higher levels of proficiency found the language-learning process easier. This finding lent weight to Aktaş's (2001) finding which indicated the existence of a relationship between that proficiency level and language learning beliefs in that the beginner level participants of her study found English difficult. This finding also lent support to Kayaoğlu's (2013) finding which indicted that poor language learners' self-efficacy beliefs about pronunciation differed from those of language learners with high English language proficiency. This finding is in synch with that of Suwanarak (2013), who underscored the interplay between proficiency level and achievement, underlying the fact that high achievers had different language learning beliefs. This finding of this study also supported the finding of Genç, Kuluşaklı, and Aydın (2016), who found that high and low self-efficacious learners had different beliefs about language learning. Similarly, a direct relationship was found between proficiency level and strategy use in that the participants with higher levels of language proficiency were observed to employ learning strategies more. As to the relationship between proficiency level and language difficulty and overall understanding, no statistically significant relationship between these two variables was detected. Yet, there exists a subtle relationship between them in that the

participants with higher levels of proficiency saw language learning less difficult; learners with low English proficiency found language learning the most difficult. In short, considering the findings of BALLI (total), it is possible to say that there is no hierarchical increase or decrease among the groups. Based on this finding, it can be stated that the participants' proficiency levels do not have a significant impact on their language learning beliefs.

5.2. Recommendations for Future Research

As has been underlined above, no statistically significant relationships have been detected between the age, gender, and proficiency levels of the participants and their language learning beliefs. However, it is virtually impossible to generalize these findings due to the relatively small sample size of the study. Therefore, a more comprehensive research with more prep school students having intensive language instruction in different parts of Turkey is needed to verify and generalize the findings. In addition, the relationship between language learning background and language learning beliefs could be investigated. Another venue for further research could be investigating students having intensive language training in state universities and private universities and their language learning beliefs. More importantly, the data of this study, as mentioned before, were collected through a questionnaire. Questionnaires consisting of closed items, according to Sakui (1999), allow respondents only to state their beliefs included in the questionnaire, which in some ways is restrictive. Studies with well-conducted interviews would give participants more freedom and in turn allow them to reveal their beliefs which are not addressed in the questionnaire.

5.3. Pedagogical and Theoretical Implications of The Study

Despite being unable to identify a statistically significant relationship between the participants' age, gender, language proficiency level and their language learning beliefs, the findings of the study, considered in the light of the results of previous research, have underlined that the interplay between learner-related features and beliefs about language learning is very dynamic, complex, context sensitive and multi-faceted. The findings have also underlined the importance of the impact of these learner-related features and learner beliefs about language learning and its

components. Given the significance of this relationship, prep school Turkish EFL learners' consciousness on the importance of these and other learner-related features and their impact on learner beliefs about language learning should be raised to help them to navigate through language learning process, a process which is oftentimes hard, tough and full of difficulties. In the same vein, a similar consciousness-raising recognition might be achieved with policy makers, administrators, materials designers, parents, and foreign language teachers in particular.

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Appendix A

İsim:

Sevgili Katılımcılar, bu çalışmanın amacı öğrenci inanışlarını incelemektir. Birinci bölümde katılımcılar hakkında bilgi edinmek için sorular bulunmaktadır. Her cümleyi okuyup size uygun olanı işaretleyiniz. Bu ankette doğru ya da yanlış cevap bulunmamaktadır. Cevaplarınız çalışmaya önemli katkıda bulunacaktır ve saklı tutulacaktır. Katılımınız için teşekkür ederim.

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BÖLÜM 1 - Kişisel Bilgiler

1. Yaş: _____

2. Cinsiyet: Bay _____ Bayan _____

3. En son katıldığınız proficiency sınavından aldığınız toplam puan nedir? _____

BÖLÜM II **Part II: Dil Öğrenme Hakkındaki İnanışlar Envanteri** (Horwitz, 1987)'nden uyarlanmıştır.	Asla bana uymaz	Genellikle bana uymaz	Bana biraz uyar	Genellikle bana uymaz	Kesinlikle bana uyar
1. Çocuklar yetişkinlerden daha kolay İngilizce öğrenirler.					
2. Bazı insanların yabancı dil öğrenmek için özel yetenekleri vardır.					
3. Bazı dilleri öğrenmek diğer dilleri öğrenmekten daha kolaydır.					
4. İngilizce;	Çok zor	Zor	Orta zorlukta	Kolay	Çok kolay
5. İngilizceyi çok iyi öğreneceğime inanıyorum.					
6. Ülkemdeki insanlar yabancı dil öğrenmede başarılıdır.					
7. İngilizceyi mükemmel bir telaffuzla konuşmak önemlidir.					
8. İngilizce konuşabilmek için İngilizce konuşan toplumların kültürlerini bilmek gerekir.					
9. İngilizcesini doğru bilmediğin şeyi söylememelisin.					
10. Önceden yabancı bir dil bilen biri için başka bir yabancı dili öğrenmek daha kolaydır.					
11. Matematikte ya da fen bilimlerinde iyi olan kişiler yabancı dil öğrenmede başarılı değillerdir.					
12. İngilizce en iyi İngilizce konuşulan bir ülkede öğrenilir.					
13. Tanıştığım anadili İngilizce olan kişilerle pratik yapmaktan hoşlanırım.					
14. İngilizce bir kelimeyi bilmiyorsam tahmin ederim.					
15. Eğer biri günde bir saat çalışırsa, yabancı dili ne kadar sürede çok iyi öğrenmiş olur?	1 yıldan az	1-2 yıl	3-5 yıl	6-10 yıl	Günde 1 saatle İngilizce öğrenilmez.
16. Yabancı dil öğrenmek için özel bir yeteneğe sahibim.					

17. Yabancı bir dili öğrenmede en önemli şey kelime bilgisidir.					
18. Çok tekrar ve pratik yapmak önemlidir.					
19. Yabancı dil öğrenmede bayanlar erkeklerden daha iyidir.					
20. Ülkemdeki insanlar İngilizce bilmenin önemli olduğuna inanırlar.					
21. Diğer insanlarla İngilizce konuşurken gergin hissederim.					
22. Eğer başlangıç seviyesindeki öğrencilere hata yapmaları için izin verilirse daha sonra bu öğrencilerin doğru konuşmaları zor olur.					
23. Yabancı bir dili öğrenmede en önemli şey dilbilgisidir.					
24. Anadili İngilizce olan kişileri ve kültürlerini daha iyi anlayabilmek için İngilizce öğrenmek isterim.					
25. Yabancı bir dili konuşmak anlamaktan daha kolaydır.					
26. Kaset ve teyplerle pratik yapmak önemlidir.					
27. Yabancı bir dili öğrenmek diğer dersleri öğrenmekten farklıdır.					
28. İngilizce öğrenmede en önemli şey İngilizceyi anadilime, anadilimi İngilizceye çevirebilmektir.					
29. Eğer İngilizceyi iyi öğrenirsem, iyi bir iş bulmak için daha iyi fırsatlarım olur.					
30. Birden çok dil konuşan kişiler çok zekilerdir.					
31. İngilizceyi çok iyi konuşmak istiyorum.					
32. Anadili İngilizce olan arkadaşlar edinmek isterim.					
33. Herkes yabancı bir dil öğrenebilir.					
34. İngilizce okumak ve yazmak, konuşmaktan ve anlamaktan daha kolaydır.					

CURRICULUM VITAE

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AN EXPLARATORY STUDY ON EFL LEARNERS' BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

26.08.2019

Doç. Dr. Hüseyin Kafes

BİLDİRİM

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

    X Tezimin tamamı her yerden erişime açılabilir.

o   Tezim sadece Akdeniz Üniversitesi yerleşkelerinden erişime açılabilir.

o   Tezimin 1 yıl süreyle erişime açılmasını istemiyorum. Bu sürenin sonunda uzatma için başvuruda bulunmadığım takdirde, tezimin tamamı her yerden erişime açılabilir.

Gülçin ARSLAN