

VOCATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS' BELIEFS ABOUT FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

MESLEK YÜKSEKOKULU ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENMEYE İLİŞKİN DÜŞÜNCELERİ

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Özet: Öğrencilerin dil öğrenmeye ilişkin düşüncelerini anlamak, diğer bir deyişle, öğrencilerin neyi doğru ya da gerçek olarak kabul ettiklerini anlamak, son zamanlarda eğitim araştırmalarında önemle belirtilmiştir. Bunun temel nedeni, dil öğrenmeye ilişkin düşüncelerin, dil öğrenme sürecinde ve öğrencilerin ilerlemesinde temel ilke olarak kabul görmesidir. Bu nedenle, öğrencilerin dil öğrenmeyle ilgili düşüncelerini ortaya çıkarmak, etkili öğrenme yöntemleri oluşturmada faydalı olmasının yanında, dil öğretmenleri, müfredat planlayıcıları ve siyasilerin öğretim yöntemlerini, müfredatları ve politikalarını öğrencilerin düşünce ve beklentilerine uygun hale getirmesinde kılavuz hükmünde olacaktır. Bu makale, Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesi (MAKÜ) Gölhisar Meslek Yüksekokulu ve Gölhisar Sağlık Hizmetleri Meslek Yüksekokulu'nda iki yıllık ön lisans programlarında öğrenim gören 296 üniversite meslek yüksekokulu öğrencisinin dil öğrenmeye ilişkin düşüncelerini bir durum tespit çalışması olarak incelemektedir. Öğrencilerin düşüncelerini değerlendirmek için, Horwitz BALLI (Dil Öğrenme Envanteri İle İlgili Düşünceler) temelli envanter kullanılmıştır. Veriler betimleyici olarak analiz edilmiş ve sonuçlar ilgili yüzdelerle birlikte tablolarda verilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, üniversite meslek yüksekokulu öğrencilerinin, dil öğrenmeyle ilgili öğrenci düşüncelerine ilişkin yapılan önceki araştırmalara hem benzer hem de farklı düşünce yelpazesine sahip olduklarını göstermektedir. Çalışma, dil öğrenimi konusundaki öğrenci düşüncelerinin tespit edilmesinin öğrencilerin kendilerinin, müfredat hazırlayanların ve siyasilerin farkındalıklarını arttırabileceğini öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğrenci düşünceleri, İngilizce, Dil öğrenimi

Abstract: Understanding language learner beliefs, in other words understanding what language learners accept as true or real, has recently been stressed in educational research. This is mainly because language learning beliefs are regarded as fundamental in the language learning process and in learners progress. Therefore, finding out language learner beliefs about language learning will not only be helpful in forming effective learning methods but also provide guidelines for language teachers, syllabus planners and policy makers to suit their teaching methods, syllabuses, and policies to meet learner beliefs and expectations. This paper reports on a descriptive study of language learning beliefs held by 296 university vocational school students studying in the two-year associate degree programs at Mehmet Akif Ersoy University (MAKÜ), Gölhisar Vocational School and Gölhisar Health Services Vocational School. Horwitz BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) was used to assess learners' beliefs. The data were analyzed descriptively and the results were provided in tables with their relevant percentages. The results of this study demonstrated that university vocational school learners have a range of beliefs both similar to and different from those revealed by previous research on learner beliefs about language learning. The study concludes with suggestions that the identification of learner beliefs about language learning may lead to increased awareness on the part of the learners themselves, syllabus planners and policy makers.

Key Words: *Student beliefs, English, Language learning*

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Introduction

Researchers in the field of second language acquisition have shown great interest in learners' individual characteristics that can affect the learners' success in language learning (Vipulphol, 2004); hence beliefs about language learning have been one of the pioneering research focuses. Richardson (1996, p.103) defines beliefs as "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true". Researchers have found that second language learners come to the language class with some preconceived ideas or beliefs about language and language learning and that these beliefs can indicate what expectations the learners have and what actions in their learning they will take. Therefore, researchers have been investigating the beliefs that second language learners possess and the factors that affect learners' beliefs in order to find ways to help learners adjust their beliefs to facilitate their language learning.

Almost all of the research about FL learner beliefs is carried out in EFL contexts. This is mainly because English is accepted as *lingua franca*, and that it is by far the most taught FL in the world. As pointed out by Alsamaani (2012), knowledge of English has become an essential part of daily life of the global world. Many people are using English in nearly every sector and for international relations. Ehrlich (2008) estimates that more than 300 million people speak English as their native language and more than 400 million people speak it as a second or FL. Altan (2012), also stresses the importance of English as a *lingua franca* by arguing that the importance of English as a worldwide language has been increasing rapidly and more and more people are aware of the fact that at least some knowledge of English is necessary to get ahead in life since it brings high social status to the individual, as well as extending job opportunities.

One variable which has received attention recently in the language learning process is beliefs about language learning which Horwitz (2007) considers as central constructs in every discipline which deals with human behavior. Learners' beliefs about themselves and about foreign languages and their learning have been in the focus of educational research because they are considered fundamental to learners' progress (Alsamaani, 2012). As pointed out by Büyükyazı (2010), if beliefs about language learning are prevalent in the culture at large, then FL teachers must consider that students bring these beliefs with them into the classroom. Learners' beliefs influence their consciousness, attitude towards learning, learning strategies, and policies. The Turkish National Ministry of Education (MEB) has recognized this need and made several reform movements about the teaching of English in state schools. Turkey has, for example, adopted the European Language Portfolio put forward by the European Council in 2001. This project has been designed to encourage

European citizens to learn their first FL in primary education. Turkey put this practice into action in 2002 with some pilot projects and widened the scope starting in 2004-2005 academic year.

The purpose of present study is to explore university vocational school students' beliefs about FL learning in a Turkish context. More specifically, the present study addresses the following research questions:

What are university vocational school students' beliefs about FL learning as regards to:

1. English language aptitude?
2. The difficulty of language learning?
3. The nature of language learning?
4. Learning and communicating strategies?
5. Motivation and expectations?

The current study is significant for both theoretical and practical reasons. At the theoretical level, it sheds light on an area of research in FL learning beliefs addressed extensively by linguists worldwide. At the practical level, the study will help to those ELT lecturers teaching in the local research site in understanding learners' approaches to studying English and the type of goals they adopt. Moreover, this study is among the first studies carried out in a Turkish university vocational school context about student beliefs.

Literature Review

In the context of second/foreign language acquisition, beliefs are defined by Victori and Lockhart (1995, p.224) as “general assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing learning and about the nature of language learning”. Beliefs are also defined as “psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true” (Richardson, 1996 p.102). In this context, Sakui and Gaies (1999) propose three characteristics of beliefs about language and language learning. First, beliefs are subjective understandings; therefore, they do not necessarily reflect external reality. Beliefs reflect “truths” held by individuals and therefore are potentially facilitative for language learning (e.g. everyone can learn a FL) or debilitating (e.g. women are better than men at learning foreign languages). Second, beliefs are relatively stable, which indicates that beliefs are formed and maintained by a complex social and cultural system. Third, beliefs are idiosyncratic, that belief systems are unique to individuals.

Accordingly, as argued by Alsamaani et al. (2012), based on the extensive survey of literature, it can be concluded that beliefs guide action, but they are also affected by action, beliefs are difficult

to change if they are formed early in life, beliefs are socially constructed and culturally transmitted, beliefs have to be inferred from statements, intentions and actions, and they are dynamic in the sense that they not only change over time, but may be expressed differently in different situations. According to Cotteral (1999, p. 494), beliefs play a decisive role in language learners' success, failure and experiences. Thus, knowledge of students' beliefs about language learning may provide language educators with a better understanding of their students' "expectations of, commitment to, success in and satisfaction with their language classes" (Horwitz, 1988 p.283). In quoting Cotteral, et al., consequently teachers can make more informed choices about teaching and adopt a more sensitive approach to the organization of learning opportunities.

As it is clearly outlined by Rieger (2009, p.98), in the past two decades Horwitz's (1987) Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) has been extensively used to investigate, among others, the links between beliefs and proficiency (Mantle-Bromley, 1995), the impact of culture on beliefs (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Horwitz, 1988, that of gender (Siebert, 2003; Tercanlıoğlu, 2005), the dimensions underlying language learners' beliefs (Sakui & Gaies, 1999), and strategy use (Yang, 1999) in various countries. The extensive research conducted with the inventory shows that beliefs about language learning are context specific. Horwitz (1988), the first researcher trying to determine the beliefs of learners about FL learning, has looked at the beliefs of American undergraduate students studying commonly taught languages. She developed the 34 -item scale BALLI. She found that learner beliefs change very little over the whole semester, learner beliefs do not automatically change when learners are merely exposed to new methods.

Zhong (2015) investigated to what extent learners' beliefs change and the nature of learners' beliefs as a case study. This 18-week longitudinal study which was carried out for low-proficiency Chinese learners at a language school in New Zealand revealed that learners' beliefs were contextually and situationally determined. However, some of them were stable and others were dynamic. In addition, it was concluded that beliefs could affect each other and could sometimes be contradictory.

Another study (Khaffafi Azar & Saeidi, 2013) was carried out to investigate the relationship between 200 Iranian EFL learners' language learning beliefs and their learning strategies. In order to collect data, Horwitz's (1987) Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), were used. To this study, there was a positive correlation between overall BALLI and SILL. In other words, learners with stronger beliefs used more learning strategies. In addition, this study suggested that identifying learners' beliefs was important to understand learners' strategies and it was helpful for planning language instructions.

Bacon and Finnemann (1992) investigated gender differences in self-reported beliefs about FL learning and authentic oral and written input. They found that women in their study were more open to authentic input and possess a higher level of motivation and strategy use in language learning in addition to a higher level of social interaction with the target language (Spanish). Siebert's (2003), BALLI based study also found significant gender-related differences as well. However, Tercanlıoğlu (2005), found no significant differences in beliefs about language learning of 45 male and 73 female full-time undergraduate EFL teacher trainees at a Turkish university.

In relation to the identification of learners' beliefs, Altan (2006) administered BALLI to a total of 248 FL major university students at five universities in Turkey. His findings confirm that pre-service teachers arrive at the task of language learning with definite preconceived notions of how to go about it. He suggested that FL teacher educators and teacher trainers should take these beliefs into account if they expect their students to be open to particular teaching methods and to receive the maximum benefit from them. Oz (2007) also investigated beliefs about language learning of 470 Turkish EFL learners in secondary education. He concluded that learners' metacognitive knowledge or beliefs about language learning have variability in terms of social and educational contexts, age, gender, and stages of language learning. Büyükyazı (2010) investigated the beliefs about language learning of 156 EFL students and 19 EFL teachers in Celal Bayar University prep classes. The results demonstrated that EFL learners have a broad range of conceptions both similar to and different from those reported by their teachers.

A similar study to the current study was carried out in order to explore university prep school students' beliefs about FL learning (Şevik, 2013). Horwitz's (1987) Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) was used as an instrument. According to the results related to FL aptitude, university prep school students believed that everyone can learn to speak a FL even though they mostly agree that they don't have a FL aptitude. Regarding to the difficulty of language learning, they believed that English is not a difficult language to learn and they will ultimately learn to speak this language very well. In relation to the nature of language learning, the respondents agreed that learning a FL is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new words and it is better to learn a FL in the foreign country. Regarding to learning and communicating strategies, they believed that it is important to repeat and practice a lot in FL learning and to speak with an excellent pronunciation and accent. Moreover, they believed that if they learn to speak English well, it will be useful for them to find a good job. In conclusion, the study revealed that university prep school students' beliefs are both similar to and different from those revealed by previous research. The results of

Şevik's (2013) study about university prep school students will be argued in the chapters of results, discussion and conclusions comparing with current study's findings.

Methodology

Participants

A total of 296 university vocational school students voluntarily participated in this study. They were enrolled in different departments of Gölhisar Vocational School and Gölhisar Health Services Vocational School in 2015/16 academic year. Of the 296 participants; 127 were females (%42,91) and 169 were males (%57,09). Most of the participants were studying in day-time-education. Since all are vocational high-school graduates, most of them do not have a good English language education background.

Instrument

The questionnaire used in this study is the BALLI for FL students (Horwitz , 1988). BALLI is the most widely used and recognized questionnaire in research on learner beliefs and it contains a prescriptive set of statements to which respondents mark their degree of agreement. Altan (2006, 2012) used the BALLI inventory in two different Turkish based contexts.

The FL students' BALLI consists of 34-items related to five areas: 1) English language aptitude; 2) the difficulty of language learning; 3) the nature of language learning; 4) learning and communication strategies; and 5) motivation and expectations. Respondents are required to rate their agreement to each statement on a Likert-type scale from '1' (strongly agree) to '5' (strongly disagree). Although the Likert-scale was originally developed to measure attitudes, its scope has been extended to wider cognitive and affective variables, including beliefs.

Data collection and analysis

Data were obtained by distributing the questionnaire to 312 students towards the end of the 2015/16 academic year. However, only 296 questionnaires were eligible to be used in the study. Lecturers distributed the questionnaires during class time. After summarizing and tabulating the information obtained from the background questionnaire, descriptive statistics were computed for the BALLI items.

Results

The results will be presented in five tables (as percentages and significance values) according to the five BALLI areas outlined in the instrument section, as suggested by Horwitz (1988). Two positively worded points and two negatively worded points were grouped together so as to find out

whether the participants had positive or negative beliefs on one item. Due to restrictions of space and page limits, only the most striking results will be interpreted after each table, and the remaining will be left for the readers to interpret.

Foreign Language Aptitude

Table 1.

Foreign Language Aptitude

Statements	Total Agree		Total Disagree		Undecided	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language	256	86.5	11	3.7	29	9.8
2.Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language	92	31.1	112	37.8	92	31.1
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one	195	65.9	41	13.9	60	20.3
15. I have foreign language aptitude	54	18.2	176	59.5	66	22.3
22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages	47	15.9	153	51.7	96	32.4
29. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages	20	6.8	193	65.2	83	28.0
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent	138	46.6	82	27.7	76	25.7
33. Turkish people are good at learning foreign languages	76	25.7	91	30.7	129	43.6
34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language	277	93.6	8	2.7	11	3.7

The items as shown in Table 1, related to FL aptitude, focus on the broad existence of specific abilities for language learning and beliefs about the traits of successful and unsuccessful language learners. First, 86,5% of the respondents in this study either strongly agreed or agreed with statement 1, consistent with the common wisdom that children are better language learners than adults. Thus, participants hold beliefs consistent with many research studies showing a positive affect of young age on language acquisition (Donato, Antonek, & Tucker, 1996). Second, 93,6% of the respondents in this study either strongly agreed or agreed with statement 34, which shows that the participants have positive beliefs about themselves in terms of FL learning. Finally, only 18,2% of the respondents in this study either strongly agreed or agreed with statement 15, and 59,5% either

disagreed or totally disagreed. However, when compared to the disagreement percentage (49,2%) in the study carried out for university prep school students (Şevik, 2013), the rate for the item 15; “I have foreign language aptitude” is higher. The reason for this low assessment of their own language learning abilities, may be due to the fact that the participants are university vocational students but not EFL or ELT learners and that they don’t have a good FL education background.

Difficulty of Language Learning

Table 2.

Difficulty of Language Learning

Statements	Total Agree		Total Disagree		Undecided	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others	200	67.6	31	10.5	65	22.0
4. The language I am trying to learn is very difficult	77	26.0	145	49.0	74	25.0
6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak this language very well	164	55.4	37	12.5	95	32.1
14. A language learner needs at least four years to learn about the language and use it fluently	97	32.8	100	33.8	99	33.4
24. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language	112	37.8	73	24.7	111	37.5
28. It is easier to read and write this language than to speak and understand it	146	49.3	64	21.6	86	29.1

The items as shown in Table 2 provide information about the common difficulty of learning a FL. First, 49% of the respondents either disagreed or totally disagreed with statement 4, meaning that half of them view the English language as not being difficult, 26% agreed and 25% were undecided. Second, 55,4% of the respondents in this study either strongly agreed or agreed with statement 6, which shows that almost half of them are confident and optimistic that they will eventually learn English very well. However, 32,1% were undecided. Thus, we may speculate that English is considered as an easy language to learn by almost half of university vocational school EFL learners. Finally, 67,6% of the respondents in this study either strongly agreed or agreed with statement 3, 10,5% disagreed, and 22% were undecided. In addition, it is possible to conclude from Table 2 in general that one-third of university vocational school EFL learners are undecided about difficulty of language learning (Statements 6, 14, 24 and 28).

The Nature of Language Learning

Table 3.

The Nature of Language Learning

Statements	Total Agree		Total Disagree		Undecided	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
5. The structure of English is different from that of Turkish	242	81.8	25	8.4	29	9.8
8. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language	107	36.1	131	44.3	58	19.6
11. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country	258	87.2	20	6.8	18	6.1
16. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words	263	88.9	11	3.7	22	7.4
20. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules	177	59.8	49	16.6	70	23.6
25. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects	235	79.4	29	9.8	32	10.8
26. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating from English	178	60.1	47	15.9	71	24.0

The items as shown in Table 3 provide information about the nature of language learning. 87,2% of the respondents in this study either strongly agreed or agreed with statement 11, which shows the students' openness to studying abroad. The majority of the respondents (88,9%) believed that learning new words is the most important part of language learning. Moreover, 59,8% believed that learning grammar rules is important, and 60,1% believed the role of translations. Thus, we may speculate that learning English is considered as it is mostly related to learning grammar rules and translating from English. Finally, 81,8% believed that the structure of English is different from that of Turkish. This is an expected result since Turkish and English do not belong to the same language family.

Learning and Communicating Strategies

Table 4.

Learning and Communicating Strategies

Statements	Total Agree		Total Disagree		Undecided	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
7. It is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent pronunciation and accent	240	81.1	27	9.1	29	9.8
9. You shouldn't say anything in the foreign language until you can say it correctly	49	16.6	200	67.6	47	15.9
12. If I heard someone speaking the language I am trying to learn, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language	166	56.1	48	16.2	82	27.7
13. It is O.K. to guess if you don't know a word in the foreign language	130	43.9	80	27.0	86	29.1
17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot	291	98.3	3	1.0	2	0.7
18. I feel self-conscious speaking the foreign language in front of other people	76	25.7	158	53.4	62	20.9
19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning it will be hard to get rid of them later on	170	57.4	83	28.0	43	14.5
21. It is important to practice in the language laboratory	206	69.6	22	7.4	68	23.0

The items as shown in Table 4 provide information about learning and communicating strategies. Items 17 and 21 refer to learning strategies. As for item 17, almost all of the respondents (98,3%) either agreed or totally agreed that repetition and practice is important in FL learning. In addition, a great majority (69,6%) also emphasised the importance of practising in the language laboratory. As for item 7, a great majority (81,1%) indicated that an excellent accent and pronunciation is important, however looking into item 9 reveals that this belief does not hinder students from communication. Since 67,6% of the respondents disagreed with item 9; "you shouldn't say anything in the foreign language until you can say it correctly". In a way, responses to item 12 (56,1% agreed) also shows most of them are willing to communicate even in the early phases of FL learning.

Motivations and Expectations

Table 5.

Motivations and Expectations

Statements	Total Agree		Total Disagree		Undecided	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
23. If I get to speak this language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it	272	91.9	6	2.0	18	6.1
27. If I learn to speak this language very well, it will help me get a good job	279	94.3	7	2.4	10	3.4
30. Turkish people think that it is important to speak a foreign language	202	68.2	43	14.5	51	17.2
31. I would like to learn this language so that I can get to know its speakers better	198	66.9	60	20.3	38	12.8

The items as shown in Table 5 provide information about motivations and expectations. A great majority (91,9%) are extrinsically motivated to learn English. 94,3% realize that if they learn to speak English well they will be able to get a good job. Another 66,9% of the participants are intrinsically motivated to learn EFL because they are interested in getting to know its speakers better. And finally, 68,2% agreed that Turkish people hold a belief that learning a FL has become a necessity.

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the overall beliefs of Turkish university vocational school EFL learners about FL learning, to discuss them under the light of the current literature and to fill a gap in locally situated research. A modified Turkish version of the well-known Horwitz's (1987) BALLI was used for the collection of the data, and the results reveal that Turkish university vocational school EFL learners have positive and realistic beliefs about FL as regard to motivation and expectations about EFL learning, the nature of FL learning, and communicating strategies. Thus, we may come to the conclusion that the participants are very much aware of the role of English as a lingua franca even though their level of English is not high since they don't have a good FL education background.

Almost all of the participants (94%) believed that knowing English will be very useful in getting a good job, and they are well aware that they will be able to find a lot of opportunities to use English in the future. These beliefs lead to great motivation. However, they also expressed some beliefs that may result in negative outcomes for most of the learners. Only a minority (18%), for example, believed that they have FL aptitude. In fact, they contradict with themselves because a great majority (94%) believes that everyone can learn a FL, and another 55% believe that they will eventually learn to speak English very well. Moreover, even though they believe that everyone can learn to speak a FL, only 25% agree that Turkish people are good at learning a FL. They contradict with themselves for the second time here. However, it is clearly seen in the study in which the same questionnaire was used for Turkish university prep school EFL learners that a great majority of them (81%) believe that they ultimately learn to speak English very well (Şevik, 2013). This means that university vocational school students are not as self-confident as the students in prep school. The reason for this difference may be the fact that they were not well educated in their previous schools in terms of FL learning and that they seem not to have a goal to learn a FL in the future since they study other programs which are not related to FL learning. On the other hand, prep school EFL learners were voluntarily in EFL prep school sacrificing an academic year. This means that they aimed to learn English and they felt more self-confident. Therefore, in addition to language instruction, awareness and self-confidence raising tasks or studies should be carried out in Turkish university vocational schools. ELT lecturers should take some time to talk about the ways of becoming a better language learner.

Regarding to the nature of language learning, a great majority (87%) believe that it is better to learn a FL abroad and that learning a FL is mostly a matter of learning vocabulary (89%). Most of the participants (60%) believe learning a lot of grammar rules and translating from English is important in learning a FL. However, university prep school students did not agree with the ones in vocational schools. Because 41% believed the importance of learning grammar rules and only 34% believed the importance of translations. The reason for the university vocational school learners' assumption may be related to the teaching methods (i.e Grammar Translation Method) used in their past English courses.

The participants are also very well aware of the importance of repetition and practice in FL learning; 98% believe that they should repeat and practice a lot. Another 70% believe that they should practice in the language laboratory. However, there aren't any language laboratories in university vocational schools in Gölhisar. On the other hand, Şevik (2013) states in his study with prep school students that learners rarely used the self-access language laboratory although they

(77%) believe that practicing in language laboratories was important. Yet, it is worth sharing the idea of preparing a language laboratory for students with the administrators of university vocational schools in spite of limited budget of these institutions. In addition, regarding to learning and communicating strategies, even though majority of university prep school learners did not hesitate to speak English with foreigners or speak in front of other people, half of the participants in university vocational schools stated that they were willing to speak with foreigners and did not feel shy about speaking in front of others. This again means that communicative classroom practices, self-confidence raising tasks or studies should be carried out in Turkish university vocational schools.

To sum up, even though the results demonstrate that university vocational students have high levels of motivations and expectations and that they are well aware of the importance of English, their classroom practices and habits do not match with their beliefs. Thus, the participants in the study have a mismatch between their beliefs and study skills.

Due to the small size of the population and single research site in this study, it is not possible to generalize the findings of this research to the entire population of university vocational schools in Turkey. However, it is possible to draw some conclusions and suggestions. Exploration of Turkish university vocational school learners' beliefs and reflection on their possible effect on FL learning may lead to increased awareness, adjustment of their expectations, and to the development of more effective FL learning behaviours as well as to self-knowledge and autonomy. This exploration might also provide guidelines for EFL lecturers in university vocational schools to adjust their teaching methods to avoid mismatches between classroom practices and learner beliefs. Educators might take learners' prior beliefs about EFL learning into account when designing language learning syllabuses, setting weekly lesson schedules and adjusting the balance between the teaching of the four language skills. Finally, it is suggested that a larger scale research should be carried out in the Turkish universities, vocational schools about learner beliefs in order to come to generalizations, cover wider ranges and compare learner beliefs in different contexts.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Giriş

İkinci dil edinimi alanındaki araştırmacılar, öğrencilerin dil öğrenimindeki başarısını etkileyebilecek bireysel özelliklere büyük ilgi gösteriyorlar. Dolayısıyla dil öğrenimiyle ilgili düşünceler, önde gelen araştırma odaklarından biridir. Araştırmacılar, ikinci dil öğrenen öğrencilerin, dil ve dil öğrenimi konusunda önyargılı fikir veya düşüncelerle sınıfa geldiklerini ve bu düşüncelerin, öğrencilerin hangi beklentilere sahip olduklarını ve öğrenim sürecinde nasıl hareket edeceklerinin bir göstergesi olduğunu ortaya koymuşlardır. Bu nedenle, araştırmacılar öğrencilerin sahip oldukları düşünceleri ve düşüncelerini etkileyen faktörleri öğrencilerin düşüncelerini uyarlamalarına yardımcı olacak yollar bulmaları ve dil öğrenmelerini kolaylaştırmak için araştırmaktadır. Dil öğrenme sürecinde yakın zamanda dikkat çeken diğer bir değişken, öğrencilerin dil öğrenimi hakkındaki düşünceleridir. Öğrencilerin kendileri, yabancı dillerle ilgili düşünceleri ve kendi öğrenme tarzları hakkındaki düşünceleri, eğitim araştırmalarının odak noktasındadır. Çünkü bu düşünceler öğrencilerin ilerlemeleri için esas teşkil etmektedir. Dil öğrenimi hakkındaki düşünceler genel olarak bu kültürde geçerli ise, yabancı dil öğretmenleri öğrencilerin bu tutumlarını sınıfa getirdiğini hesaba katmalıdırlar. Öğrencilerin düşünceleri bilinçlerini, öğrenmeye karşı tutumlarını, öğrenme stratejilerini ve politikaları etkiler. Bu araştırmanın amacı üniversite meslek yüksekokulu öğrencilerinin yabancı dil öğrenimine ilişkin düşüncelerini araştırmaktır. Daha spesifik olarak, bu çalışmada aşağıdaki araştırma soruları ele alınmaktadır: Üniversite meslek yüksekokulu öğrencilerinin: 1) İngilizce dil yeteneği, 2) Dil öğreniminin zorluğu, 3) Dil öğreniminin mahiyeti, 4) Öğrenme ve iletişim stratejileri ve 5) Motivasyon ve beklentilerine ilişkin yabancı dil öğrenimi hakkındaki düşünceleri nelerdir? Mevcut çalışma, teorik ve pratik nedenlerden dolayı önemlidir. Çalışma, teorik düzeyde, dünya genelinde dilbilimcilerin yoğun bir şekilde üzerinde durduğu yabancı dil öğrenme düşüncelerine ilişkin araştırma alanına ışık tutuyor. Pratik düzeyde ise, çalışma, yerel araştırma alanındaki ELT

okutmanlarının, İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin yaklaşımlarını ve belirledikleri hedeflerin türünü anlamasında faydalı olacaktır. Ayrıca, bu çalışma, bir Türk üniversite meslek yüksekokulu bağlamında öğrenci düşüncelerine ilişkin yapılan ilk çalışmalar arasındadır.

Alanyazın

Yapılan geniş kapsamlı kaynak taraması baz alındığında, düşüncelerin; eylemde yol gösterici olduğu, ancak yapılan eylemlerden etkilendiği, yaşamın erken dönemlerinde oluşması durumunda değişiminin zor olduğu, kültürel olarak oluştuğu ve kültürel olarak iletildiği, söylenen ifadelerden, niyetlerden ve eylemlerden çıkarılması gerektiği, bu düşüncelerin dinamik olduğu ve zamanla değişmekle kalmadıkları, ancak farklı durumlarda farklı şekillerde de ifade edilebildikleri sonucuna varılabilir. Düşünceler, dil öğrenen kişilerin başarı, başarısızlık ve deneyimlerinde belirleyici bir rol oynamaktadır. Dolayısıyla, öğrencilerin dil öğrenimi hakkındaki düşüncelerine ilişkin bilgi, dil eğitimcilerine öğrencilerinin dil dersleriyle ilgili beklentilerini, sorumluluklarını, başarılarını ve memnuniyetlerini daha iyi anlayabilmelerini sağlayabilmektedir. Sonuç olarak, öğretmenler öğretim hakkında daha bilinçli kararlar alabilir ve öğrenme olanaklarının düzenlenmesine karşı daha hassas bir yaklaşım sergileyebilirler. Son 20 yılda diğerlerinin yanı sıra, Horwitz'in (1987) Dil Öğrenme Envanteri İle İlgili Düşünceler'i (BALLI), düşünceler ve yeterlik arasındaki bağlantıları, kültürlerin ve cinsiyetin düşünceler üzerindeki etkisini, dil öğrencilerinin düşüncelerinin ve strateji kullanımının temelini oluşturan boyutlarını araştırmak için çeşitli ülkelerde yaygın bir şekilde kullanılmıştır. Bahsi geçen envanterle yapılan kapsamlı araştırma, dil öğrenimine ilişkin düşüncelerin konuya özgü olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Öğrencilerin yabancı dil öğrenimiyle ilgili düşüncelerini belirlemeye çalışan ilk araştırmacı olan Horwitz (1988), yaygın olarak öğretilen dilleri öğrenen Amerikan lisans öğrencilerinin düşüncelerini gözden geçirmiştir ve 34 maddelik BALLI envanterini geliştirmiştir. Öğrenci düşüncelerinin tüm dönem boyunca çok az değiştiğini ve öğrencilerin yeni yöntemlere maruz kaldıklarında düşüncelerinin otomatik olarak değişmediğini ortaya çıkardı. Örnek olay incelemesi olarak Yeni Zelanda'da Çinli öğrencilerle yapılan bir araştırmaya göre de öğrencilerin düşünceleri bağlamsal ve durumsal olarak oluşmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, bu düşüncelerin bazıları değişmekte, bazıları ise değişmemektedir. Buna ek olarak, çalışmada düşüncelerin birbirini etkileyebileceği ve bazen de çelişkili olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. İngilizce öğrenen 200 İranlı öğrencinin dil öğrenmeye ilişkin düşünceleri ile öğrenme stratejileri arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmak için yapılan bir başka araştırmaya göre, düşünce becerisi daha fazla olan öğrencilerin daha fazla öğrenme stratejisi kullandığı belirlenmiştir. Buna ek olarak, bu çalışma, öğrencilerin düşüncelerinin belirlenmesinin öğrencilerin stratejilerinin anlaşılması açısından önem taşıdığını ve dil eğitiminin planlanmasında yararlı olduğunu göstermiştir. Öğrencilerin yabancı dil

öğrenimine yönelik görüşlerinde ve özgün bir şekilde elde edilen sözlü ve yazılı verilerde bayanların otantik girdilere daha açık olduğu ve dil öğrenmede yüksek düzeyde bir motivasyon ve strateji kullanımına ve bunun yanı sıra hedef dilde (İspanyolca) daha yüksek bir sosyal etkileşim düzeyine sahip oldukları ortaya çıkmıştır. Yine benzer bir çalışmada (Altan, 2006) da cinsiyete dayalı önemli farklılıklar bulunmuştur. Oysaki bir başka çalışmada (Altan, 2012), bir Türk üniversitesinde İngilizce öğretmen adayları, tam zamanlı 45 erkek ve 73 bayan öğrencinin dil öğrenimine ilişkin düşüncelerinde önemli bir fark bulunamamıştır. Türkiye'deki beş üniversitede 248 yabancı dil öğretmen adayına uygulanan envanterin sonucuna göre, öğretmen adayları dil öğrenme hususunda önyargılı bakmaktadırlar. Öğrencilerin düşüncelerinin belirlenmesi hususunda yabancı dil öğretmenliği eğitmenleri ve öğretmen eğitmenleri; öğrencilerinin belirli öğretim yöntemlerine açık olmalarını ve onlardan maksimum fayda elde etmelerini bekliyorlarsa, bu düşünceleri dikkate almalıdırlar. Yine 470 Türk ortaöğretim öğrencisi ile yapılan bir çalışmaya göre (Oz, 2007), öğrencilerin üst bilişsel bilgileri veya dil öğrenimi hakkındaki düşünceleri; sosyal ve eğitsel konular, yaş, cinsiyet ve dil öğrenme aşamalarında değişkenliğe sahiptir. Üniversite hazırlık sınıfı öğrencilerinin yabancı dil öğrenimiyle ilgili düşüncelerini araştırmak için yapılan bir çalışmada (Şevik, 2013) üniversite hazırlık sınıfı öğrencilerinin çoğu, yabancı dil yeteneğine sahip olmadığını düşünse de, herkesin bir yabancı dil konuşmayı öğrenebileceğine inanmaktadırlar. Dil öğrenimindeki zorlukla ilgili olarak da, İngilizcenin öğrenilmesi zor bir dil olmadığını ve sonunda bu dili çok iyi bir şekilde öğreneceklerini düşünmektedirler. Katılımcılar, yabancı bir dil öğrenmenin püf noktasının çoğunlukla yeni sözcükler öğrenmek olduğu ve yabancı dili yabancı bir ülkede öğrenmenin daha iyi olduğu hususunda hem fikir olmuşlardır. Öğrenme stratejileri ile ilgili olarak ise, yabancı dil öğreniminde çok tekrar ve pratik yapmanın ve mükemmel telaffuz ve aksanla konuşmanın önemli olduğuna inanmaktadırlar. Ayrıca, İngilizceyi iyi öğrenmelerinin iyi bir iş bulmaları konusunda faydalı olacağını düşünmektedirler. Sonuç olarak, araştırma, üniversite hazırlık sınıfı öğrencilerinin düşüncelerinin önceki araştırmalara göre hem benzer hem de farklı olduğunu ortaya koymuştur.

Yöntem

Bu makale, Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesi (MAKÜ) Gölhisar Meslek Yüksekokulu ve Gölhisar Sağlık Hizmetleri Meslek Yüksekokulu bünyesinde iki yıllık ön lisans programlarında öğrenim gören 296 meslek yüksekokulu öğrencisinin dil öğrenmeye ilişkin düşüncelerini bir durum tespit çalışması olarak incelemektedir. Katılımcılar 2015/16 eğitim ve öğretim yılında Gölhisar Meslek Yüksekokulu ve Gölhisar Sağlık Hizmetleri Meslek Yüksekokulu'nun farklı bölümlerine kayıtlıydı.

296 katılımcının; 127'i kız (% 42,91) ve 169 erkek (% 57,09) öğrencilerden oluşuyordu. Bu çalışmada kullanılan envanter yabancı dil öğrenen öğrenciler için BALLI'dir. BALLI, öğrenci düşünceleri üzerine yapılan araştırmalarda en çok kullanılan ve bilinen envanterdir ve katılımcıların aynı fikirde olma derecelerini belirten, öğrencilere yönelik bir dizi ifade içermektedir. Altan (2006, 2012) bu envanteri iki çalışmasında da kullanmıştır. Bu likert ölçek başlangıçta tutumları ölçmek için geliştirilmiş olsa da, kapsamı düşünceler de dahil olmak üzere daha geniş bilişsel ve duyuşsal değişkenlere genişletilmiştir. Veriler, envanterin 2015/16 öğretim yılının sonuna doğru 312 öğrenciye dağıtılmasıyla elde edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, araştırmada sadece 296 envanter kullanılmaya uygun bulunmuştur. Öğretim görevlileri ders saatlerinde envanteri uygulamışlar ve elde edilen bilgileri özetleyip tabloştandırdıktan sonra, BALLI maddeleri için betimleyici değerler hesaplamışlardır

Sonuçlar

Katılımcıların % 86,5'i dili çocukların yetişkinlerden daha iyi öğrendiklerine inanmaktadır. Bu çalışmaya katılanların % 93,6'sı herkesin yabancı bir dili konuşmayı öğrenebileceğine inandığı halde, yalnızca %25'lik bir kesim, Türk halkının yabancı dil öğrenmede iyi olduğunu kabul etmektedir. Dil öğrenme zorluğuyla ilgili olarak, katılımcıların yarısı İngilizce öğrenmenin çok zor olmadığına ve en sonunda konuşmayı öğreneceğine inanıyor. Buna ek olarak, üniversite meslek yüksekokulu öğrencilerinin yaklaşık üçte biri genel olarak dil öğreniminin zorluğu konusunda kararsızdırlar. Dil öğreniminin mahiyetine gelince, büyük bir çoğunluk (%87) yurt dışında bir yabancı dil öğrenmenin daha kolay? olduğuna ve yabancı bir dili öğrenmenin püf noktasının kelime öğrenmek olduğuna inanmaktadır (%89). %81,8'i ise İngilizcenin yapısının Türkçeden farklı olduğunu düşünmektedir. Öğrenme ve iletişim stratejileri ile ilgili olarak, katılımcıların neredeyse tamamı (%98) tekrar etme ve pratik yapmanın önemli olduğuna inanmaktadır. Katılımcıların çoğu (%69,6) dil laboratuvarında pratik yapmanın önemini vurgulamıştır. Çok büyük bir çoğunluk (%81,1) mükemmel bir aksanın ve telaffuzun önem taşıdığını belirtmiştir. Katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu (%92) gelecekte İngilizceyi kullanmak için çok fırsatı olacağına ve %94'ü ise İngilizce öğrenmenin iyi bir iş bulmalarına yardımcı olacağına inanmaktadır. Son olarak, %68,2'lik kesim, Türk halkının yabancı bir dil öğrenmenin bir zorunluluk haline geldiğine dair bir inanca sahip olduğu hususunda mutabık kalmıştır.

Tartışma ve Sonuç

Çalışmanın amacı, yabancı dil öğrenen üniversiteli meslek yüksekokulu Türk öğrencilerinin yabancı dil öğrenimiyle ilgili genel düşüncelerini araştırmak, bunları mevcut literatür ışığında

tartışmak ve bölgesel olarak yapılan arařtırmalarda bir boşluęu doldurmaktır. Elde edilen sonuçlar, meslek yüksekokulu öğrencilerinin; İngilizce öğrenmeye ilişkin motivasyon ve beklentiler, yabancı dil öğreniminin mahiyeti ve iletişim stratejileri hususunda olumlu ve gerçekçi düşünceleri olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuçlar, üniversite meslek yüksekokulu öğrencilerin motivasyon ve beklentilerinin yüksek olduğunu ve İngilizcenin öneminin farkında olduklarını göstermesine rağmen, sınıf içi uygulama ve alışkanlıklarının düşünceleriyle uyuşmadığını göstermektedir. Katılımcıların düşünceleri ve çalışma becerileri arasında bir uyumsuzluk vardır. Katılımcı sayısının azlığı ve tek araştırma alanı nedeniyle, bu araştırmanın bulgularını Türkiye'deki üniversite meslek yüksekokullarının tamamına genellemek mümkün değildir. Bununla birlikte, bazı çıkarımlarda bulunmak ve öneriler getirmek mümkündür. Meslek yüksekokulu öğrencilerinin düşüncelerinin ve bu düşüncelerin yabancı dil öğrenmeye olası etkilerinin araştırılması; farkındalığın artırılmasına, beklentilerinin karşılanmasına ve öğrencinin kendini tanıması ve özerkliğini sağlamasının yanı sıra daha etkin yabancı dil öğrenme davranışı geliştirilmesini sağlayabilir. Bu araştırma, üniversite meslek yüksekokullarındaki İngilizce okutmanları için, sınıf içi uygulamalar ve öğrenci düşünceleri arasındaki uyumsuzlukları engelleme ve öğretim yöntemlerinin düzenlenmesi konusunda kılavuz görevi görebilir. Eğitimciler, yabancı dil müfredatını tasarlarken, haftalık ders programlarını belirleyip dört dil becerisinin öğretimi konusunda dengeyi sağlarken öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenimiyle alakalı düşüncelerini dikkate alabilirler. Son olarak, Türk üniversitelerinde, meslek yüksekokulu öğrencilerinin düşünceleri hakkında genellemelere yapmak, daha geniş bir yelpazeyi kapsamak ve öğrenci düşüncelerini farklı bağlamlarda karşılaştırmak için daha geniş arařtırmalar yapılmalıdır.