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Language Learning Attitudes: Ingrained Or Shaped In Time?¹

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ABSTRACT

Language learning constitutes an essential need in today's world. From academic to social settings, humans need to communicate in a different language to survive in their target community. However, despite this increasing importance of language, it is difficult to say we have learned a foreign language successfully on a large scale since there are a lot of factors in language learning process. Language attitudes, one of these factors, influence this process both positively and negatively, depending on how we view learning a foreign language. Therefore, this study deals with the issue of language attitudes to uncover learners' language conceptions and probable effects on their learning. Moreover, this study aims to reveal the potential positive or negative role of past learning experiences on the development of language beliefs. Thus, 35 university students in their 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th years constitute the participants of the study. Based on mixed research design, the study is comprised of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were gathered through Attitude Scale towards English Course, and the analyses were performed with Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS 17.0 version for Windows). The qualitative data were collected from students' reports of their own autobiographies regarding their previous language learning experiences in elementary, secondary, high school and university years, and were subjected to the content analysis. The study showed language attitudes from behavioural, cognitive and affective perspectives and found out different factors in shaping students' learning conceptions.

Key Words: Language learning attitude, Adult education

1. Introduction

Learning dominates our lives, and it is a lifelong endeavour. To get most out of learning, it becomes rather important to determine how we view the learning process and what learning means to us. On account of the fact that each student is a unique individual, s/he develops different conceptions with respect to learning, which adds variety to personal definitions. In general sense, learning means gaining knowledge and skills and taking a step for change. Jarvis (2006) conceives learning as a combination of body and mind, which integrates the experiences into the individual's biography and

¹ This study was developed from PhD dissertation titled "Getting Inside The Mental Lives Of Students: Learned Helplessness, Problem Solving Skills And Lifelong Learning Tendency In EFL Context" by Dişlen Dağgöl, 2015 (Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Gül den İLİN, Çukurova University, English Language Teaching Program)

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contributes to changes. "Learning conceptions are beliefs and views on learning and related phenomena, that is to say, conceptions of oneself as a learner, learning objectives and the task division between students, teachers and fellow students in the learning process" (Marambe, Athuraliya, Vermunt & Boshuizen, 2007, p.751). Individuals display differences in their conceptions of behaviour, learning and knowledge (Entwistle and Entwistle, 1992; King, et al., 1983; Ryan 1984; Sternberg, 1985; Vermunt and van Riswijk, 1988 in Burnett, Pillay & Dart, 2003). Their personal constructs as regards learning vary. These variances encourage learners to voice their preferences related to learning types, which determines how they will benefit from learning. Conceptions held by the students are considered as a part of developmental process which may lead to motivation or inhibition (Burnett, Pillay & Dart, 2003). Richardson (2000) support the idea that students' adoption of a study approach could be facilitated or constrained by their conceptions of learning. Blake and Smith (2007) propose that better understanding of learning conceptions provides a chance for improvement of student experience. It is also important in language learning. Tanaka and Ellis (2003) view student beliefs as key a component that make a contribution to individual learner differences in second language learning, and they refer to some studies (Ellis, 1994; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992, 1993) to show that learner beliefs affect learners' actions, in particular, selection of learning strategies, and their emotional states such as confidence and anxiety, and thus influence both linguistic outcomes (i.e., changes in competence, knowledge, and skills in some aspect of the target language) and non-linguistic outcomes (i.e., changes in reactions to the target language, the situation, and/or factors associated with the target language). Conceptions of learning shape students' language learning habits. How they view or deem learning provides them a direction to follow on the path to learning. Concerning the issue, Rieger (2009) quotes Horwitz (1988) to show that knowing students' beliefs as regards language learning can enable teachers to gain insight into their students' expectation, engagement, accomplishment and contentment with respect to their language classes. Based on their personal constructs or theories, students act accordingly and make their language learning process more meaningful. These personal assumptions relating to learning raise students' awareness, and students who are conscious of themselves and learning process are more likely to construct their language learner identities. Davis (2003) also notes the role of beliefs in determining the behaviour, and the significance of beliefs in language learning. Similarly, Piquemal and Renaud (2006) assert that if teachers and researchers hold greater awareness in students' beliefs and attitudes towards foreign language learning, they can boost learning strategies appealing to these beliefs better. Given such concepts as belief, attitude and behaviour together within the same context, it is safe to say that these notions influence each other. To make it clear, Rott (2002) propounds the interrelation among cognition, emotion and action:

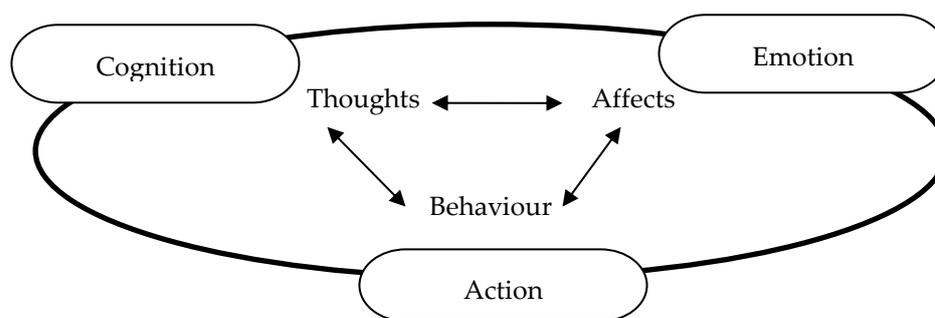


Figure 1. The Interaction between cognition, emotion and action

Figure 1 offers the interaction between cognition, emotion and action in a general sense. Additionally, Rott (2002) puts forth a more detailed and specific model that gives insight into the interrelation between cognition, emotion and action in higher education:

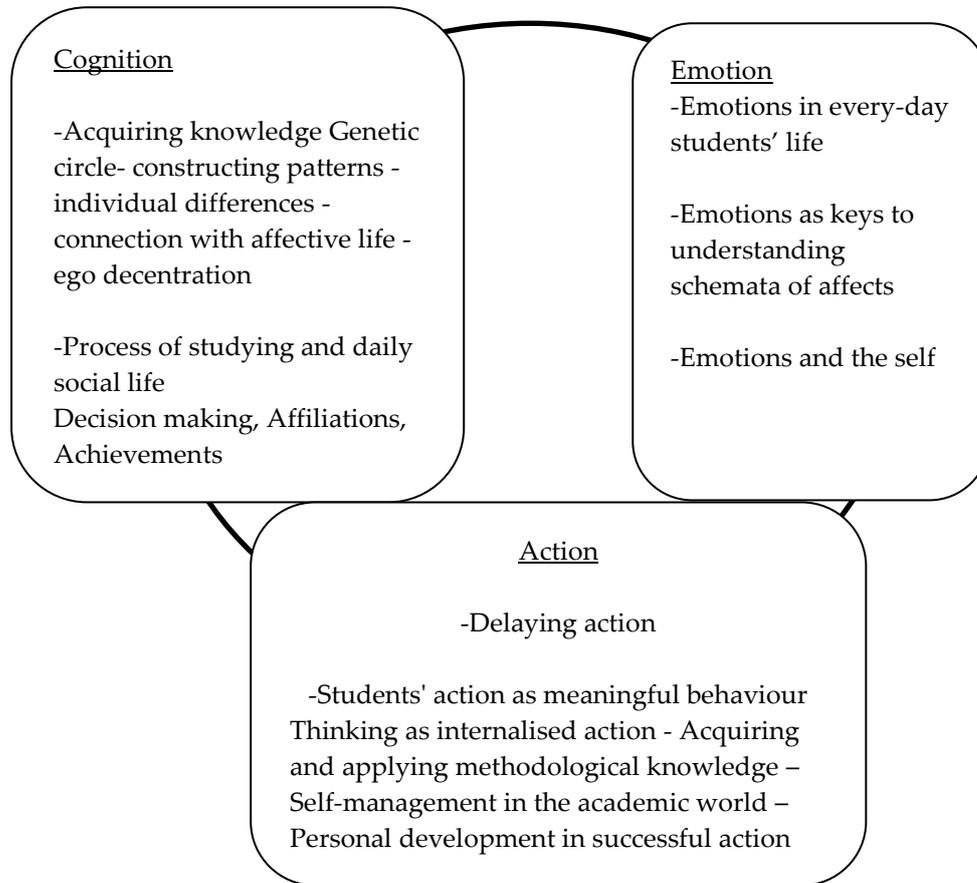


Figure 2. The interaction between cognition, emotion and action in higher education

As it can be contemplated from the figure, students pass through different cognitive, affective and behavioural processes in their learning, and what they experience in these processes influence one another. Therefore, it can be stated that student thinking or student beliefs do not stand isolated from various factors included in learning. Student thinking occupies an undeniable place in learning since it can act like a determinant of students' decisions, stance, plans and even their success and failure. Therefore, providing insight into student beliefs can contribute to building a sound, conscious and efficient learning environment, even solving various problems like learned helplessness in learning continuum. Since beliefs and attitudes can show differences in different contexts and they can get affected from various factors, the present study addresses the following questions to add a different perspective to the issue:

1. How do university students view learning English from behavioural, cognitive and affective dimensions?
2. Does the year of university education influence the language learning attitudes?
3. What kinds of factors take part in shaping language learning attitudes?

2. Method

The present study, descriptive in nature, utilized both quantitative and qualitative data. The participants were 35 students in their 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th years at university. In the study, the data were collected through Attitude Scale towards English Course and students' autobiography reports regarding previous language learning experiences. The scale constituted the quantitative side of the study, and the autobiographies formed the qualitative part of the study. Quantitative data were analysed through SPSS programme, and all qualitative data were subjected to content analysis.

3. Findings

3.1. Findings from the Attitude Scale towards English Course

Attitude Scale towards English Course (Aydoslu, 2005) is comprised of three dimensions as "behavioural", "cognitive" and "affective". Each dimension sheds light into the students' actions, beliefs and emotions regarding English. Attitudes bear importance since attitudes like knowledge, belief and values, are learnt and developed, and combined into the people's biographies and remembered, which constitutes a part of learning (Jarvis, 2006). Likewise, positive or negative attitudes and perceptions of a certain language can leave a noteworthy impact upon the performance in that language (Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013). In this study, each dimension was analysed separately to render the analysis process more concise and systematic, as shown below.

3.1.1. Behavioural Dimension

The behavioural dimension of the attitude scale consists of five items, four of which are positive statements and one of which implies a negative statement in terms of their behavioural attempts in learning English. The percentages and the frequencies of the participants' responses are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Attitudes towards English in terms of Behavioural Dimension

ITEMS	Completely agree		Agree		Not sure/ Undecided		Disagree		Completely disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
2 I enter websites where I can use English	11	31,4	12	34,3	5	14,3	5	14,3	2	5,7
3 I listen to songs in English	15	42,9	11	31,4	3	8,6	3	8,6	3	8,6
15 I watch television channels broadcasting in English	9	25,7	10	28,6	6	17,1	6	17,1	4	11,4
19 I play games in English	8	22,9	9	25,7	7	20,0	7	20,0	4	11,4
30 I do not waste my time by studying English	7	20,0	1	2,9	0,0	0,0	4	11,4	23	65,7

The first four items in the Table 1 present what kind of activities students get engaged while learning English. These also constitute some reflections of their study habits. For instance, approximately 66 % of the students enter websites where they can use English. However, only seven students do not go online to use English. Thus, a great majority of the students seem to benefit from websites that give them opportunity to use English. Likewise, more than half of the students (n=24) listen to songs in

English. As for the 15th item, nearly 54 % of the students claim to watch television channels broadcasting in English. When it comes to playing games, about one fourth of the students (22.9 %) displayed complete agreement, and roughly 26 % of the students stated to play games in English. However, 20 % of the students were indecisive about playing games in English. One third of the students do not appear to prefer playing games in the target language. Mean score of this item is 3.29, which shows they do not have clear choices for playing games. The last item is a negative statement. Only one fourth of the students appear not to waste their time by studying English. No student had an undecided view for the item. In contrast, about 77 % of the students do not hold the belief in wasting time by studying English. Therefore, students can be regarded to have positive attitudes towards English from a behavioural perspective.

3.1.2. Cognitive Dimension

The cognitive dimension of the attitude scale is comprised of four items. All items included in this dimension are positive statements. Frequencies and percentages of the students' cognitive attitude towards English were given in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Students' Attitudes towards English in terms of Cognitive Dimension

ITEMS	Completely agree		Agree		Not sure/ Undecided		Disagree		Completely disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
10 I think knowing English will increase job opportunities	33	94,3	2	5,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
16 I want to spend more time to broaden my knowledge in English	28	80,0	7	20,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
21 I believe I will use English in a lot of ways in my life	28	80,0	5	14,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2	5,7
24 Subjects covered in English lessons are important	24	68,6	9	25,7	2	5,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0

Table 2 provides students' beliefs and thoughts towards English to some extent. It is apparent that all of the students think that English will increase their job opportunities. It also hints at their high level of extrinsic motivation. Likewise, all of the participants want to spend more time to broaden their knowledge in English. None of the students showed disagreement or undecided views towards the benefits of English for job-related chances and will to devote more time to improving English. Moreover, 80 % of the students completely agreed with the belief that they will use English in a lot of ways in their lives. Only two students displayed complete disagreement with their prospective usage of English in various ways in their lives. Therefore, majority of the participants seem to have positive beliefs for the practical side of the target language in their lives. As for the significance of the English lessons, roughly all of the students view subjects covered in English lessons as important. Only two students have unclear perceptions about the importance of those subjects. However, none of the students have negative cognitions for their significance, which shows that students are aware of the importance of English lessons and they do not deem them as redundant.

3.1.3. Affective Dimension

The affective dimension of the attitude scale involves more items than the other two dimensions. The items reflect students' emotive stances and wishes as regards learning English. Seven items are positive, and 14 items are negative statements. Table 3 below propounds the frequencies and percentages of the students' responses pertaining to the affective respect of the attitude scale.

Table 3. Students' Attitudes towards English in terms of Affective Dimension

ITEMS	Completely agree		Agree		Not sure/ Undecided		Disagree		Completely disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
1 I like English lesson	26	74,3	7	20,0	1	2,9	1	2,9	0,0	0,0
4 I am afraid of English lesson	3	8,6	1	2,9	0,0	0,0	11	31,5	20	57,1
5 English is a difficult lesson	1	2,9	7	20,0	2	5,7	8	22,9	17	48,6
6 Time passes quickly in English lesson	15	42,9	15	42,9	4	11,4	0,0	0,0	1	2,9
7 English is an enjoyable lesson	19	54,3	15	42,9	0,0	0,0	1	2,9	0	0,0
8 If it were possible, I would want to take another lesson instead of English	1	2,9	2	5,7	1	2,9	8	22,9	23	65,7
9 I do not watch movies in English without Turkish subtitles or dubbing	6	17,1	6	17,1	3	8,6	14	40,0	6	17,1
11 I read story books in English	4	11,4	11	31,4	4	11,5	11	31,4	5	14,3
12 I abstain from English exam	2	5,7	6	17,1	2	5,7	8	22,9	17	48,6
13 I find English lesson boring	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2	5,7	9	25,7	24	68,6
14 I do not enjoy studying English course-books	2	5,7	1	2,9	2	5,7	12	34,3	18	51,4
17 I am against giving English lessons down from the first stage of Elementary School	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1	2,9	4	11,4	30	85,7
18 I hate English lesson	0,0	0,0	1	2,9	1	2,9	3	8,6	30	85,7
20 It is quite unnecessary for me to learn English	0,0	0,0	0	0,0	0,0	0,0	4	11,4	31	88,6
22 English lesson is a waste of time for me	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	5	14,3	30	85,7
23 I get happy if English class hours are decreased	0	0,0	1	2,9	1	2,9	9	25,7	24	68,6
25 I do not like speaking in English in English lessons	2	5,7	3	8,6	3	8,6	10	28,6	17	48,6
26 Studying English bothers me	0	0,0	1	2,9	1	2,9	10	28,6	23	65,7
27 I try to make foreign friends with whom I can correspond in English	9	25,7	12	34,3	7	20,0	4	11,4	3	8,6
28 I do not want to miss English class	21	60,0	12	34,3	2	5,7	0	0,0	0	0,0
29 I take pleasure in doing assignments for English class	15	42,9	10	28,6	5	14,3	4	11,4	1	2,9

As it is obvious from Table 3, roughly all of the participants like English lesson. Only one student showed disagreement with this notion, and one student provided undecided posture to the idea of liking English lesson. Likewise, only four students stated that they are afraid of English lesson. Approximately 88 % of the students remarked that they do not have a fear of English lesson. Unlike the first item, no student displayed unclear perceptions in terms of fear. In a similar manner, none of the students showed complete agreement with the issue of hatred against English lesson as stated in the 18th item. Only one student agreed to hate English lesson. However, nearly 94 % of the students noted that they do not have the sense of hatred against English lesson. As for the difficulty of the lesson, a quarter of the participants regarded English as hard. Similarly, nearly one fourth of the students (22,9 %) manifested disagreement with the difficulty of the English lesson. However, about half of the participants (48,6 %) took a complete disagreement attitude against this issue. Accordingly, 30 out of 35 students felt that time passes quickly in English lesson. Only one student completely disagreed with this feeling. Therefore, it can be said that students enjoy English classes in a general sense. This idea is congruent with the 7th item. Roughly all of the participants (98,2 %) deem English class as enjoyable. Therefore, 94,3 % of the students voiced that they do not want to miss English class in the 28th item. All these positive emotive stances are in parallel with the 8th item. Only three students noted that they would want to take another lesson instead of English if it were possible. However, more than half of the students (65,7 %) exhibited complete disagreement with this issue, which means that they are pleased with English class. It is consistent with the 23rd item since almost all of the students (94,3 %) do not get happy if English class hours are decreased. Only one student agreed decline in English class hours would make him/her happy, which is coherent with the 22nd item on account of the fact that students view English as necessary. None of the students feel English lesson as a waste of time. In parallel with the 20th item, none of the students deemed English quite redundant for them to learn. All these responses reflect the signs of motivation in the participants. Therefore, approximately all of the participants (97,1 %) are in favour of giving English lessons down from the first stage of Elementary school as it is obvious from the 17th item. None of the students stood against the early start of English lessons in Elementary School. Only one student had an unclear perception regarding the issue. By the same token, almost all of the students (94,3 %) did not find English lesson boring as it is clear from the 13th item. None of the participant students considered English class as boring. When it comes to exams, almost one fourth of the students (22,8 %) specified that they abstain from English exam. However, more than half of the students (n=25) did not have the sense of avoidance from English exam. As for coursebooks, less than a quarter of the students did not enjoy studying English coursebooks. It means that a majority of the students (85,7 %) take a positive posture to studying English coursebooks. With respect to studying English in a general sense, nearly all students (94,3 %) do not feel that studying English bothers them. Only one student finds studying English bothering. Moreover, more than half of the students (71,5 %) take pleasure out of doing assignments for English class. However, nearly 15 % of the students do not enjoy preparing assignments for English class. When it comes to speaking during English class, about 15 % of the students do not like speaking English in English class. However, 27 out of 35 students do not feel negative against speaking English in class. Only three students are indecisive concerning the issue. Students' responses regarding the affective aspect of the attitude scale displayed consistency among themselves, and students seem to have a positive attitude towards English from an affective angle.

The attitude scale represents students' general stance towards English. Higher scores in the scale refer to more positive attitude among students. Four different groups (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year university students) constituted the participants of the study; therefore, Kruskal Wallis analysis was carried out so as to see if there was a statistically significant difference among four groups in terms of their attitude to the target language. Since the number of the students was low in each group, the non-parametric test, Kruskal Wallis analysis, was applied in the study. The findings of Kruskal Wallis analysis were provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Findings Students' Attitudes towards English

Groups	N	Mean Rank	X ²	df	P
1 st year	10	17,20	2,325	3	.508
2 nd year	11	16,05			
3 rd year	6	23,67			
4 th year	8	17,44			

Table 4 displays the results of the Kruskal Wallis analysis for the language attitudes of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students. The findings display that students in different years at university do not have a statistically significant difference in terms of their attitude towards English ($p > .05$). However, there are differences in their mean ranks. Thus, considering the mean ranks, 3rd year students seem to have the highest positive attitude among all the groups. They are followed by 4th and 1st year students, respectively. Yet, 1st and 4th year students do not show big difference in their mean scores. According to the table, 2nd year students seem to have the lowest score. In addition to attitudes, what students experienced in learning English during their school years offer a different perspective due to the fact that "it is through our experiences that we learn and continue to learn and develop the art of thinking which, in its turn, affects both our knowing and the ways in which we go about thinking" (Jarvis, 2007, p.89).

3.2. Findings from the Autobiography Reports

Students were asked to write their own autobiographies as regards their language education from elementary school to university in order to provide a general picture and ground for the study. Students presented their views and experiences as well as the factors influencing their language learning process. Each stage of their education was dealt with separately. Excerpts from students' mouths were also provided and transferred as they were reported. Table 5 below propounds the findings concerning their elementary school years.

Table 5. Findings of the Autobiography Regarding Elementary School Years

n	TITLES	THEMES	F
1	Positive	<u>Exterior</u>	
		• Positive teacher role	5
		• Enjoyable process	2
		• Effective education	1
		<u>Interior</u>	
		• Positive attitude	5
		• Intrinsic motivation	2
		• Success	2
		• Background	2
		• Vocabulary improvement	1

		• Persistence	1
		• Curiosity	1
		• Personal effort	1
2	Negative	External	
		• Unfruitful process	6
		• Insufficient process	4
		• Inadequate experience	4
		• Teacher from another field	3
		• Negative teacher role	3
		• Ineffective education	2
		• Unconscious education	1
		Internal	
		• Fear	3
		• Learnt helplessness	1
		• Failure	1
		• Lack of effort	1
		• Lack of progress	1
		• Lack of motivation	1
		• Difficulty in pronunciation	1
3	Neutral	• Vocabulary learning	3
		• Easy subjects	1
		• Normal education	1
		• Standard education	1
Total			61

Concerning the elementary school experiences in term of language education, students voiced positive, negative and neutral ideas. Positive opinions include positive teacher role with five citations.

Excerpt 1: *"I made my first acquaintance with English when I was in the fourth grade. I got my first education and gained my first vocabulary then. I learnt a lot of words since I was eager to learn a new language. Our teacher made us love English and enabled us to overcome our prejudice."*

Some students view language education as enjoyable (2 citations) and effective (1 citation). These form the external components. As to the positive internal elements, positive attitude (5 citations) presents itself in the first place. Some students claim to have intrinsic motivation (2 citations) towards English. Two citations also view elementary school education as a good background in terms of English learning. Some students regard themselves as successful (2 citations), persistent (1 citation) and curious (1 citation) in the elementary school. In addition, one citation expresses vocabulary improvement and another citation hints at putting personal effort in learning English in those years. When it comes to negative reflections, some students deem elementary school years in terms of English education as unfruitful (6 citations), insufficient (4 citations), ineffective (2 citations) and unconscious (1 citation).

Excerpt 2: *"I got very little education in elementary school; it was even scarce."*

Moreover, a few students assert not to have much experience (4 citations), which mainly states that their knowledge was limited to education at school. Negative teacher role (3 citations) and teacher from another field (3 citations) are among the unpleasant experiences from the students' standpoints.

As for the internal negative elements, three citations belong to the concept of fear in learning. One student stated to have learned helplessness in elementary school. That is to say, he/she claimed to believe that he/she could never learn English due to the differences from Turkish. Other than these, failure, lack of effort, lack of progress, lack of motivation and difficulty in pronunciation, each cited once, constitute the negative memories from elementary school. Apart from positive and negative experiences, students also stated neutral standpoints. To illustrate, vocabulary learning (3 citations) was part of the education and the subjects were easy (1 citation). One citation refers to its being standard and another citation hints at its being a normal education. However, considering all these from a whole picture, it is obvious that negative views or experiences surpass the positive ones for language learning process in elementary school. Students' perspectives concerning secondary school were addressed in the following table.

Table 6. Findings of Autobiography Regarding Secondary School Years

n	TITLES	THEMES	F
1	Positive	<u>External</u>	
		• Positive teacher role	5
		• Enjoyable process	2
		<u>Personal</u>	
		• Positive attitude	3
		• Motivation	1
		• Vocabulary improvement	1
• Success	1		
2	Negative	• Not better than elementary	1
		• Teacher from another field	1
3	Neutral	• Normal	1
Total			16

Table 6 exhibits the students' responses regarding their secondary school years in terms of language education. Some students claim to have positive teacher influence (5 citations) and see that process as enjoyable (2 citations).

Excerpt 3: *"When I moved from elementary to secondary school, I got bored from school. However, I met such a teacher that she reintegrated me into the school. The teacher's contribution to my love for English and school was high. The teacher loved me much; as she loved me, I loved English more. I gained achievement. I loved English so much that I said I would be an English teacher".*

Furthermore, three citations refer to positive attitude towards English in those years. Motivation, vocabulary improvement and success, each cited one time, take place among the positive personal experiences. As for the negative standpoints, two unpleasant citations are seen in the list. One bore the belief that secondary school language education was not better than the elementary school education. And the other citation was about the teacher from another field just as identified in elementary school analyses above. As a neutral opinion, only one citation sees that stage as normal. In contrast to the elementary school education, positive ideas are more than the negative ones. In addition to elementary and secondary school educations, findings for the high school experiences are given in the following table.

Table 7. Findings of Autobiography Regarding High School Years

n	TITLES	THEMES	F
1	Positive	<u>External</u>	
		• Positive teacher role	8
		• Effective process	5
		• Positive reinforcement	2
		• Increase in class hours	1
		• Stories	1
		• Word games	1
		• Positive peer effect	1
		<u>Personal</u>	
		• Positive attitude	4
		• Success	2
		• Awareness	2
		• Background	2
		• Effort	2
		• Improvement	1
		• Sentence formation	1
		• Practice	1
		• Perseverance	1
		2	Negative
• Negative teacher role	6		
• Unfruitful process	5		
• Inadequate experience	3		
• Lack of progress	2		
• Insufficient education	2		
• Ineffective education	2		
• Disconnection	1		
• Decrease in class hours	1		
• No English in the 1st semester	1		
• Limited, simple and routine subjects	1		
<u>Internal</u>			
• Lack of motivation	4		
• Negative attitude	2		
• State of forgetting	1		
• No study	1		
• Study only for exam	1		
• Lack of effort	1		
• Fear	1		
3	Neutral		
		• Weekly quizzes	1
		• Games	1
		• Intense process	1
		• Retrieval of what was forgotten	1
		• Assignments	1
		• Difficulty	1
		• Listening practice	1
		• Negative reinforcement for using Turkish	1
		Total	

Students' responses related with their high school experiences in terms of language learning are explored in Table 7 above. The priority belongs to positive teacher role (8 citations) among the pleasant experiences. Five citations reflect high school language educations as an effective process.

Excerpt 4: *"I studied in preparation class in high school. I can say that I loved learning English in high school. I think that I have a good educational background due to the education I received in high school. I thought I would not be able to succeed when I started studying in preparation class. However, what encouraged me was the teachers' motivation. The education was quite effective. I took English class 24 hours a week."*

In addition, students deem positive reinforcement (2 citations), positive peer effect (1 citation), increase in class hours (1 citation), stories (1 citation) and word games (1 citation) as favourable components for high school education. Regarding the internal positive elements, it is apparent that students had positive attitude (4 citations). Some students seem to think themselves as successful (2 citations) and aware (2 citations) of importance of English in the high school. Their responses also refer to the effort (2 citations) made, perseverance (1 citation) shown and improvement (1 citation) experienced during those years. Two citations indicate high school education as a good background, as well. Apart from these, students appear to consider making own sentences to self-check (1 citation) and practice as favourable items of high school education. As in positive views, teacher role (6 citations) is located in the first place in negative views.

Excerpt 5: *"I met an English teacher at high school, and I took a dislike to English. I started to have a low opinion of it."*

Another student claimed that their teacher at high school told them English would not be of service to them.

Some students perceive high school education as an unfruitful (5 citations), ineffective (2 citations) and insufficient (2 citations) process. In addition, students hold the belief that they had inadequate experience (3 citations) and lack of progress (2 citations) at high school. One citation also hints at the sense of disconnection at high school. Together with these, decrease in class hours (1 citation) and simple, routine and limited subjects (1 citation) take place among the unfavourable views concerning high school. In addition to external factors, internal elements include lack of motivation (4 citations), negative attitude (2 citations), forgetting (1 citation), lack of study (1 citation) and diligence (1 citation), and fear (1 citation). From neutral perspective, the general conditions were expressed such as ten-hour English classes, weekly quizzes, game-playing, intensity of the process, retrieval of what was forgotten, listening practice and negative reinforcement for using Turkish in the classroom, each cited once. In total, the number of negative and positive points of views is almost the same, as opposed to elementary school and secondary school. Additionally, what university education was like was put to analysis in the following table.

Table 8. Findings of Autobiography Regarding University Years

n	TITLES	THEMES	F
1	Positive	<u>External</u>	
		• Positive teacher role	5
		• Foreign instructor	4
		• Effective process	3
		• Sufficient for General English	1

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice with songs 1 • Translation 1 • Online chat 1 • Positive peer effect 1 • Enjoyable process 1 • Focus on different skills 1 • Use of different techniques 1 • Vocabulary improvement 1 • Benefit from audio-visual materials 1 	
		Internal	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness 3 • Positive attitude 2 • Endeavour 2 • Hopeful to have experience though Erasmus 1 	
2	Negative	Exterior	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate experience 3 • Limited class hours 2 • Unfruitful process 2 • Insufficient education 1 • Insufficient for academic career 1 • No benefit until the change of teacher 1 • Lack of money 1 • Inhibitory classroom environment 1 • Negative teacher role 1 	
		Personal	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear 1 • Lack of motivation 1 • Difficulty 1 • Low level of English 1 • Little attendance 1 • Lack of progress 1 • Lack of effort 1 	
3	Neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories 1 • Translation 1 • State of planning 1 • Online study 1 • Study-set 1 • Practice through EU projects 1 • Attendance for a course 1 • Benefit from internet 1 • Movies/animations 1 	
Total			59

Students expressed positive, negative and neutral views for their university education as in the other stages of education examined above. With the frame of positive stances, favourable teacher role (5 citations) is seen at the beginning of the list in the university education, as well. It may indicate that students place a high value on teacher influence. In a similar manner, some students view foreign instructor (4 citations) as a positive element.

Excerpt 6: "I can say that university became a turning point for me. It became easier via foreign instructors at university to learn the language that I had already tried to learn through my efforts by translating songs and watching sub-titled movies previously."

University education is regarded as effective (3 citations), enjoyable (1 citation) and sufficient for General English knowledge (1 citation). Furthermore, practice with songs, online chat, translation, positive peer effect, focus on different skills, use of different techniques, vocabulary improvement and benefit from audio-visual materials constitute the favourable memories from university. From the internal perspective, more awareness of its importance (3 citations), positive attitude towards English (2 citations), endeavour (2 citations) and hope to gain experience through Erasmus programme (1 citations) compose positive reflections of university education. When it comes to negative impressions, three citations mirror inadequate experience at university in terms of language learning. Limited class hours (2 citations) and lack of money (1 citation) are also perceived as negative.

Excerpt 7: "We forgot or our English level decreased until university years since we did not have contexts to use English and we did not practice it after high school. However, at university we realized that a different world was waiting for us; we recognized the value of English; however, we had to give secondary importance to English owing to the confine of 2-hour English a week and lack of money."

Some students deem language education at university as unfruitful (2 citations) and insufficient (1 citation) process, and inadequate especially for academic career (1 citation). What is more, inhibitory classroom environment (1 citation) owing to negative peer effect and negative teacher effect (1 citation) were given a space among the negative conceptions. Fear, lack of motivation, having difficulty, seeing English class as a waste of time due to low level of education presented at university, and therefore little attendance to the English classes, lack of progress and lack of effort display themselves as negative personal components though they were cited one time. Neutral views picture the general situations including using stories, translation, movies, internet, study-set, online study, attending for a language course, making planning and practising with EU projects, each cited once. These actions may hint at autonomous learning at university. As in secondary school, students' positive views appear to increase at university and get higher than negative ones. In addition to general picture at different stages of their education, factors influencing their language learning process were covered in the following table, as well.

Table 9. Factors Affecting Students' Language Learning

n	TITLES	THEMES	F
1	Contributing Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • Family • Friends • Effort • Practice • Resources and materials • Movies • Translation • Absence of fear • Songs • Dreams • Curiosity 	10 9 3 3 3 3 3 2 1 1 1 1

		• Reading	1
		• Vocabulary improvement	1
		• Games	1
		• Writing	1
		• Self-confidence	1
		• Internet	1
2	Debilitative Factors	• Family	2
		• Teacher	2
		• State school	1
		• Lack of practice	1
		• Book	1
		• Friends	1
		• Education system	1
		• Lack of people knowing English around	1
		• Limited, simple and routine subjects	1
Total			56

Concerning the factors having an impact upon the students' learning process, they voiced both contributing and debilitative factor. On the one hand, contribution factors are comprised of teacher (10 citations), family (9 citations), friends (3 citations), effort (3 citations), practice (3 citations), resources and materials (3 citations), movies (3 citations), translation (2 citations), absence of fear (1 citation), self-confidence (1 citation), dreams (1 citation), curiosity (1 citation), reading (1 citation), writing (1 citation), vocabulary improvement (1 citation), games (1 citation), songs (1 citation) and internet (1 citation). On the other hand, debilitative factors consist of family (2 citations), teacher (2 citations), studying at state school (1 citation), lack of practice (1 citation), friends (1 citation), insufficiency of using books alone (1 citation), education system (1 citation), lack of people knowing English around (1 citation) and limited, simple and routine subjects (1 citation). Teacher and family appeared on the top of the list in both contributing and debilitative factors.

Excerpt 8: *"Teacher provides you the first impression: He or she makes you either love or hate English."*

Excerpt 9: *"Family should be positive about language education. My family does not object to my learning a different language; thus, I feel myself lucky."*

To sum up, students got influenced from different elements both positive and negative during their learning process; however, all these complete each other, helping students to shape their stances towards language learning.

4. Conclusion

The present study aimed to specify the language learning attitudes in tertiary context, and to display the probable factors influencing these attitudes in order to answer the dilemma whether language attitudes are ingrained or shaped in time. The study used both quantitative and qualitative data to address the issue of attitudes towards learning English.

Since attitudes and conceptions are multi-dimensional, students' attitudes were analysed from behavioural, cognitive and affective aspects. They were found to have positive attitudes towards learning English from all dimensions. While learning English, they benefit from websites. As Li and

Ni (2011) remarks, students can gain quality linguistic and cultural knowledge through use of technology, and it enables them to communicate and get rapid feedback. They also have positive opinions about songs in learning language. Students' use of songs can also be justified since songs in language learning settings are supported by teachers and empirical studies as a tool to enhance linguistic, sociocultural and communicative skills (Engh, 2013). The students in the present study also believe the importance of studying English and they do not see it as a waste of time, which shows their consciousness in this issue.

With the awareness in the significance of learning English, students also believe that learning English brings job opportunities, which implies high level of extrinsic motivation. As a matter of fact, this belief stands as a common expectation of many language learners, and given that language constitutes one of the basic needs in globalized world, it seems quite natural to associate qualification in language with better job opportunities. As Rajprasit, Pratoomrat, Wang, Kulsiri and Hemchua (2014) point out, English language proficiency occupies an important role in global economy, and it can be regarded as a key factor for success in certain occupations. Considering that the participants of the present study are university students enrolled in different departments, this finding seems to be expected. Together with extrinsic motivation, students show motivation to increase their knowledge in English. Another important point is that students believe they will use English in different ways in their life. This belief can make their learning process more meaningful and purposeful. Furthermore, positive attitudes towards future use of English can feed their lifelong learning tendencies. As Mašić, Zovko and Kovačić Samaržija (2016) suggest, for lifelong learning, an individual should first learn how to learn, and then have a positive attitude towards learning. Furthermore, students of higher education institutions are expected to have shaped ideas and conceptions for lifelong learning since it is related with current and future educational and vocational situation (Liodaki, Giavassi, Papadaki & Karalis, 2016). With high motivation for English, students also do not see subjects in the English course as redundant. Furthermore, students would like to have foreign friends, which implies integrative motivation. Foreign friends can be a good way of communicating in English in a natural manner.

Regarding English as necessary, students also deem it as enjoyable and easy. Therefore, negative feelings such as fear, boredom or hatred are outweighed by positive ones. They believe the importance of giving English lessons down from the first stage of elementary school. In a study conducted by Jurišević and Pižorn (2013), students aged between 6 and 8 were found to enjoy learning foreign language and develop a positive academic self-concept during the lessons. Likewise, at early childhood development of language and other cognitive skills occurs quite rapidly, and children who get second language input early can develop a native-like pronunciation and learn the grammatical system of the language; in addition, exposure to cultural elements while learning can raise cultural awareness and enable children to get sensitive to diversities; therefore, learning foreign language at early childhood can pave the way for improvement (Winskel, Zhou, Li, Mei, Peart, & Booth, 2016).

Concerning the previous language learning experiences, teacher role presents itself as an important factor in every stage of their educational life. Teachers can have both facilitative and debilitating effects on students' learning processes. As Xu and Huang (2010) note, teacher role is influential and critical in learning process; a teacher who can build a warm environment in the classroom can lead to a decrease in motivation, on the other hand, teacher as a facilitator can address students' psychological feelings, help students enjoy the class and actively participate. Especially in elementary

and secondary school years, teachers from another field constitute another problem. This fact refers to out-of-field teaching, and it indicates the practice of teaching in a subject, field or level for which a teacher has neither minor nor major university education (McConney & Price, 2009). Salleh and Darmawan (2013), referring to a study carried out by Seastrom et al. (2002), state that out-of-field teaching led to an instruction based on textbook and caused student participation and critical thinking to be limited. When they move to high school and university, learning tools such as stories, games and songs are mentioned more, which indicates that students get more aware of the benefit of different learning methods as they progress in their school years. They also appreciate positive peer effect at high school and university. Peers can pose an influence on individuals directly via student teaching, role modelling or class disruptions (Liu, 2010). Similarly, they seem to get more conscious of the insufficiency of language classes. Limited, simple and routine subjects are regarded as one of the negative sides of high school years. After elementary and secondary school, it is quite natural to detect such a problem. As a matter of fact, this constitutes one of the critical problems of language teaching since same subjects can be taught again when starting a new class in secondary, high school and even in university. If we start where we end in the previous year, we can clear the obstacle in front of language teaching and learning; hence, we can achieve a progressive language education. Otherwise, repeating the same subjects, we can have the risk of making language teaching a boring process. Students not progressed enough previously may have to start the same subjects again at university, which makes them feel that they cannot show progress. This way, students can have hard time in learning English academically even at university. English classes' appropriateness for General English is referred as one the negative past experience of university education in this study. However, perseverance, one of the most important factors in learning, is firstly remarked in university years. The study done by Madhlangobe, Chikasha, Mafa and Kurasha (2014) among adult students revealed that successful students applied a lot of persistent strategies that allowed them to persevere and prevail under conditions that led other students to drop out or fail. However, vocabulary learning is voiced as a positive side of almost all education years. Vocabulary knowledge is frequently considered as a critical instrument for second language learners because lack of vocabulary in the target language hinders sound communication; therefore, it is an essential part of language learning process (Alqahtani, 2015). For this reason, vocabulary teaching should not be ignored in all phases of language education. Among other factors, family occupies an important role in learning language. Likewise, practice poses an impact upon language learning process.

All in all, language learning is multifaceted and it is surrounded by different factors. All factors can have certain roles and influences in learning process, increasing or decreasing the chance of success. Therefore, all these elements can change students' stances towards learning English positively and negatively. A positive memory can pave the way for lifelong learning; similarly, a negative experience can block the path to success. Hence, attitudes should not be imprisoned by negative prejudices which can be broken through a sound approach. As a consequence, bearing in mind that a positive change can result in real progress, we should present students favourable learning experiences and help them shape their ingrained negative conceptions for the better.

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