

## **Students' Beliefs about Language Learning: A Study Carried Out Among the Students of Anatolian High School and Vocational High School**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to examine the beliefs of Anatolian and Vocational High School students towards English language learning and to investigate the differences in their beliefs with regard to their gender, school type, grades, their families' economic status, where they live and their parents' educational levels. The participants of the study were composed of 182 students, half of whom are from Anatolian High School students and the other half is from Vocational High School students at a public school. BALLI, a Likert-type scale was used to collect data. Independent t-test, one-way ANOVA, and the cross-tabulation were used in the analysis of data. The findings revealed that there is a meaningful difference among the students' beliefs in terms of their school type. Anatolian High School students are more conscious and hopeful about language learning than Vocational High School students. Gender was found to be partially responsible for the variation of beliefs among students. However, there is not a significant difference between the students' beliefs and their grades, where they live, their family's economic situation and their parents' educational level. It was also come in sight that the use of language out of the classroom did not show a great distinction between the school types even though Anatolian High School students expressed that they integrated English in their daily lives by a narrow margin.

**Keywords:** BALLI, Beliefs, Language Learning, Individual Differences, Foreign Language Education

## **Introduction**

English, as the lingua franca, is widely learnt and taught throughout the world and officially recognized as the language of scientific studies as well as being the most common and preferred language learnt to speak and communicate. It is also notable that, almost in every daily setting, people are exposed to foreign languages. The developing technology makes people believe that they should keep up with the pace of the rest of the world, that is why, a great deal of attention is put on learning and teaching foreign languages. In Turkey, English is primarily taught as a foreign language in state and private language schools. Over the past few decades, the importance of learning English has been well comprehended and old-fashioned teaching techniques have been tried to be replaced with newer techniques. The teachers have been trained and tested. The methods, techniques or styles that are of little use have been replaced with interactive, analytical and requiring physical participation activities that contribute a lot to the learning process. The curriculums have been changed and adapted to the needs of the students' level by level. The significance of productive skills has been emphasized and it has been suggested that the younger it is taught the better it is spoken, so starting from the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders until the end of the high school; English is compulsorily taught by EFL teachers. However, teaching English to a very young audience like that hasn't proven more effective. Students learn English better when they are exposed to it during a game, or even a YouTube video. It is mostly believed that students feel stressed or reluctant when they learn it as a school subject that they have to pass in order to be successful in their school life. It is where both EFL learners and teachers fail; they ignore the fact that it is indeed a tool to interact, not a school subject that is to be just learnt from the books. Because of that, students feel biased towards English and however much they understand it is a must to learn it to survive in this incredibly improving world to be able to be part of it, they pay little or no attention during the classes. This situation makes teachers feel ineffective and accept the fact that they are incapable of teaching; as a result, learning is failed. It is really important to have a set of clear beliefs about the language learning process not only for students but also for teachers. During this learning process, students' motivation and beliefs are also shaped by their instructors

as well as the other factors such as students' background, views or aptitude and motivation for learning.

### **Literature Review**

As mentioned in the introduction part, learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning affect the language learning process directly and greatly and contribute a lot to the students' own development and teachers' view of their career. YAZICI & Tan (2010) say that the first attempts to systematically investigate those beliefs started with Horwitz' studies (1985, 1987, 1988) and in the 1980s, Horwitz designed an instrument to assess students' beliefs about learning a new language, which she called the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI). She continues stating that Horwitz found five areas of beliefs that people commonly hold about second language learning: *the difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning, strategies for communication and learning, and learner motivations and expectations*. As a result of her research, Horwitz (1988) concludes that language learners enter the classroom with 'definite preconceived notions' of how a foreign language is learned, and that certain erroneous beliefs can negatively affect the way they viewed the language learning experience.

Following Horwitz, there are also many researchers who studied the beliefs of individuals and their impact on the learning process. For example, Richardson (1996) defines beliefs as "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true". In addition to what Richardson describes, Puchta (1999) also shows the importance of beliefs saying that "beliefs are guiding principles for our students" behavior and strong perceptual filters (...) they act as if they were true."

Another important point that is made by Barcelos (2003) is that "all the definitions of beliefs about SLA refer to the nature of language and language learning." And she adds that "some definitions emphasized the social and cultural nature of beliefs (...) because [beliefs] are born out of our interactions with others and with our

environment." Seeing that the beliefs are resulted from our interaction with our environment, we can say that these beliefs originally belong to our cultures, traditions and the way we live as a society. Similar to what Barcelos quotes, Kunt (2008) states learners' beliefs usually spring from their earlier learning experiences and are shaped by cultural backgrounds.

As an independent variable, gender effect has also been included in the studies in order to check if females or males differ in terms of their beliefs towards language learning. Siebert (2003) found a number of significant differences in beliefs among males and females in relation to language learning and strategy use. She concluded that female students are more interested in the social aspects of the language than male are. Likewise, Kesgin & Arslan (2015) studied the impact of gender and came up with the findings that the female students have a more positive attitude towards English lessons than male students. Not surprisingly, this study results may be an explanation why female English teachers outnumber the male English teachers in Turkey.

It can be concluded that students' beliefs are affected by the teachers' attitudes, beliefs and expectations from the students. In addition to the teachers, nationality, ethnicity and cultural factors play a significant role in the perception of language learning. Furthermore, the socio-cultural and socio-economic condition of a students' environment in which he or she is raised up is a major element that has to be taken into consideration. As an exemplification, Chambers (1999) clarifies that students do not come to the languages classroom with empty minds. They come with certain attitudes shaped by their family, friends, the media and experiences they have with the target community. Wilkins (1974) also advocates that the effect of parents should not be ignored in foreign language learning. Students are not mature enough to build up negative or positive attitudes towards language learning, that's why they are highly influenced by their parents at home and friends at school or in their environment. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), learner's attitude towards the culture of the target language is the most significant component affecting foreign

language acquisition. If the parents are biased against the culture of the target language, they may not want their children to be exposed to the culture and its language for the sake of raising their children with good standards suiting their own culture. Unfortunately, it makes the learning process double difficult for the students.

As there is no sufficient study based on Turkish High School students' whose beliefs on language learning, this research aims to investigate the beliefs both groups hold, especially students' socio-cultural and economic reasons behind their beliefs towards English learning, the education level of their parents and their willingness to learn English. This research is carried out to illustrate the beliefs of students towards language learning in Anatolian High Schools and Vocational High Schools in order to get an overall conclusion about the beliefs they have in their minds. The goal of the study is to get what kind of beliefs students hold towards learning a second language in both school types. It is intriguing why Vocational High School students are generally known to be bad at English, what lies beneath this generalization or what affects their beliefs about language learning process.

### **Research questions**

The aim of this study is to reveal what beliefs about language learning students in Anatolian High Schools and Vocational High Schools hold and whether there are any differences or similarities between their beliefs. Hence, this study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. Do the Anatolian High School students' beliefs about language learning differ from those of Vocational High School students?
2. If yes, what are the underlying effects of the difference between students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning? (Gender, school types, grades, where they live, family's economic status, family's education level)

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

A descriptive, Likert-type research technique was adopted to collect the opinions of students and teachers in Vocational and Anatolian High Schools concerning the current situation of their attitudes towards the English language.

### **Working Group**

Student participants were selected from both types of schools. There are 91 Anatolian High School students and 91 Vocational High School students. The total number of students is 182 (104 male, 78 female). Out of 182 students, there are 66 9<sup>th</sup> graders, 64 10<sup>th</sup> graders, 28 11<sup>th</sup> graders and 24 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

### **The Instruments**

BALLI was developed by Horwitz (1985, 1987) to identify students' beliefs about language learning in five areas: 1) foreign language aptitude (9 items), 2) the difficulty of language learning (6 items), 3) the nature of language learning (6 items), 4) learning and communication strategies (8 items) and 5) motivations and expectations (6 items). BALLI has been widely used, including studies on American learners of French, Spanish, German, and Japanese; US university instructors of French, pre-service ESL and EFL teachers of English; Korean, Taiwanese, Turkish and Turkish- Cypriot English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The thirty-five items of BALLI were scored on a Likert scale ranging from "1: strongly disagree" to "5: strongly agree." Because BALLI measures different beliefs about language learning, there is no composite score. The Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) developed by Horwitz (1987) was translated into Turkish and then used for students.

### **Data collection**

Participants took the questionnaire in their own classrooms during English classes. They were informed about the purpose of the study before the questionnaires were handed out. They were asked to participate in the study anonymously. However,

they were required to fill out some demographic information, such as their gender, age, level, educational status of their parents, economic condition of their family, where they reside and whether they use English apart from their school life. It took approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

### **Data analysis**

In this study, the SPSS 15.0 was used to compute calculations and conduct analyses. Correlations analysis, Independent Samples t-tests, and One-way ANOVA and Cross-tabulation were conducted to obtain the results. For the present study, Cronbach's Alpha of BALLI was .892 which is quite satisfying since the minimum level is recommended to be .70.

### **Findings**

In this part, the research questions will be answered with the findings received in the wake of analysis. The questionnaire items were categorized into 5 themes, namely foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies and motivations and expectations. After the items were allotted to the themes, the mean scores were computed for each and used separately in terms of students' beliefs towards language learning. Items 1, 2, 6, 10, 11, 16, 19, 30 and 33 assess students' beliefs related to the foreign language aptitude. Items 3, 4, 5, 15, 25 and 34 assess students' beliefs in terms of the difficulty of language learning. Items 8, 12, 17, 23, 27 and 28 assess students' beliefs about the nature of language learning. Items 7, 9, 13, 14, 18, 21, 22 and 28 assess students' beliefs regarding the learning and communication skills. Items 20, 24, 29, 31, 32 and 35 assess students' beliefs motivation and expectations.

### ***Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference between the school types and students' beliefs towards language learning?***

According to the independent samples t-test results, students from both school types hold different opinions about the nature of language learning. Also, their motivation and expectations towards foreign language learning differ greatly. However, their

beliefs towards foreign language aptitude, difficulty of language learning and learning and communication skills themes displayed no great differences between the school types as shown in the tables below.

The results were evaluated with Independent Samples t-test (Table 1). There is not a meaningful difference between high school types and the students' beliefs related to foreign language aptitude. ( $t_{161.101} = 1.177, p > .05$ ). According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, equal variances not assumed line (t/ df) values were taken into consideration (Sig=.003,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 1**

*Foreign Language Aptitude Differences between students' beliefs in terms of school types*

	School Type	N	M	Std. Deviation	df	t	p
Foreign Language Aptitude	Anatolian High School	91	2.9512	.48805	161.101	1.177	.241
	Vocational High School	91	2.8462	.69739			
Total		182					

Even though there is no significant difference between the school types, the mean (M=2.9512) of Anatolian High School students is a bit higher than the mean of Vocational High School students (M=2.8462), which shows that Anatolian High School students ( $n=59$ ) are more aware of language aptitude agreeing or strongly agreeing that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language while the number of students who agreed or strongly agreed on the same item from Vocational High School is 53. As can be understood from this item example, the numbers are quite close and supportive to the result.

As can be seen from the Table 2, there is not a significant difference between high school types and the students' beliefs related to the difficulty of language learning



( $t_{169.997} = 1.146, p > .05$ ). According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, equal variances not assumed line (t/ df) values were taken into consideration (Sig=.008,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 2**

*Difficulty of Language Learning Differences between students' beliefs in terms of school types*

	School Type	N	M	Std. Deviation	df	t	p
Difficulty of Language Learning	Anatolian High School	91	2.9670	.65885	169.997	1.746	.083
	Vocational High School	91	2.7711	.84388			
Total		182					

The mean of Anatolian High School students ( $M=2.9670$ ) is higher than the mean of Vocational High School students ( $M=2.7711$ ). Some Anatolian High School students ( $n=19$ ) think that English is an easy language whereas only 8 out of 91 Vocational High School students agree with this statement. 33 Anatolian High School students and 23 Vocational High School students also stated that they eventually would learn how to speak English well. Other items pertaining to the difficulty of language learning have very close frequencies, which is the proof of such close mean scores.

Table 3 suggests, unlike the two previous results, it would be right to talk about a meaningful difference between high school types and the students' beliefs related to the nature of language learning ( $t_{160.315} = 3.475, p < .05$ ). According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, equal variances not assumed line (t/ df) values were taken into consideration (Sig=.001,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 3***Nature of Language Learning Differences between students' beliefs in terms of school types*

	School Type	N	M	Std. Deviation	df	t	p
Nature of Language Learning	Anatolian High School	91	3.7363	.71925	160.315	3.475	.001
	Vocational High School	91	3.2766	1.03704			
Total		182					

The mean of Anatolian High School students ( $M=3.7363$ ) are higher than the mean of Vocational High School students ( $M=3.2766$ ). It means that the students in Anatolian High Schools have a good command of the nature of language learning by showing greater sensitivity to the fact that learning English is different than learning any other academic subjects ( $n=49$ ) and it is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures to learn to speak English ( $n=55$ ). Related to the nature of language learning, most of the students from Anatolian High School ( $n=71$ ) agreed that the most important part of learning a language is learning vocabulary while grammar and translation between the mother and target language are favored by 51 of them. The numbers for Vocational High School students for each component are 51, 39 and 42 respectively. More than half of the Vocational High school students ( $n=49$ ) agreed that English is learnt best in an English-speaking country while this number is 69 for Anatolian High School students.

As to the learning and communication skills (Table 4), the results suggested that there is not a meaningful difference between high school types and the students' beliefs. ( $t_{157.038} = 1.645$ ,  $p > .05$ ). According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, equal variances not assumed line ( $t/df$ ) values were taken into consideration ( $Sig=.001$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table 4**

*Learning and Communication Skills Differences between students' beliefs in terms of school types*

	School Type	N	M	Std. Deviation	df	t	p
Learning and Communication Skills	Anatolian High School	91	3.0810	.52684	157.038	1.645	.102
	Vocational High School	91	2.9176	.78820			
Total		182					

The mean is expectedly a bit higher for Anatolian High School students (M=3.0810) than Vocational High School students (M=2.9176). The most visible difference can be seen from the answers given to the item 18. 73 Anatolian High School students and 56 Vocational High School students agree on the importance of repetition and practice. 54 Anatolian High school students are of the opinion that speaking English with a great pronunciation is important while 29 Vocational High School students see pronunciation is a significant element. Additionally, 60 Anatolian and 46 Vocational High School students disagree with the statement that a student should not say anything in English until he or she says it correctly. More Anatolian High School students focus on conveying their messages and feel free to speak than Vocational High School students.

As all shown in Table 5, a meaningful difference between high school types and the students' beliefs related to the motivation and expectation was observed. ( $t_{170.315} = 3.190, p < .05$ ). According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, equal variances not assumed line (t/ df) values were taken into consideration (Sig=.010,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 5***Motivation and Expectation Differences between students' beliefs in terms of school types*

	School Type	N	M	Std. Deviation	df	t	p
Motivation and Expectation	Anatolian High School	91	3.6136	.77733	170.315	3.190	.002
	Vocational High School	91	3.1923	.99130			
Total		182					

The mean of Anatolian High School students ( $M=3.6136$ ) are higher than the mean of Vocational High School students ( $M=3.1923$ ). It means that the students in Anatolian High Schools are more motivated to learn English for a couple of reasons such as being successful at university life, finding a better job, getting to know English people better and so on. On the other hand, the majority of Vocational High School students do not feel determined or driven to learn English in that they disagree with the idea of English being necessary.

**Research Question 2: If yes, what are the underlying effects of the difference between students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning? (Gender, grades, where they live, family's economic status, family's education level)**

Students' beliefs towards learning a foreign language, directly English, haven't proven to be as varied as expected between school types. The p-values showed that only difference was observed in two areas which were categorized before. Students' sense of nature of language learning as well as their motivation and expectations contrasted while the rest of the areas seemed to house no discrepancies. In order to tell the motives behind these differences, some factors considered to be distinctive were analyzed. First of all, the gender factor was scrutinized whether it had an impact on the students' beliefs. The tables were ordered below to give better understandings.

**Table 6**

*Foreign Language Aptitude Differences between students' beliefs in terms of gender*

	Gender	N	M	Std. Deviation	df	t	p
Foreign Language Aptitude	male	104	2.7917	.64150	180	-2.819	.005
	female	78	3.0413	.51656			
Total		182					

According to the Table 6, there is a significant difference between gender and students' beliefs related to foreign language aptitude. ( $t_{180} = -2.819$ ,  $p < .05$ ). According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, equal variances assumed line ( $t/df$ ) values were taken into consideration ( $Sig = .091$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Female students' mean ( $M = 3.0413$ ) is higher than male students' ( $M = 2.7917$ ), yet it is important to remember that the number of female participants is lower than the number of male students. Female students believe that they have a special talent for the foreign languages and are more moderate about their likelihood of learning English than male students do.

**Table 7**

*Difficulty of Language Learning Differences between students' beliefs in terms of gender*

	Gender	N	M	Std. Deviation	df	t	p
Difficulty of Language Learning	male	104	2.7917	.76597	180	-1.590	.114
	female	78	2.9722	.74749			
Total		182					

The independent samples t-test analysis shown in Table 7 depicted no difference between gender and students' beliefs with respect to the difficulty of language learning ( $t_{180} = -1.590$ ,  $p > .05$ ). According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, equal variances assumed line ( $t/df$ ) values were taken into consideration ( $Sig = .742$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

The mean of female students (M=2.9722) is a little higher than male students' (M=2.7917). This theme was found to be the only one that showed no difference at all. It suggests that difficulty of language learning does not diverge in terms of gender.

**Table 8**

*Nature of Language Learning Differences between students' beliefs in terms of gender*

	Gender	N	M	Std. Deviation	df	t	p
Nature of Language Learning	male	104	3.3205	.99776	179.979	-3.369	.001
	female	78	3.7543	.73890			
Total		182					

Table 8 shows that there is a meaningful difference between the male and female students' beliefs in terms of the nature of language learning ( $t_{179.979} = -3.369$ ,  $p < .05$ ). According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, equal variances not assumed line (t/ df) values were taken into consideration (Sig=.009,  $p < .05$ ). As for the nature of language learning, female students' mean (M=3.7543) is higher than male students' mean (M=3.3205), 59 out of 78 female students and 59 out of 104 male students agreed on the belief that English should be learnt in an English-speaking country. Moreover, most of the female students (n=50) think that English-speaking cultures are necessary to be picked up to be proficient at speaking English while it is the case for only less than half of the male participants (n=45) .

**Table 9**

*Learning and Communication Skills Differences between students' beliefs in terms of gender*

	Gender	N	M	Std. Deviation	df	t	p
Learning and Communication Skills	male	104	2.8534	.71382	180	-3.477	.001
	female	78	3.1939	.56359			
Total		182					

The table 9 exhibits that there is a significant difference between the male and female students as regards learning and communication skills ( $t_{180} = -3.477, p < .05$ ). According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, equal variances assumed line ( $t/ df$ ) values were taken into consideration ( $Sig = .188, p > .05$ ). The female students' mean ( $M = 3.1939$ ) is higher than the male students' ( $M = 2.8534$ ). Female students highly appreciate the importance of practice, repetition, real-life like interaction over the grammatically aligned dialogues and natural errors made in the process of learning according to the results.

**Table 10**

*Motivation and Expectation Differences between students' beliefs in terms of gender*

	Gender	N	M	Std. Deviation	df	t	p
Motivation and Expectation	male	104	3.2548	.95812	180	-2.566	.011
	female	78	3.6004	.81399			
Total		182					

As the last theme, motivation and expectations also vary meaningfully by gender ( $t_{180} = -2.566, p < .05$ ). According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, equal variances assumed line ( $t/ df$ ) values were taken into consideration ( $Sig = .080, p > .05$ ). Female students' mean ( $M = 3.6004$ ) is higher than male students' ( $M = 3.2548$ ); therefore, it is apparent that female students have more optimistic beliefs about learning English than male students. Most of the female students ( $n = 59$ ) think that it is important to learn English to have better job opportunities while this number is 57 out of 104 male students. Besides, female students want to learn to speak English well and have English friends more than male students do.

To sum up, the gender factor plays an important role in shaping the beliefs of students towards language learning. Out of 5 themes, only the theme called *difficulty of language learning* showed no difference between the genders. The mean scores were slightly different, for the participants for each gender were not equal. However,

female students seem to be more fearless and insightful about learning English when compared to male students.

Following the gender, the impact of grades, where they live, family's economic situation and parents' educational level were analyzed with One-way Anova to see whether the beliefs were dependent on these factors and the results would change according to the variables. Unexpectedly, the beliefs proved to be unaffected by the external factors. The descriptive table was added below to highlight the p-values.

**Table 11**

*One-way Anova results of the difference between students' beliefs and their grades*

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Aptitude	Between groups	.536	3	.179	.488	.691
	Within groups	65.175	178	.366		
	Total	65.711	181			
Difficulty	Between groups	1.445	3	.482	.829	.480
	Within groups	103.462	178	.581		
	Total	104.907	181			
Nature	Between groups	2.574	3	.858	1.016	.387
	Within groups	150.391	178	.845		
	Total	152.965	181			
Communication	Between groups	.655	3	.218	.477	.699
	Within groups	81.454	178	.458		
	Total	82.109	181			
Motivation	Between groups	.560	3	.187	.221	.882
	Within groups	150.336	178	.845		
	Total	150.896	181			

The beliefs differences towards language learning in terms of students' grades are presented in Table 11. According to the results, there is no meaningful difference concerning grade since the p values are higher than .05 in each area of students' beliefs. Grade was found to be an ineffective factor for students towards the beliefs about English language.



**Table 12***One-way Anova results of the difference between students' beliefs and where they live*

	Anova	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Aptitude	Between groups	1.908	2	.954	2.677	.072
	Within groups	63.803	179	.356		
	Total	65.711	181			
Difficulty	Between groups	.580	2	.290	.497	.609
	Within groups	104.327	179	.583		
	Total	104.907	181			
Nature	Between groups	2.307	2	1.153	1.370	.257
	Within groups	150.658	179	.842		
	Total	152.965	181			
Communication	Between groups	1.835	2	.918	2.046	.132
	Within groups	20.274	179	.448		
	Total	82.109	181			
Motivation	Between groups	3.363	2	1.681	2.040	.133
	Within groups	147.533	179	.824		
	Total	150.896	181			

Another factor that was suspected to have an impact on the students' beliefs towards language learning was the environment they live in. It was wanted to be discovered whether they live in a village, a county, or a province has an impact on their beliefs. The results are shown in Table 12. A significant difference was not found in terms of where they reside since the p-values are higher than .05 in each section. Students' social environment in terms of the place they live in had no impact in shaping or changing their beliefs according to the findings of the study.

**Table 13***One-way Anova results of the difference between students' beliefs and their families' economic situation*

	Anova	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Aptitude	Between groups	.929	2	.464	1.283	.280
	Within groups	64.782	179	.362		
	Total	65.711	181			
Difficulty	Between groups	1.143	2	.571	.986	.375
	Within groups	103.764	179	.580		
	Total	104.907	181			

Nature	Between groups	.566	2	.283	.332	.718
	Within groups	152.399	179	.851		
	Total	152.965	181			
Communication	Between groups	.032	2	.016	.035	.966
	Within groups	82.078	179	.459		
	Total	82.109	181			
Motivation	Between groups	2.446	2	1.223	1.475	.232
	Within groups	148.450	179	.829		
	Total	150.896	181			

Table 13 presents the difference of the students’ beliefs toward the language learning pertaining to the family’s revenue. The students were asked to categorize their family’s economic situation into three parts; namely, low, middle and high. When the results were analyzed with one-way ANOVA, p-values were observed to be higher than .05 which means that there was not a meaningful difference between the monthly revenue of the student’s family and their attitude towards the English language. Family’s economic situation seems to have had no effect on determining the students’ beliefs.

**Table 14**

*One-way Anova results of the difference between students’ beliefs and their mothers’ education level*

Anova		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Aptitude	Between groups	.224	3	.075	.203	.894
	Within groups	65.487	178	.368		
	Total	65.711	181			
Difficulty	Between groups	.828	3	.276	.472	.702
	Within groups	104.078	178	.585		
	Total	104.907	181			
Nature	Between groups	2.535	3	.845	1.000	.394
	Within groups	150.430	178	.845		
	Total	152.965	181			
Communication	Between groups	.860	3	.287	.628	.598
	Within groups	81.250	178	.456		
	Total	82.109	181			
Motivation	Between groups	4.381	3	1.460	1.774	.154
	Within groups	146.515	178	.823		
	Total	150.896	181			

The last inspected factor was parents' education level to check whether it creates differences among students' perceptions. The students were asked which level their parents graduated from last. The data was obtained both for mothers (Table 14) and fathers (Table 15). The results were analyzed with One-way Anova. The findings supported that the educational level of parents did not influence the students' beliefs and could not make a significant difference since p-values are higher than .05 in each theme for both parents.

**Table 15**

*One-way Anova results of the difference between students' beliefs and their fathers' education level*

	Anova	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Aptitude	Between groups	.188	3	.063	.170	.917
	Within groups	65.523	178	.368		
	Total	65.711	181			
Difficulty	Between groups	.671	3	.224	.382	.766
	Within groups	104.236	178	.586		
	Total	104.907	181			
Nature	Between groups	3,256	3	1.085	1.290	.279
	Within groups	149.709	178	.841		
	Total	152.965	181			
Communication	Between groups	.815	3	.272	.595	.619
	Within groups	81.295	178	.457		
	Total	82.109	181			
Motivation	Between groups	2.584	3	.861	1.034	.379
	Within groups	148.312	178	.833		
	Total	150.896	181			

**Discussion**

This study attempted to reveal the beliefs of students who study at two types of high schools, namely Anatolian High School and Vocational High School, towards English language learning and whether there is a difference in the beliefs that the students hold towards English language in terms of their gender, the school type that they study, their grades, where they live (city, countryside, village), their family's economic status and their parents' education level. Those factors are assumed to be the external ones that may have an impact on the formation of students' beliefs and

thus, also, their attitudes. Attitude is variable and can be changed by the many external and internal personality factors of a person (Rukh 2014). There are many factors affecting students' attitudes towards the English language such as conditions at home, student features, teaching and learning variances, and school factors as Mordi (1991) ordered. Since attitudes are the natural consequences of the beliefs in students' minds, this paper, accordingly, tried to figure out the relation between the beliefs and gender, beliefs and grades, beliefs and family's related attributions and lastly beliefs and the school type they study. In coordination with the results of previous studies in the field, gender showed its significance over the beliefs of students in four major themes out of five in this study. Kesgin and Arslan (2015) examined the attitudes of students' regarding the gender factor and suggested that female students have more positive attitudes towards English language than male students. Likewise, in this current study, female students' beliefs are more assured and conscious than male students as to the foreign language aptitude, nature of language learning, learning and communication skills and motivation while there is no significant difference in relation with the difficulty of language learning. Tercanlioğlu (2005) probed pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs towards language learning and whether they relate to gender. The findings hereby indicated that there was no gender related difference found to affect the students' beliefs.

The core of this study was to release whether it is the school factor that causes the beliefs to vary considerably. Students are obviously affected by many external factors, most of which are in-school factors related to the school management, teacher-student relationships and students' own ideas of the necessity of language learning as a whole. To exemplify, the results of Kesgin and Arslan (2015: 300) proved that "the highest attitude score towards the English language belongs to foreign language intensive high schools; the lowest one belongs to technical high schools as was expected before the research." However, this present study diametrically found almost no difference between students' beliefs and the effect of school type and the beliefs did not seem to differ among the students of both school types regarding the major themes in an unexpected way. The only difference was

found in the nature of language learning and motivation and expectation themes whereas the students showed more or less the same attitudes towards the areas of foreign language aptitude, difficulty of language learning and learning and communication. The fact that the students from both school types showed no greater differences may be linked to the general lack of interest in language learning. When the students are volunteers and also interested in learning a language, foreign language courses can reach their objectives (Wilkins, 1974). As long as the students feel that they do not need to learn a foreign language, the language learning process is demanding and thereby failure is inevitable with insufficient time and effort, they will more likely to grow negative beliefs and attitudes towards language learning. Williams and Burden (1977: 88) suggest that “it is undoubtedly true that learners bring many individual characteristics to the learning process.” Thus, teachers must be aware of the importance of individual differences in learning a language. If the circumstances that give rise to any negative ideas are ameliorated, the factors that affect the beliefs in an unpleasant way are minimized, the necessary assistance of the teachers offered to the students through mediation and proper selection of teaching materials are provided, and it will pave the way for students to have more can-do beliefs at least.

Çimen (2015) examined the beliefs of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers and claimed, from the first year to the last year, changes systematically noted in the agreement/disagreement levels. These changes can be linked to the education program they have taken for four years in addition to the teaching experience. Contrary to the view that language learning beliefs are static and difficult to change (İnözü, 2011), the results of this study showed that they can be dynamic and changing over time (Amuzie & Winke; 2009; Ellis, 2008; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). Moreover, it is favored when the beliefs are changing instead of just being stable. It shows that the teacher self-development is a change for the better. On the other hand, this present study elicited reverse results in that the students from both high schools have no different beliefs when their level is changed over time.

Another factor which concerns the accommodation of the students was looked into as to whether it creates a difference among the students' beliefs towards English language learning. According to the findings, there is no big difference among the students' beliefs no matter where they live in. Similarly, the family's economic status was thought to be an important factor that has a bearing on students' beliefs. Surprisingly, this factor, also, did not seem to affect any major theme and the students are closely alike in terms of their beliefs. Yet, as a comparative study to the current study, Kesgin and Arslan (2015) found out that the family's economic status creates a meaningful difference in the students' beliefs. They reported that the highest revenue and the middle revenue group of students have more positive attitudes towards language learning than the lowest revenue group. It can be said that the students' awareness of outer world and its requirements is escalated as they are in financially good terms.

As the last element, parents' educational level was believed to have an undeniable relation with the students' beliefs as in accordance with what Kesgin and Arslan (2015) found out in their study. However, the current study obtained no relevant or similar results to the previous studies. Students' beliefs were found to be dependent on neither mother's nor father's educational level. It was expected that the beliefs would be more positive as the level increased, but the data gathered from the students proved to be total opposite.

Together with the external factors that were exhibited in tables in the findings part, interpreted and compared in the discussion part, the students were also asked whether they use English apart from the classroom. As additional information, the students were asked to add their use of context if their answer was yes. The results did not support the general assumption that Anatolian High School students would probably use English more out of the classroom by integrating the language in their daily lives. The majority of the students expressed that they had to learn some vocabulary because of the video games which they were fan of although they were aware of the fact that it did not help students develop any speaking skills. There was

found to be no student at all who voluntarily wanted to use English as a tool to communicate with or as lifetime superiority to other people. The numbers are more or less the same for both school types even though the Anatolian High School students outnumbered the Vocational High School students with 7 more students.

**Table 16**

*The number of students who use English outside the classroom regarding the school types*

	Anatolian High School	Vocational High School
Yes	24	17
No	67	74

### **Conclusion**

Students' beliefs are the most affected outputs of the language learning process. They are under the impact of every single unit of this ongoing process. They are, by the way, the most effective systems to direct the learning advancement to satisfying extend. As long as beliefs are not adopted in a way that students can take advantage of learning, they will most likely form negative and biased attitudes towards the language itself, the speakers of the language and their own academic self-efficacy and self-belief. It should not be forgotten that teachers are the other indispensable factors which influence the teaching-learning process. Attitude is not genetically inherited, that is to say, it can be changed as the teachers share the responsibility and eliminate the reasons for negative attitudes. They should use different and enjoyable materials to arouse students' interests. Along with teachers, parents are also stakeholders of the learning process. Their attributions greatly contribute to students' academic success.

A close examination of the results revealed that students in this study held some collinear beliefs. For instance, the majority of the respondents (over 60 %) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that *I want to learn to speak English well, it's best to learn English in an English-speaking country* and *If I learn English, I will have better job opportunities*. The students also seem to have high reliance on their ability to speak English since most of the students (60.4 %) expressed that they are not afraid to speak

English when necessary. When other items are analyzed with their frequencies and percentages, it gets apparent that students mostly feel neutral or the ratios for both agree and disagree are relatively the same. It can be said that students do not defend strong beliefs towards language learning and it is also clear that they are not influenced by external factors when they hold their beliefs.

BALLI was used in the detection of the high school students' beliefs about language learning for this study. The BALLI findings may be practical for teachers in determining the common beliefs of the majority as well as identifying the minority with discrepancies. We can conclude from the findings that the students are off preconceived notions to some extent in that English is now the language of every trend from technology field to even the simplest human being activity. It is good to see that students do not feel timid when they have to expose to English. It shows that English is beyond the idea of being an academic subject and studied only in schools.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

This study includes the students of Anatolian High School and Vocational High School in the same public school. This study can be carried out with more schools or with private schools versus public schools. It is expected to obtain greater differences this way, for the students will be indeed from different backgrounds and have different beliefs as a result. This restriction probably gave rise to more uninspired findings. Additionally, more types of schools can be added to the study to be able to see the determinants better. This study was originally prepared to include teachers' beliefs as well, however, the lack of participants made the study only limited to the students. To make it more generalizable, this study should involve as many stakeholders as possible, including teachers, students, parents and so on.

In this study, only BALLI was used to determine the students' beliefs, however, interviews could be arranged to get the motives behind their beliefs and supplemented by observations or interviews in order to be able to more fully define students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning. Using not only qualitative



but also quantitative methods to describe the findings will gain the study the dimensional strength needed.

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