

The Beliefs of University Foreign Language Students and Their Teachers about Language Learning*

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Münevver BÜYÜKYAZI

Celal Bayar Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Bölümü

ABSTRACT

Learners' beliefs influence their consciousness, attitude towards learning, learning strategies and policies. Teachers' beliefs also strongly influence their teaching behavior, methods, and learners' development. Determination of learners' and teachers' beliefs in language teaching/learning process will be helpful in forming effective learning/teaching methods. This paper reports on a study that investigated the beliefs about language learning of 156 English as a foreign language (EFL) students and 19 EFL teachers in the Department of Foreign Languages at Celal Bayar University of Manisa. The primary aim of the study was to explore what beliefs the students in prep classes held about learning EFL. The study also intended to determine if the beliefs of the learners and their teachers displayed a change. Data were collected using a 34-item Likert-Type scale (Horwitz's BALLI - Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory), modified for the Turkish EFL learners and their teachers. Data were analyzed descriptively and the results were given as percentages. Beliefs of learners were classified under five subheadings as suggested by Horwitz (1988). The results of this study demonstrated that EFL learners have a broad range of conceptions both similar to and different from those reported by their teachers.

Key words: Beliefs about language learning, learner beliefs, foreign language learning, foreign language instruction

Üniversite Yabancı Dil Öğrencilerinin ve Öğretmenlerinin Dil Öğrenimindeki İnançları

ÖZET

Öğrencilerin inançları onların bilinçlerini, öğrenmeye karşı tutumlarını, öğrenme stratejilerini ve öğrenme politikalarını etkiler. Öğretmenlerin inançları da öğretme davranışlarını, yöntemlerini ve öğrenci gelişimini önemli bir şekilde etkiler. Dil öğrenme/öğretim sürecinde öğrenci ve öğretmen inançlarının belirlenmesi etkili öğrenme/öğretim yöntemleri oluşturmada yardımcı olacaktır. Bu çalışma, Manisa Celal Bayar Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Bölümünde 156 İngilizce hazırlık sınıfı öğrencisi ve 19 İngilizce okutmanın dil öğrenme üzerine olan inançlarını bildirmektedir. Çalışmanın birincil amacı hazırlık öğrencilerinin ve

* The findings of this research were presented in *The 4th International IDEA Conference (2009)*, which was held at Celal Bayar University.

öğretmenlerinin İngilizce öğrenme hakkındaki inançlarını belirlemekti. Çalışma ayrıca, öğrenci ve öğretmen inançlarında farklılığı olup olmadığını tespit etmeyi de amaçladı. Veriler, Türkçe'ye çevrilerek ve İngilizce'yi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilere ve öğretmenlerine uyarlanarak, 34 maddeli Likert tipi bir ölçek olan ve Horwitz (1988) tarafından geliştirilen Dil Öğrenimi hakkında İnanç Envateri – BALLİ ile toplandı. Veriler tanımlayıcı istatistikle analiz edildi ve sonuçlar yüzde olarak verildi. Öğrenci ve öğretmen görüşleri Horwitz (1988) tarafından önerilen beş alt başlık altında sınıflandırıldı. Çalışmanın sonuçları öğrencilerin öğretmenler tarafından bildirilen inançlara hem benzer hem de farklı çok sayıda kavrama sahip olduklarını gösterdi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dil öğrenme inançları, öğrenci inançları, yabancı dil öğrenme, yabancı dil öğretme

I. INTRODUCTION

Many people apparently believe that foreign language fluency can be obtained with relatively little effort. If beliefs about language learning are prevalent in the culture at large, then foreign language teachers must consider that students bring these beliefs with them into the classroom. Learners' beliefs influence their consciousness, attitude towards learning, learning strategies, and policies. For example, if a student believes that learning a second language primarily involves learning new vocabulary, he will expend most of his/her energy on vocabulary acquisition. An unsuccessful learning experience could easily lead a student to the conclusion that special abilities are required to learn a foreign language and that s/he does not possess these necessary abilities. Horwitz (1988) stated that learners' satisfaction with the course, their confidence in the teacher, and their achievement may be affected if the learners have preconceived ideas, negative feelings or unrealistic expectations about how foreign languages are learned, and if their ideas differ from those of their teachers.

Teachers' beliefs strongly influence their teaching behavior, methods, and learners' development. Therefore, determination of learners' and teachers' beliefs is helpful in forming effective learning/teaching methods and improving learners' language learning abilities. The aim of this research is to carry out a preliminary investigation of the ideas of the learners and their teachers in a foreign language learning context at a state university in Turkey.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In the past two decades the topic of beliefs about language learning has been attracting considerable research interest. Horwitz is the first researcher trying to determine the beliefs of learners in foreign language learning. She developed a 34-item scale called Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) in 1988. She found that learner beliefs change very little over the whole semester, learner beliefs do not automatically change when learners are merely exposed to new methods, and learner beliefs were "quite well entrenched" (pp. 76).

Some other researchers were also interested in the beliefs of learners. Some of them conducted follow-up research using the inventory Horwitz

developed in 1988. For example, Kern conducted a study with the BALLI in 1995 with 180 students of French as a second language at the University of Berkeley. Mantle-Bromley (1995) used the BALLI to investigate the beliefs of 208 seventh grade middle school students taking first-year French and Spanish in Kansas. She stressed that teachers need to understand the beliefs of foreign language students because learners with realistic and informed beliefs are more likely to behave productively in class, work harder outside class, and persist longer with language study. She proposed when student beliefs and performance do not match, they “become frustrated with the class and with themselves” and certain misinformed “beliefs and expectations may actually prove harmful to their success in the [foreign language] classroom”.

Some researchers tried to determine the differences between male and female learners. Siebert (2003) found a number of significant differences in beliefs among males and females in relation to language learning and strategy use. In another U.S. study, Bacon and Finnemann (1992) investigated gender differences in self reported beliefs about foreign language learning and authentic oral and written input. Bacon and Finnemann (1992) found female compared to male students reported a higher level of motivation and strategy use in language learning, greater use of global strategies in dealing with authentic input, and a higher level of social interaction with the target language (Spanish). Tercanlioglu (2005), found no significant differences in beliefs about language learning of 45 male and 73 female full-time undergraduate EFL teacher trainees at a Turkish university. She concluded age, stage of life, and contextual differences in the language-learning situation may also be important sources of group variation in learner beliefs. Bernat and Lloyd (2007) found similarities between males and females in terms of their beliefs in foreign language aptitude, the difficulty they perceive when learning a language, the nature of language learning, strategies in learning, and communication, and their motivations and expectations. Males and females differed significantly in their beliefs that multilinguals are very intelligent (with more females agreeing with that statement) their enjoyment of practicing English with Australians (with women enjoying it less).

Learner beliefs that differ markedly from teacher beliefs may also affect learner attitudes and motivation. In Horwitz's study (1988), answers on some items differed from commonly held teacher perceptions. These gaps between teacher and learner beliefs probably result in “negative [language-learning] outcomes” for learners. Horwitz also suggests that a gap between teacher and learner beliefs can lead to reduced learner confidence, reduced satisfaction with the class, and unwillingness to participate in ‘communicative’ activities. Peacock (1999) suggested that the gaps between teacher and learner beliefs did result in negative learning outcomes for the participating learners; did lead to reduced learner confidence in and satisfaction with the class and a reluctance to participate in communicative activities. Some of the students’ beliefs were

“truly detrimental to successful language learning”, and probably did lead to them spending too much time memorizing vocabulary lists and grammar rules rather than doing the tasks planned for them.

Beliefs of learners have been investigated in some Turkish contexts. Oz (2007) reported on a study that investigated metacognitive knowledge or beliefs about language learning of 470 Turkish EFL learners in secondary education. He concluded that learners’ metacognitive knowledge or beliefs about language learning have variability in terms of social and educational contexts, age, gender, and stages of language learning.

Altan (2006) administered BALLI to a total of 248 foreign language major university students at five universities in Turkey. His findings confirm that preservice teachers arrive at the task of language learning with definite preconceived notions of how to go about it. He suggested that foreign language teacher educators and teacher trainers should take these beliefs into account if they expect their students to be open to particular teaching methods and to receive the maximum benefit from them. Knowledge of learner beliefs about language learning should also increase teacher educators’ understanding of how the future teaching of these people would be.

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As the above mentioned study results and researchers indicate, studying the beliefs of learners and their teachers is of great importance in order to have a clear understanding of their beliefs in the language they are learning and teaching. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the beliefs of prep class learners and their teachers in foreign language learning at Celal Bayar University and to compare the learner beliefs to those of their teachers’.

IV. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Participants:

A total of 200 EFL students and a total of 19 EFL teachers from the Department of Foreign Languages of Celal Bayar University voluntarily participated in the study in 2008/09. 156 forms from the students and 19 forms from the teachers were taken to data analysis. All the students were in their preparatory year. Mean age of the students was 19.25 ± 1.26 years; mean age of the teachers was 32.42 ± 7.86 years. The students’ average time spent in learning was 3.92 ± 3.60 years; the teachers’ average time spent in teaching was 9.84 ± 7.58 years.

B. Data Collection Instrument

The BALLI, a 34-item inventory on beliefs about language learning was used to collect data from the learners. The inventory was almost not changed since the purpose of this study was to replicate and expand on Horwitz’s 1988 study in a Turkish context. Only a couple of items were modified so that they could be expressed in Turkish and be suitable for a Turkish context. The

Turkish version was back translated by two different experts in the field. The two forms were given to a bilingual group of people. The correlation coefficient between the two forms was .87; therefore, we used the Turkish version to collect data. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale, which invites the learners to express their beliefs from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The same categories, namely, the nature of language learning, the difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, language learning strategies, and motivation and expectations were used as suggested by Horwitz. The BALLI was administered to 200 students during 2008/09. The forms were completed anonymously in class. Data was gathered from totally 156 students. The same inventory was modified for the teachers. Items which are directly related to learner beliefs (items 12,15,18,23, and 31) were excluded from the scale. Thus, a 27-item scale was given to totally 19 teachers teaching in the same unit. The response rate of the teachers was 100%.

C. Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS 15.0 package program. Data was analyzed descriptively (mean scores, frequencies, standard deviations, and percentages. For each item, the difference between the learners and the teachers was determined via a t-test for independent samples. Significant levels were set at $p<0.05$.

V. LIMITATIONS

One of the limitations of this study is that all the participants involved in the study were from the same unit attending an EFL preparation program. It should also be noted that there was an imbalance of the number of the teachers and the students (156 students and 19 teachers)

VI. RESULTS

In the study aiming to investigate the learner and teacher beliefs about foreign language learning, we analyzed the frequencies, and the results were given as percentages in the following tables. Two positively worded points (agree and strongly agree) and two negatively worded points (disagree and strongly disagree) were grouped together so that we could see whether the participants had positive or negative beliefs on one item. The categories suggested by Horwitz (1988) were used for data categorization. In each category, the beliefs of learners and teachers were presented in percentages and the difference was determined by means of a t-test and the significance value was given.

The first category suggested by Horwitz (1988) was difficulty of language learning. When the beliefs of learners and teachers were compared, a clear difference can be observed (Table 1). Almost 80% of the learners believed that English is a difficult language to learn; however, the majority of the teachers (~88%) thought that English is an easy or a medium-difficulty

language ($p < .05$). Learners also underestimated the duration necessary to learn English. They believed English can be learned in less than a year or in 1-2 years by spending only 1 hour a day (~55%); however, teachers believed one cannot learn English in 1 hour a day (~37%; $p < .05$). Learners and teachers also differed in terms of difficulty of speaking and understanding a foreign language. While ~45% of learners agreed with item 24, ~90% of teachers showed disagreement ($p < .05$). Despite these differences in their values, we also observed that teachers and learners showed agreement. Both believed that some languages are easier than others (~75% of the learners; ~95% of the teachers agreed; $p > .05$). Another item which revealed no significant difference between the learners and the teachers was that the ease of reading and writing than speaking and understanding the foreign language. Both the teachers and the learners disagreed with item 28 (~31% of the learners and ~32% of the teachers; $p > .05$).

Table 1: Difficulty of Language Learning (in percentages)

Item#	Item	Subjects	1 + 2	3	4 + 5*	p
3	<i>Some languages are easier to learn than others.</i>	Students Teachers	74.4 94.8	16.7 5.3	9.0 ---	.003†
6	<i>I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak this language very well.</i>	Students Teachers	30.1	54.5	15.4	.000†
24	<i>It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.</i>	Students Teachers	25.0 10.5	29.5 ---	45.5 89.5	.001†
28	<i>It is easier to read and write this language than to speak and understand it.</i>	Students Teachers	41.6 36.9	27.6 31.6	30.8 31.6	.659
4	English is: 1) a very difficult language, 2) a difficult language, 3) a language of medium difficulty, 4) an easy language, 5) a very easy language.	<i>students</i> 5.1 25.0 54.5 14.1 1.3 <i>teachers</i> --- --- 36.8 52.6 10.5				.000†
14	<i>If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?</i> 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years, 3) 3-5 years, 4) 5-10 years, 5) You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day	<i>students</i> 16.7 37.8 22.4 4.5 18.6 <i>teachers</i> 5.3 31.6 26.3 --- 36.8				.088

*Note: 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree; † $p < .05$

The second category examined was “Foreign Language Aptitude” and the results obtained in that category are given in Table 2. The majority of the participants agreed that language learning is easier for children than for adults (learners: ~85%; teachers: ~95% agreement). Learners and teachers were determined to have found similar beliefs in that people who are good at mathematics and science are not good at languages (~57% of the learners and ~68% of the teachers showed disagreement; $p < .05$). Another item on which

both the learners and the teachers had similar beliefs was that everyone can learn a language (~79% of the learners and ~84% of the teachers; $p > .05$).

Table 2: Foreign Language Aptitude (in percentages)

Item#	Item	Subjects	1 + 2	3	4 + 5*	p
1	<i>It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.</i>	Students	84.6	6.4	8.9	.043 [†]
		Teachers	94.8	5.3	---	
2	<i>Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.</i>	Students	41.6	20.6	37.8	.000 [†]
		Teachers	100	---	---	
10	<i>It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.</i>	Students	48.7	32.0	19.3	.071
		Teachers	73.7	15.8	10.5	
15	<i>I have foreign language aptitude.</i>	Students	21.2	27.6	51.3	
		Teachers				
22	<i>Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.</i>	Students	12.8	20.5	57.7	.000 [†]
		Teachers	53	36.8	10.5	
29	<i>People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.</i>	Students	14.8	28.2	57.0	.968
		Teachers	10.6	21.1	68.4	
32	<i>People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.</i>	Students	23.8	26.3	50.0	.255
		Teachers	57.9	42.1	---	
33	<i>Turkish people are good at learning foreign languages.</i>	Students	18.6	43.6	37.8	.778
		Teachers	31.6	26.3	42.1	
34	<i>Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.</i>	Students	78.8	11.5	9.6	.545
		Teachers	84.3	5.3	10.5	

*Note: 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree; [†] $p < .05$

One of the biggest differences was obtained in item 2, which stated that some people have inborn capacity for language learning. It is interesting to see that all the teachers agreed and strongly agreed with that item while only ~41% of the learners thought so ($p < .05$). Another big difference was determined in item 22, which indicated that women are better language learners than men ($p < .05$). Nearly half of the teachers believed that women are better language learners; however, nearly 58% of the learners disagreed or strongly disagreed with that item. Although the percentages of the learners (~49%) and the teachers (~75%) indicated that they had differing beliefs on learning another language is easier if you already know a language, we could not find a statistically significant difference between the learners and the teachers in this

item ($p > .05$). Similarly, despite no statistical significance, half of the learners (50%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the item stating that people speaking a foreign language are intelligent; however, more than half of the teachers (58%) agreed or strongly agreed with that item.

Item numbers 8, 11, 16, 20, 25, and 26 tried to determine “The Nature of Learning”. Nearly half of the learners (~42%) did not believe in the importance of knowing the foreign culture to speak the foreign language; however, ~37% of the teachers found it necessary ($p < .05$; Table 3). The number of teachers who disagreed with the item stating, “Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating to English”, nearly doubled the number of students who disagreed (~90% vs. ~49%; $p < .05$). We can infer from this item that the teachers do not believe in the translating from one language into the other while the learners strongly believe in it and act accordingly in the courses. Similarly, most of the learners believed that learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new words (~72%); however, only 42% of the teachers agreed with that item ($p < .05$). If we consider Table 3; we can state that the majority of learners and teachers showed agreement on learning a foreign language in the foreign country ($p > .05$) and learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects ($p > .05$).

Table 3: The Nature of Learning (in percentages)

Item#	Item	Subjects	1 + 2	3	4 + 5*	p
8	<i>It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.</i>	Students Teachers	33.9 36.9	24.4 36.8	41.7 26.3	.000†
11	<i>It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.</i>	Students Teachers	80.1 73.7	7.1 5.3	12.8 21.1	.564
16	<i>Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.</i>	Students Teachers	71.8 42.1	14.7 31.6	13.5 26.3	.016†
20	<i>Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.</i>	Students Teachers	45.5 10.5	26.3 36.8	28.2 52.6	.001†
25	<i>Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.</i>	Students Teachers	72.5 84.2	13.5 5.3	14.1 10.5	.494
26	<i>Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating into English.</i>	Students Teachers	23.4 ---	28.2 10.5	48.7 89.5	.000†

*Note: 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree; † $p < .05$

Learning and communication strategies are vitally important in language learning. Items 17 and 21 investigated learning strategies. We

determined that the learners and the teachers shared the same belief since the majority of them believed that repetition and practice are very important in language learning ($p > .05$; Table 4). They also had similar thoughts on practicing language in language labs (65% of the learners and 60% of the teachers agreed; $p > .05$).

Using the language communicatively is more important than knowing its rules. The beliefs on the using language communicatively revealed both similarities and differences between the learners and the teachers. The majority of learners and teachers disagreed with the item which stated that one should keep quiet until saying something correctly (learners: ~74%; teachers: ~90% disagreement). Both learners (~75%) and teachers (100%) expressed the importance of guessing the meaning of an unknown word ($p > .05$).

Table 4: Learning and Communication Strategies (in percentages)

Item#	Learning Strategies	Subjects	1 + 2	3	4 + 5*	p
17	<i>It is important to repeat and practice a lot.</i>	Students Teachers	83.9 94.7	5.1 ---	11.0 5.3	.055
21	<i>It is important to practice in the language laboratory.</i>	Students Teachers	65.4 57.9	19.2 36.8	15.4 5.3	.841
Item#	Communication Strategies	Subjects	1 + 2	3	4 + 5*	
7	<i>It is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent.</i>	Students Teachers	60.9 5.2	16.7 15.8	22.4 79.0	.045 [†]
9	<i>You shouldn't say anything in the foreign language until you can say it correctly.</i>	Students Teachers	13.4 5.3	12.8 5.2	73.8 89.5	.270
12	<i>If I heard someone speaking the language I am trying to learn, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language.</i>	Students Teachers	53.2	23.7	23.1	
13	<i>It's O.k. to guess if you don't know a word in the foreign language.</i>	Students Teachers	74.4 100.0	14.7 ---	10.9 ---	.130
18	<i>I feel self-conscious speaking the foreign language in front of other people.</i>	Students Teachers	40.4	34.0	25.7	
19	<i>If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning it will be hard to get rid of them later on.</i>	Students Teachers	43.6 21.1	23.7 21.1	32.7 57.9	.023 [†]

*Note: 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree; [†] $p < .05$

However, they differed from each other when it came to accent. While ~61% of the learners believed that speaking with an excellent accent is very important,

only 5% of the teachers thought so ($p < .05$). ~44% of the learners believed that mistakes should be corrected immediately to learn accurately; however, the teachers were more tolerant on this: only 21% of them showed agreement ($p < .05$; Table 4).

Table 5: Motivations and Expectations (in percentages)

Item#	Item	Subjects	1 + 2	3	4 + 5*	p
23	<i>If I get to speak this language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.</i>	Students Teachers	76.2	12.2	11.5	
27	<i>If I learn to speak this language very well, it will help me get a good job.</i>	Students Teachers	80.7	9.0	10.3	
30	<i>Turkish people think that it is important to speak a foreign language.</i>	Students Teachers	60.9 73.7	21.8 15.8	17.3 10.5	.255
31	<i>I would like to learn this language so that I can get to know its speakers better.</i>	Students Teachers	33.9	21.2	44.8	

*Note: 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree; [†] $p < .05$

Why people try to learn a language gives insights about their motivation in learning. The majority of the learners (~61%) and the teachers (~74%) in our group stated that knowing a foreign language is important in Turkey ($p > .05$; Table 5). It was also clear from the expressions of the learners that they had instrumental motivation to learn the language since ~81% of them believed that they could find a good job if they knew a foreign language. The learners (~76%) also stated that they would find many opportunities to use the language.

VII. DISCUSSION

In this study, some representative research studies on learner beliefs and the gap between learner and teacher beliefs have been reviewed. Then, based on the data gathered by means of BALLI, learner and teacher beliefs in a Turkish university context have been summarized. The knowledge of learner beliefs and the gap between learner and teacher beliefs will certainly facilitate the language teacher and learning process.

The important finding of the reported survey is the similarity of beliefs between the learners and the teachers. The data also showed numerous differences between the groups. As the nature of the data collection procedures employed precludes unambiguous explanations, any small differences found in the beliefs could be due to measurement error, differences in participant populations (the different proportions of the learners and the teachers, for example), or the instructional content of specific classes.

This survey gives the results of only a static, cross-sectional view of student beliefs. How learner beliefs change over time, from person to person, and from setting to setting needs further exploration. For example, it is important to find out how student beliefs change over the course of language instruction. A similar study can be applied at the beginning and at the end of the program so that any changes could be determined throughout a specific training period. The beliefs of the learners may have been influenced by the curricular or the instructional practices. The beliefs of the language teachers might also have been effective on the learner beliefs.

A. Pedagogical Implications

Although our main purpose was to determine the beliefs of a group of Turkish EFL learners and their teachers held in language learning, some of the specific beliefs the learners have should not be ignored. Majority of the learners believe that knowing a language will be very useful to get a good job, and they are well aware that they will be able to find a lot of opportunities to use the language. These beliefs will lead to great motivation. However, they have some beliefs which may result in negative outcomes for most of the learners. For example, nearly half of them think that they do not have foreign language aptitude. They study it because it is the part of the school curriculum. They also do not believe that Turkish people are good at learning languages. In fact, they contradict with themselves because the majority of them believe that everyone can learn a foreign language. Therefore, in addition to language instruction, awareness raising tasks or studies should take place in the institutions. Teachers sometimes should give presentations on how they can become better language learners.

Their beliefs extend to ineffective learning strategies. For example, most of them believe that learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary items. Such a belief may result in their memorizing long vocabulary lists, which they may not be able to use suitably in certain contexts. Nearly half of them believe that learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules. This may explain why Turkish learners know a lot about the language, but they have a lot of difficulty in putting this theoretical knowledge into practice. In addition, they believe that one should speak the language with an excellent accent, which puts a lot of burden on them. Despite the opposite beliefs of the teachers on this issue, students' beliefs on speaking with an excellent accent prevent them from participating in the class discussions and answering the questions voluntarily. In addition, most of them are criticized harshly by their classmates in case of a pronunciation error.

Another reason why they are not good at languages may be their anticipation on the duration of a person can be fluent in a language. Nearly forty percent of them believe that if someone studies one hour a day, they can become fluent in the language in 1 or 2 years. As they cannot reach their

purpose so quickly, most of them give up. In fact, the majority of the teachers are aware that one cannot become fluent in a foreign language studying only one hour a day. Learning a language requires more effort. The teachers may help them change their minds and work harder to achieve good results. It is also interesting to see more than half of the learners express that they have no idea that they will ultimately learn to speak this language. They have very little hope, or they are hopeless. The teachers should encourage them that they will be able to learn it if they are persistent, and if they exert enough effort.

B. Suggestions for Further Research

We obtained some important data on the beliefs of the learners and the teachers in our institution about the language learning/teaching process. However, this may not lead us to put this process into a halt. As stated above, beliefs may be influenced by various factors; therefore, they should be investigated in differing times. Researchers from different institutions can cooperate together in order to cover wider ranges and compare learner beliefs in different contexts. Learner and teacher beliefs might be investigated from different perspectives such as age, gender, and socio-economic status. In addition, correlations between learner beliefs and proficiency levels, achievement scores, and self-reported proficiency levels of the learners may be investigated in the following studies.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The findings we obtained confirm that students arrive at the task of language learning with some certain beliefs, which may be effective in their pursuit of the task and in their achievement. If the teachers are not aware of the beliefs of the learners, their efforts in applying some teaching methods to get the maximum benefit may be in vain. Knowledge of the learner beliefs will be important in increasing teachers' understanding of how students approach the tasks; and as a result, will help the teachers to apply more effective teaching techniques during the courses.

REFERENCES

- ALTAN, M. Z. (2006), "Beliefs about Language Learning of Foreign Language-Major University Students", *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 31(2), S. 45-52.
- BACON, S. M. C.; FINNEMANN, M. D. (1992), "Sex Differences in Self-reported Beliefs about Language Learning and Authentic Oral and Written Input", *Language Learning*, 42(4), S. 471-495.
- BERNAT, E.; LLYOD, R. (2007), "Exploring the Gender Effect on EFL Learners' Beliefs about Language Learning", *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology*, 7, S. 79-91.
- HORWITZ, E. K. (1988), "The Beliefs about Language Learning of Beginning University Foreign Language Students", *The Modern Language Journal*, 72(3), S. 283-294.
- KERN, R. G. (1995), "Students' and Teachers' Beliefs about Language Learning", *Foreign Language Annals*, 28(1), S. 71-92.

- MANTLE-BROMLEY, C. (1995), "Positive Attitudes and Realistic Beliefs: Links to Proficiency", *Modern Language Journal*, 79(3), S. 372-386.
- OZ, H. (2007), "Understanding Metacognitive Knowledge of Turkish EFL Students in Secondary Education", *Novitas-ROYAL*, 1(2), S. 53-83.
- PEACOCK, M. (1999), "Beliefs about Language Learning and Their Relationship to Proficiency", *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(2), S. 247-265.
- SIEBERT, L. L. (2003), "Student and Teacher Beliefs about Language Learning", *The ORTESOL Journal*, 21, S. 7-39.
- TERCANLIOGLU, L. (2005), "Pre-service EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Foreign Language Learning and How They Relate to Gender", *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*, 5-3(1), S. 145-162. Retrieved on 9th March, 2009 from http://www.investigacionpsicopedagogica.org/revista/articulos/5/english/Art_5_58.pdf

