

2016

Exploring EFL Learners' Perceived Self-efficacy and Beliefs on English Language Learning

Gülten Genç

İnönü University, 11farewell@gmail.com

Emine Kuluşaklı

emine.kulusakli@inonu.edu.tr

Savaş Aydın

savas.aydin@inonu.edu.tr

Recommended Citation

Genç, G., Kuluşaklı, E., & Aydın, S. (2016). Exploring EFL Learners' Perceived Self-efficacy and Beliefs on English Language Learning. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(2).
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41n2.4>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.
<http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol41/iss2/4>

Exploring Prospective EFL Teachers' Perceived Self-efficacy and Beliefs on English Language Learning

Dr. Gülten Genç
Emine Kuluşaklı
Savaş Aydın
İnönü University, Turkey

Abstract: Learners' perceived self-efficacy and beliefs on English language learning are important in education. Taking into consideration the important impact of individual variables on language learning, this study seeks to highlight the relationship between Turkish EFL learners' beliefs about language learning and their sense of self-efficacy. The participants are 210 Turkish EFL undergraduate students whose major is English. The subjects were questioned about their beliefs and self-efficacy as English language learners. The data gathered were analysed quantitatively. The findings demonstrated that EFL students have medium scores in their English self-efficacy and hold the strong belief that motivation factors have a great role on their learning process. Moreover, student's beliefs about language learning are affected by their English self-efficacy. It is recommended that teachers and teacher trainers enhance students' self-efficacy and help students hold correct beliefs about foreign language learning to motivate them. It is expected that the findings of the study will shed light on the relationship between EFL learners' beliefs and self-efficacy and provide guidelines for teachers to help their students become aware of and to evaluate their own beliefs in language learning and English self-efficacy during the teaching of a foreign language.

Introduction

Learners' perceived self-efficacy and beliefs on English language learning are important issues in education for the last three decades. Recent research studies conducted in relation to the language learning have indicated that, learners' beliefs about foreign language learning show variations depending on their individual differences. Their previous experiences and self-efficacy as language learners or their own cultural backgrounds are often said to play a significant role in shaping their beliefs. Taking into consideration the important impact of these variables on language learning, this study seeks to highlight the relationship between Turkish EFL learners' beliefs about language learning and their self-efficacy.

Learner's Perceived Self-efficacy

The term self-efficacy should be defined in order to understand its use in this study. According to Bandura's self-efficacy theory, self-efficacy is defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given

attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Self-efficacy is the personal determination of one’s own ability to deal with a certain task. Notably, this determination is not based entirely on actual past experience or existing ability and skills but also on students' perceptions of their own knowledge and ability relative to the task or situation (DeTure, 2004). Taipjutorus, Hansen, and Brown (2012) studied the learners’ self-efficacy in a learner-controlled online learning environment. For them, self-efficacy is specific to the context of a situation but, once established, is generalized to other situations with the strongest effect taking place in activities that are closest to those in which self-efficacy has been improved. Taipjutorus, et al asserted that ensuring that online learners develop self-efficacy within a course means that they should continue to be successful online learners into the future.

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is a more consistent predictor of behavior and achievement than any other related variables. He noticed self-efficacy is the most influential arbiter in human agency and has a powerful role in making decisions. Also, he claimed learning new skills and performing them in authentic situations are much more related to self-efficacy beliefs than the other self-constructs. So, it is self-efficacy that helps us explain the reason of why people’s behaviors are different when they have similar knowledge. Bernhard (1997) defines the concept of self-efficacy as learners’ beliefs about their abilities to accomplish a task whereas, for Pajares (2000), it is the students’ judgments of their academic competence. The concept is also defined by Ehrman (1996) as the degree to which the student thinks he or she has the capacity to cope with the learning challenge (Cited in Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 16).

Rahimi and Abedini’s (2009) findings provide valuable information to foreign language educators. They indicate that the students’ self-beliefs of language ability can influence their language achievement negatively or positively depending on the strength of their efficacy beliefs. Bonyadi, Nikou and Shahbaz (2012) concur, suggesting that learner variables such as self-efficacy and language learning strategies are worthy of exploring. Başaran and Cabaroğlu (2014) revealed that teachers of English have frequently observed in their classrooms that students with poor proficiency in English are mostly those who do not believe that they can learn a foreign language. Their study has shown that participants’ self-efficacy perceptions have been restructured and improved through a process of positive experiences. This observation has been confirmed by a great amount of research (Tanaka & Ellis, 2003) on self-efficacy in foreign language learning, which has convincingly reported that there is a strong positive correlation between learners’ self-efficacy and their EFL achievements.

According to Bandura’s social cognitive theory (1986, 1991b), goals increase people’s cognitive and affective reactions to performance outcomes because goals specify the requirements for personal success. Goals also prompt self-monitoring and self-judgements of performance attainments (Bandura & Cervone, 1983, 1986 Locke, Cartledge, & Knerr, 1970); however, self-regulation of motivation depends on self-efficacy beliefs as well as on personal goals. Perceived self efficacy influences the level of goal challenge people set for themselves, the amount of effort they mobilize, and their persistence in the face of difficulties. Perceived self-efficacy is theorized to influence performance accomplishments both directly and indirectly through its influences on self-set goals.

Learners’ Beliefs on Language Learning

Foreign language learners often hold different beliefs or notions about language learning because they are influenced by previous experiences as language learners, or shaped by their own cultural backgrounds (Horwitz, 1987). Many researchers have suggested that

learners' preconceived beliefs about language learning would likely affect the way they use their learning strategies and learn a foreign language (Abraham and Vann, 1987; Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Wenden, 1986a, 1987a).

Hosseini and Pourmandnia (2013) stated in his study that teachers need to have a clear understanding of the language being taught and student beliefs, because learners with realistic and informed beliefs are more likely to behave productively in the class, work harder outside the class, and persist longer with language study; this must be taken into consideration particularly due to the fact that when students' beliefs and performance do not match, they become frustrated and disappointed with the class and with themselves resulting in hindrance in the intake of the material. Recent researchers have examined learners' beliefs about language learning for different purposes. Cotterall (1995), for example, explored how those learners' beliefs about language learning reflect learners' readiness for autonomy. Victori (1992) expanded Wenden's (1987b, 1991) classifications of second language learners' metacognitive knowledge and developed a questionnaire to measure students' metacognitive knowledge in language learning so that it was possible to modify and reconstruct possible misconceptions that the students may have (Victori, 1992, cited in Victori and Lockhart, 1995).

In the literature, it has also been emphasized that teachers' teaching methodologies should also be compatible with (or at least, take into account) learner beliefs (Yalçın, 2013). In his study, it was seen that teachers' beliefs and practices had an impact on learner beliefs and learner beliefs tended to show similarity with teacher beliefs in time. The study also concluded that belief change is possible but a radical change in beliefs about language learning requires considerable amount of time and effort. However, in some other studies there was no significant change in learners' beliefs over time (Bahadır, 2011). Yalçın (2013) also indicated that students were as successful as they believed they were and EFL teachers' and students' beliefs were related to some extent.

Horwitz (1987) administered the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) to groups of learners to identify the types of beliefs held by language learners. Five general areas of beliefs emerged from the analysis of the responses relating to (1) the difficulty of language learning, (2) aptitude for language learning, (3) the nature of language learning, (4) learning and communication strategies, and (5) motivation and expectations. Wenden (1986, 1987) grouped the beliefs into three general categories: (1) use of the language (for example, the importance of 'learning in a natural way'), (2) beliefs relating to learning about the language (for example, the importance of learning grammar and vocabulary), and (3) the importance of personal factors (i.e. beliefs about the feelings that facilitate or inhibit learning, self-concept, and aptitude for learning).

Inceçay (2011) identifies five main categories of language learning beliefs in the end of her study; (1) ideal English learner, (2) ideal English teacher, (3) ideal English classroom, (4) difficulties in language learning process, (5) strategies of learners to overcome difficulties. The findings of the observation checklist and reflection papers written by the participants reveal some significant effects of the language learning beliefs of preservice teachers on their practice teaching. The results of the study revealed that both participants' teachings are greatly affected by their foreign language learning beliefs.

Relationship Between Self-efficacy and Learners' Beliefs

According to Ellis (2008), the relationship between beliefs and learning/proficiency is necessarily an indirect one. That is beliefs do not have a direct effect on language learning but are mediated by the actions that learners perform. Thus, the strength of the relationship

depends on the extent to which individual learners are able or are prepared to act on their beliefs - conflicts between beliefs, situational constraints, cultural background (see Schulz 2001) or personal reasons may prevent them from performing. Thus, in the case of some learners' beliefs can have a clear effect on learning because the learners are able and prepared to act on their beliefs. In the case of other learners, beliefs have little effect on learning because learners do not engage in learning activities compatible with them. What has emerged as especially important in these studies is the extent to which learners develop beliefs related to self-efficacy and self-directed learning as these govern the extent to which they are prepared to work on opportunities for learning in their particular learning context.

Significance of the Study and Research Questions

As self-efficacy is an influential factor in human behavior, it has been studied in relation to different variables such as career choice (Betz & Hackett, 1986), athletic performance (Feltz, 1982), interpersonal relationship (Kanfer & Zeiss, 1983), career planning (Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984), self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2000) and teacher education (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). The linguists and educators mentioned above have implied that there is a relationship between learners' beliefs and self-efficacy in their studies.

This review of the literature indicates that little research has investigated, the association between beliefs about language learning and self-efficacy, in EFL context. Thus, this research intends to provide a clear insight into the relationship between the concepts of learner beliefs and their sense of self-efficacy in EFL communities with the aim of filling the existing gap in the literature focusing on the following research questions:

1. What are the most common beliefs and self-efficacy levels of prospective EFL teachers with respect to foreign language learning?
2. Does the level of self-efficacy affect Turkish EFL learners' beliefs about language learning?

Method

Data for the study was collected during the 2014-2015 academic year from all prospective English teachers attending different years of English Language Teacher Training Program at a state university in Turkey. Subjects had been informed verbally that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and would not influence their grade in the courses, following this they received written information about the study. Totally 210 volunteer students participated in the study and 194 of them were involved in the analysis. Of the 194 students, 50 were male (25.8%) and 144 were female (74.2%).

In accordance with the purpose of the study, two scales were administered in the participants' native language in order to obtain data. The BALLI (Horwitz, 1987) was administered to gather data on language learners' beliefs in EFL context and the "English Self-Efficacy Scale" was administered to gather data on perceived self-efficacy of student teachers towards reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. BALLI was developed by Horwitz (1987) to assess 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 (5 items). For the current sample, Cronbach's Alpha of BALLI was 0.79. "English Self-Efficacy Scale" was developed by Yanar and Bümen (2008) to assess

students' perceived self-efficacy towards four basic language skills; reading (8 items), writing (10 items), listening (10 items) and speaking (6 items). In this study Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients were also calculated for each aspect of the scale and found to be 0.88 for reading; 0.83 for writing; 0.90 for listening; 0.88 for speaking and 0.94 for the overall scale which are quite satisfying since the minimum level is recommended to be 0.70 by Pallant (2005).

A quantitative research methodology was followed and a descriptive survey study was conducted. After collecting the completed questionnaires, all the data were coded and then analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS17.0). To be more specific, firstly, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations were computed to display the subjects' overall responses to the English self-efficacy and beliefs items. Secondly, t-test was conducted in order to determine if a significant difference in self-efficacy and language learning beliefs existed.

In the analysis, the five rating scales were consolidated into three groups and were interpreted as follows. Responses "1" and "2" were combined and analyzed under the category of "Disagreement" which indicated that the respondent disagreed with the statement. Responses "4" and "5" were analyzed together under the category of "Agreement" which indicated that the respondent agreed with the statement. Response "3" was analyzed in the category of "Neutral" which meant that the respondent did not either agree or disagree with the statement. The percentages of the responses were used to describe the pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs about language learning. The individual scores of the responses in the two surveys were paired for t-test analysis (paired sample correlations) to check whether there were any significant differences between beliefs about language learning and their perceptions about self-efficacy levels. Descriptive statistics were computed on the belief items. Because the BALLI does not yield a composite score, overall comparisons across the language classes were made using frequency tables of the responses.

Findings

To assess the students' beliefs about learning English as a foreign language, descriptive statistics were conducted and group means and standard deviations were presented in Table 1. Considering the mean values shown in the table, it can be concluded that the participants have beliefs about language learning in varying degrees of strength. As can be seen in the table, the beliefs of "Motivation and Expectation" were the highest, which means "very strong agreement" in Likert type scales and followed by, "Nature of Language Learning", "English Language Aptitude", "Learning and Communication Strategies" and "Difficulty of Language Learning". Results of the items are presented in groups according to the five language areas of the BALLI outlined in the method section.

GROUPS	N	MEAN	SD
English Language Aptitude	188	3.52	0.53
The Difficulty of English Language Learning	188	3.39	0.53
The Nature of Language Learning	190	3.58	0.58
Learning and Communication Strategies	191	3.50	0.47
Motivation and Expectation	191	4.14	0.74

Table 1: Means for the five aspects of students' beliefs in learning English as a foreign

This finding shows that EFL students, in general, believed that the motivation factors have a great role on their learning process while the beliefs related to difficulty of English language were not their main concern. Accordingly, applying motivation factors to encourage students seems to have a significant relationship with their success. The descriptive statistics for self-reported efficacy for reading, writing, listening and reading skills are shown in Table 2. The means in the subscales suggest that participants judged themselves more efficacious for reading and speaking (M: 3.95) than for listening (M: 3.83) and writing (M: 3.67). Students also have medium scores in their overall English self-efficacy.

SKILLS	N	MEAN	SD
Reading	189	3.95	0.61
Writing	189	3.67	0.62
Listening	183	3.83	0.66
Speaking	190	3.95	0.73
Overall Self-efficacy	195	3.85	0.68

Table 2: Analysis of Pre-service teachers' responses about their perceived self-efficacy

Summated scores of the overall Self-efficacy Scale measuring efficacy for English were used to group the participants as high and low self-efficacious student teachers. Based on the variable distribution (ranging from 1 to 5), a low level of efficacy was determined as less than 3.85 and a high level of efficacy was set as equal to or greater than 3.85. This distinction was used to see the differences between high and low efficacy participants in terms of their beliefs about learning English as a foreign language. Out of 195 participants, 93 belonged to the low-self efficacious group whereas 102 of them belonged to the high self-efficacious group.

The descriptive statistics for beliefs about language learning and the relationship between self-reported efficacy for English and beliefs about English as a foreign language are shown in the Table 3 through Table 7. The paired samples t-test results pointed out that although there were differences in both groups' belief mean scores in all the items, the differences were not statistically significant in all of them. There were significant differences on 11 of the items. In other words, whether students have high or low levels of self-efficacy, their beliefs in the rest of the items do not differ.

		Disagree	Not Sure	Agree			
BELIEFS ITEMS	SEL	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	Mean	t	p
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	Low	4.3	13.0	82.6	4.58		
	High	7.0	7.0	86.0	4.56		
2. Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	Low	7.6	15.2	77.2	4.38		
	High	8.9	12.9	78.2	4.39		
6. People from my country are good at learning foreign languages.	Low	25.7	42.6	31.7	3.11	-2.09	0.03*
	High	34.1	44.0	22.0	2.75		
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	Low	9.8	18.5	71.7	4.06		
	High	13.9	18.8	67.3	4.23		
11. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.	Low	57.6	20.7	21.7	2.52		
	High	53.5	16.8	29.7	2.28		

16. I have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	Low	27.5	35.2	37.4	3.19	-3.98	0.00*
	High	13.9	22.8	63.4	3.99		
19. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	Low	30.8	27.5	41.8	3.37		
	High	27.7	25.7	46.5	3.21		
30. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent	Low	27.5	27.5	45.1	3.81		
	High	19.8	19.8	60.4	3.35		
33. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	Low	10.0	24.4	65.6	4.08		
	High	14.9	15.8	69.3	4.11		

Table 3: Pre-service teachers' responses about English language aptitude

In the “Foreign Language Aptitude” category, statistically significant differences were determined between two groups in terms of two items. Low self-efficacious students agree more about “people from my country are good at learning foreign languages”. It seems that participants with low self-efficacy level are more optimistic about the success of Turkish language learners believing that they are successful language learners. On the other hand, high self-efficacious students mostly (almost half of them; 44%) reported that they were not sure whether Turkish people were good at learning foreign languages and one third (34%) of them agreed that Turkish people were not good language learners at all.

Bandura (1997) points out, when self-efficacy is high, it leads to higher expectancy for success. This fact may explain the difference between high and low self-efficacious students' beliefs related to the success of Turkish language learners. Since, high self-efficacious students may have higher expectations of success, they are not as optimistic as the low self-efficacious students and do not believe that Turkish people are “good enough” at their language studies.

Another belief on which high self-efficacious students differed significantly was the belief that they had a special ability for learning foreign languages. A significant amount of high self-efficacious students (63.4%) believe that they have a special ability for learning foreign languages while only one third (37.4%) of low self-efficacious students believed they had a special ability to learn a foreign language. Regarding students' responses about “Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages” these results are not gratifying in terms of low-self efficacious students since most of (63%) them do not believe or not sure about whether they have this ability or not. As can be seen in Table 3, almost 80% percent of the students from both groups believed that some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages and are gifted, but only 37% percent of low efficacious students believe that they have this special ability. Perhaps with such a low percent of students believing that they had the aptitude to learn a foreign language, the group would not put as much effort into learning because they generally did not view themselves as being capable of succeeding in a language class. On the other hand, as Horwitz (1987) claimed, a belief in the existence of foreign language aptitude may result from unsuccessful learning experience. She illustrated that learners who are not successful in language learning may develop a belief that there is such a thing as foreign language aptitude and that they themselves do not have this aptitude. Thus, this belief will certainly lead them to withdraw. This may be true for the low self-efficacious participants of this study as well. This is not a desired result in terms of pre-service teachers since they are students of today but teachers of future. As asserted by Horwitz, (1985) and Puchta (1999) if low self efficacious pre-service teachers keep holding this belief, they will reflect it to their students in the future by expecting succes just from the students perceived to have this special skill, therefore, not investing in learning of all students.

The paired samples t-test results pointed out that although there were differences in both groups' belief mean scores in all items, the differences were not statistically significant (Table 3). In the other items from “language aptitude”, the responses of participants' from

each group are very close to each other. Similar to each other, both groups mostly believe that children are better language learners than adults, learning a foreign language is easier for people who can already speak one foreign language, and everyone can learn to speak a foreign language. At this point, it should be noted that, even though most self-efficacious students reported believing that foreign language aptitude existed, the majority of them also (83.3%) agreed that everyone could learn a foreign language. Although this result may seem as contradictory at first glance, it can be explained that, the low self-efficacious students seem to hold the belief that the special ability for language learning is a gift, which helps the language learning process, but is not an essential requirement.

Both groups mostly disagree that people who are good at mathematics or science are not good language learners. Last of all, more than half of high self-efficacious participants (60%) believe that people who speak more than one language are very intelligent whereas more than half efficacious participants reported disagreement (27.5%) or stated (27.5%) that they were not sure about it.

		Disagree	Not Sure	Agree			
BELIEFS ITEMS		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	Mean	t	p
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	Low	15.4	16.5	68.1	4.05		
	High	11.1	13.1	75.8	4.29		
4. English is	Low	(a+b)**	(c)**	(d+e)**	3.10	-26	0.00*
	High	22.8	48.9	28.3	3.60		
5. I believe that I will learn to speak English well.	Low	8.7	19.6	71.7	4.26	-1.9	0.04*
	High	89	10.9	80.2	4.42		
15. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language very well.	Low	(a+b)***	(c)***	(d+e)***	2.36		
	High	54.3	18.5	27.2	2.45		
25. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.	Low	48.9	17.4	33.7	2.84		
	High	39.6	28.7	31.7	2.69		
34. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	Low	19.8	20.9	59.3	3.89		
	High	16.8	21.8	61.4	3.79		

Table 4: Pre-service teachers' responses about the difficulty of English language learning

** (a): A very difficult language (b) A difficult language (c) A language of medium difficulty (d) An easy lang (e) A very easy language

*** (a): Less than a year (b) 1-2 years (c) 3-5 years (d) 5-10 years (e) You can't learn a language in one hour a day

Regarding the difficulty of English, the responses were varied and statistically significant differences were found in only two items and mean scores of high self-efficacious students are notably higher than those of low self-efficacious in both of them (Table 4). Almost half of (45%) high self-efficacious students and 28% of low self-efficacious students agree that English is an “easy or very easy” language. The result indicating that almost half of (48.9%) low self-efficacious students and 40% of high self-efficacious students believe that English is a language of medium difficulty is encouraging. However, the results related to the students' beliefs about the difficulty of English should be approached cautiously. Although it seems that around half of the students from both groups view learning English as a subject that can be under control, the number of high self-efficacious students perceiving learning English as “easy or very easy” is nearly two times more than that of low self-efficacious ones. Based on the findings claimed by Mori (1999), Horwitz (1989), and Truitt (1995), high self-efficacious students beliefs about the difficulty of the target language can undermine those groups' success in language learning. If those students cannot make as much progress as they expected they may get frustrated and disappointed. Nevertheless, in Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy, people have different efficacy beliefs towards

certain situations. In other words, self-efficacy influences how learners approach the task, including the strategies they use, the amount of effort they put into completing the task, and whether or not they take on challenging tasks. In addition, high sense of self-efficacy arouses intrinsic interest in activities, sets challenging goals, recover confidence after failures. On the other hand, people with low self-efficacy may believe that things are tougher than they really are (Pajares, 1997; Bandura, 1986, 1997). Yet, it should also be noted that this belief may still negatively affect them as future teachers. As long as they view English as an easy language, they might get frustrated with their students who cannot perform as well as they expected at a particular time.

The findings also revealed that both groups showed significant difference in their beliefs about learning to speak English well. It is obvious that they believe they will learn to speak English well. As can be seen in the table, a huge amount of participants from both groups, (specifically 80% of self-efficacious and 70% of low self efficacious students) seem to believe and hope that they will learn to speak English well. Although there are statistically significant difference between the groups, response rates towards their positive beliefs about learning English well is encouraging on behalf of both groups. On the other hand, less than 10% of participants from both of the groups do not even believe that they will learn to speak English well.

With regard to the length of time required to speak English well, half of the participants from both of the groups believe that 1-2 years will be enough. More students from low self-efficacy group believe that English cannot be learnt in one hour a day or it would take 5-10 years. Almost half (48%) of the students from low self-efficacy group do not agree that speaking English is easier than understanding while more than one third (33,7%) of this group agree that speaking is easier than understanding. Response rates of high self-efficacious students are very close; yet, one third of this group reported that they are not sure if speaking is easier than understanding and fewer students agree that speaking is easier than understanding English. As for the comparison of language skills, it seems that response rates of both groups are similar and participants from both groups agreed that reading and writing English is easier than speaking and understanding.

		Disagree	Not Sure	Agree			
BELIEFS ITEMS	SEL	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	Mean	t	p
8. It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English.	Low High	50.5 27.7	19.8 23.8	29.7 48.5	2.58 3.41	-2.39	0.01*
12. It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.	Low High	16.3 9.9	5.4 5.0	78.3 85.1	4.23 4.50	-1.77	0.04*
17. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words.	Low High	12.0 7.9	23.9 21.8	64.1 70.3	4.04 4.24		
23. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar.	Low High	50.0 40	22.8 30.0	27.2	2.54 2.80	-.50	0.17*
27. Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects.	Low High	8.7 7.9	8.7 9.9	82.6 82.2	4.47 4.48		
28. The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.	Low High	24.4 15.8	33.3 30.7	42.2 53.5	3.35 3.75		

Table 5: Pre-service teachers' responses about the nature of language learning

In terms of the responses about the nature of language learning, (Table 5) statistically significant difference was determined in three of the items. According to the values, it can be

said that half of (50.1%) low self-efficacious students are less concerned about studying target culture in order to speak English and nearly one third of (29.7%) those participants believe in the importance of culture teaching in foreign language education. In contrast, half of (48.5%) high self-efficacious students believe in the importance of learning target culture whereas almost one third of them (27.7%) do not mind culture learning.

The next item that is statistically significant is the belief that English is best learned in an English speaking country. A huge majority (85.1%) of the participants from high self-efficacy group seem to believe that it is best to learn English in a target country. Most (78.31%) low self-efficacious students also agree with this statement but, the number of the participants from low self-efficacious students (16.3%) who do not agree with the statement cannot be underestimated.

Experience of learning a foreign language in different settings such as a new classroom, a new city, or a new country, making friends from the other countries with the help of English, and knowledge about the cultures of English speaking countries may arouse all students' interest and enthusiasm. The participants of this research also seem to have positive beliefs about studying English abroad. However, as Yang and Kim (2011) pointed out, learners may display different types of engagements in different study abroad contexts, and may experience stress and anxiety. But, the students with higher sense of efficacy, will apply greater effort, exhibit persistence and endurance to overcome stress and experience anxiety to fulfill their dreams (Pajares, 1997).

Another statistically significant difference was found between the groups in terms of their belief related to the importance of studying grammar. In the Turkish language education system, grammar has always had a central role, so it is emphasized more than the other skills during language classes. For years, Turkish students' beliefs about learning English have been shaped according to the grammar-based teaching practice in Turkey (Işık, 2011). However, it seems that the effect of this traditional grammar learning approach is fading, especially for low self-efficacious students. While half of low self-efficacious students (50%) endorsed that they did not agree with the importance of grammar in language studies, 40% of high self-efficacious students did not agree it. The results showed that high self-efficacious learners are more inclined to agree that learning grammar is the most useful part of studying grammar. This might be explained by the students' perceptions related to the difficulties of studying grammar.

Although there are differences between the groups it is clear that participants from both groups (around 50%) agreed with the idea that learning English is mostly a matter of translation (item 28), and around one third of both groups neither agreed nor disagreed. Certainly, the traditional Grammar-Translation method is still widely employed in Turkey. An over-emphasis on grammar explanation and translation still prevails at least in instructional settings. As regards the over-emphasis on grammar lessons, while nearly one third of subjects believed that learning English is mostly a matter of learning grammar rules and translation. Certainly, all these beliefs are directly related to a traditional view of language learning in Turkey.

The statement related to the role of vocabulary learning in English is clearly supported by the participants in both groups receiving high levels of agreement. Yet, more students with high self-efficacy (70.3%) agreed about the importance of vocabulary learning than the ones with low self-efficacy (64.1%). As Table 5 indicates, the percentage of the learners in both groups who considered that the most important part of learning English is being able to translate from the native language is quite high (specifically 53.5% for low and 42.2% for high self-efficacious learners) and about one third in both groups are neither agree nor disagree. Furthermore, overwhelmingly, the subjects in both of the groups seem to hold the belief that foreign language learning is different from learning other academic subjects.

		Disagree	Not Sure	Agree			
BELIEFS ITEMS	SEL	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	Mean	t	p
20. People in my country feel that it is important to speak English.	Low	20.7	14.1	65.2	3.89		
	High	20.8	11.9	67.3	3.93		
24. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know native speakers of English better.	Low	22.8	19.6	57.6	3.69		
	High	15.8	20.8	63.4	3.95		
29. If I learn English very well. I will have better opportunities for a good job.	Low	5.5	9.9	84.6	4.58		
	High	8.9	8.9	82.2	4.46		
31. I want to learn to speak English well.	Low	2.2	3.3	94.5	4.84		
	High	5.0	3.0	92.1	4.74		
32. I would like to have friends whose native language is English.	Low	3.3	12.1	84.6	4.62		
	High	5.0	5.9	89.1	4.68		

Table 6: Pre-service teachers' responses about learning and communication strategies

Considering the Table 6 about the results, any statistically significant relationship was not found between high and low self-efficacious groups in terms of the items involved in learning and communication strategies they use. As can be seen from the mean scores between the groups and descriptives, it is clear that responses rated by the subjects are very close to each other. As reported in Table 5, the statement that obtained the highest percentage from both groups is item 31 followed by 32, which both provide evidence of an internal desire and integrative motivation to use English for communicative purposes. In fact, over 90% of the respondents hoped to communicate in English successfully. The next highest average was obtained from item 29, followed by item 20 which both reveal the instrumental value of learning English and explain the strong desire to learn English well of both groups. It can be concluded that both integrative orientations, such as better understanding and getting to know the people who speak the target language and instrumental orientations such as having opportunities for a good job and importance given to learning English in the society, seem to be the major driving forces for learning English among the participants of this research.

		Disagree	Not Sure	Agree			
BELIEFS ITEMS	SEL	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	Mean	t	p
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.	Low	13.0	19.6	67.4	4.08		
	High	14.9	10.9	74.3	4.18		
9. You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.	Low	84.8	4.31	10.9	1.52	0.79	0.04*
	High	72.0	6.02	22.0	2.00		
13. I enjoy practicing English with the native speakers of English I meet.	Low	7.62	14.1	78.3	4.41	-	0.00*
	High	5.01	4.01	91.1	4.72	3.70	
14. It's o.k. to guess if you don't know a word in English.	Low	13.0	26.1	60.9	3.95	-	0.01*
	High	11.0	13.0	76.0	4.30	2.47	
18. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	Low	7.60	4.31	88.0	4.60		
	High	5.90	5.03	88.1	4.62		
21. I feel timid speaking English with other people.	Low	43.5	18.5	38.0	2.89		
	High	53.5	8.92	37.6	2.68		
22. If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English. it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on.	Low	52.2	17.4	30.4	2.56		
	High	51.5	25.7	22.8	2.42		
26. It is important to practice with audio materials.	Low	10.9	14.1	75.0	4.66	-	0.01*
	High	6.02	5.04	89.0	4.28	2.56	

Table 7: Pre-service teachers' responses about motivation and expectation

With respect to the items under the subgroup of “motivation and expectation”, as can be seen in Table 7 statistical differences were determined between high and low self-efficacious groups in terms of four items (9; 13; 14; 26). Although the belief that “anything should not be said in English until it can be said correctly” generated very high levels of disagreement (specifically; 84.8% and 72.0 %), there was a 10% difference on this item between the two groups both in agreement and disagreement response rates. The percentage of disagreement with this statement in low self-efficacious students is higher. Surprisingly, high self-efficacious students seem to attribute more importance to the correctness while speaking which is quite discouraging and may be an obstacle in their practicing process. On the other hand, as Bandura (1997) suggested, because high self-efficacious ones may display a great deal of skill, they set personal standards that are very difficult to meet. Therefore, they may be worried more about correctness.

Another significant difference determined between the groups is about the belief that concerned the degree of enjoyment in practicing English with native English speakers. Low self-efficacious students were weaker in their support (78.3% and 91.1%) on this item. High self-efficacious students seem more likely to enjoy the experience of practicing with native speakers than their low self-efficacious counterparts.

The item that addresses the students' perceptions of the importance of the acceptability of guessing was also statistically differed between the two groups. Low self-efficacious students were either positive (60%) or neutral (26%), while a large majority of high self-efficacious respondents (76%) were positive. High self-efficacious students are more willing to guess the meaning of an unknown word in English and find it acceptable.

Finally, there seems to be a lack of consensus between the groups, (Table 6), regarding the belief about the importance of practice with audio materials. Concerning the importance of being constantly exposed to massive oral input in English, almost 90% of the high self-efficacious participants agreed that practicing with audio materials is very important in learning English. High self-efficacious respondents reported that exposure to authentic and aural practice through the use of appropriate activities highly helpful. One fifth (25%) of low self-efficacious respondents seemed to be either negative or neutral about the issue. Likewise, self-efficacy has also been shown to influence academic motivation with respect to the choice of activities and persistence. Bandura (1977) suggested that one's perceived self-efficacy has a powerful influence over one's choice of an activity. It has been found that self-efficacy correlate significantly with students' perseverance in the work (Hackett and Betz, 1989; Lent, Brown, and Larkin, 1984). According to Bandura (1982), given adequate skill and personally valued outcomes, self-efficacy is hypothesized to influence the choice and direction of student behavior.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In this research, It was hypothesized that students' self-efficacy is related to their beliefs about learning English as a foreign language. To address the research questions, an empirical study with EFL students was designed and conducted by the participants. First of all students beliefs in foreign language learning were determined and the effects of self-efficacy on language learners' beliefs were analyzed focusing on Bandura's (1982) self-efficacy theory. In general, majority of pre-service EFL teachers, believed that the motivation factors had a great role on their learning process while the beliefs related to difficulty of English language were not their main concern. Participants were seen to have a moderate level of overall English self-efficacy. It was also found out that participants judged themselves more efficacious for reading and speaking than for listening and writing. Sense of

self-efficacy was found to have an important impact on the learners' beliefs about foreign language learning in varying degrees.

In conclusion, the hypothesis that pre-service English language teachers' beliefs differ in terms of their perceived self-efficacy was supported by 11 items of 34. Firstly, high and low self-efficacious learners differed in their beliefs about the success of Turkish people in learning foreign languages and having a special ability for learning foreign languages. Secondly, around half of the students from both groups viewed learning English as a subject of medium difficulty. However, the number of high self-efficacious students believing that English is an easy language and they will certainly learn it well is leaving the number of low self-efficacious students behind. Thirdly, it was concluded that low self-efficacious students were less concerned about studying target culture in order to speak English and high self-efficacious group held the belief that it was best to learn English in the target country. Moreover, high self-efficacious learners were more inclined to agree that learning grammar is the most useful part of studying grammar. Finally, the study revealed that high self-efficacious students seemed to attribute more importance to the correctness and more likely to enjoy the experience of practicing with native speakers as well as favouring guessing the meaning of an unknown word in English and practicing with audio materials. The participants did not differ in the other beliefs significantly and mostly shared similar beliefs. This was not surprising for the researchers since participants had similar educational background and experiences.

Finally, the present study found significant relationships between self-efficacy and beliefs in language learning. Although the findings in the study are based on self-reported data, which implies certain built-in limitations, they do provide a foundation for further research about language learners' English self-efficacy and their beliefs about language learning. Hence, based on the findings, some suggestions for the future studies can be made. Firstly, taking into consideration the complexity of beliefs about language learning, the combination of multiple sources of data might be employed in studies on English self-efficacy and beliefs in language learning. It might also be recommended that researchers for the future studies should try investigating the ways to enhance English self-efficacy of language learners and help them develop positive beliefs in language learning. Lastly, further research might evaluate the relationships among students' English self-efficacy and beliefs about language learning in different cultures and with the participants from different educational background and experiences.

References

- Abraham, R.G., & Vann, R.J. (1987). Strategies of two language learners: A case study. In A. Wenden, & J. Rubins (Eds.), *Learner strategies in Language learning*, (85-102). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Ashton, P.T., & Webb, R.B. (1986). *Making a difference: Teachers' sense of efficacy and student achievement*. New York: Longman.
- Arnold, J. & Brown, H.D. (1999). A map of the terrain. In J. Arnold (Ed.), *Affect in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bahadır, P., (2011). The Relationship between EFL Learners' Beliefs and EFL Teachers' Beliefs on Language Learning and the Effect of Learners' Beliefs on Learner Performance: Metacognitive Awareness. *Unpublished Masters Thesis*. Çanakkale University, Çanakkale.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191>

- Bandura, A. (1982) Self-Efficacy Mechanism in Human Agency. *American Psychologist*, 37 (2). Retrieved from: (<http://www.uky.edu/~eushe2/Bandura/Bandura1982AP.pdf>)
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.37.2.122>
- Bandura, A., & Cervone, D. (1983). Self-evaluative and self-efficacy mechanisms governing the motivational effects of goal systems. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45, 1017-1028. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.45.5.1017>
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall
- Bandura, A. (1991). Self-regulation of motivation through anticipatory and self-regulatory mechanisms. In R.A. Dienstbier (Ed.), *Perspectives on motivation: Nebraska symposium on motivation*, 38, 69-164. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy and health behaviour. In A. Baum, S. Newman, J, Wienman, R. West, & c. McManus (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of psychology, health and medicine*, 160-162. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. New York: Freeman.
- Başaran, S & Cabaroğlu N. (2014). The Effect of Language Learning Podcasts on English Self-efficacy. *International Journal of Language Academy*, 2(2), 48-69.
- Bernhardt, S. (1997). Self-efficacy and second language learning. *The NCLRC Language Resource*, 1 (5).
- Betz, N. E., & Hackett, G. (1986). Application of self self-efficacy theory to understanding career choice behavior. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 4, 279-289. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1521/jscp.1986.4.3.279>
- Bonyadi, A., Nikou, F.R., Shahbaz, S. (2012). The Relationship between EFL Learners' self-efficacy beliefs and their language learning strategy use. *English Language Teaching*, 5(8), 113. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n8p113>
- Cotterall, S., (1995). Readiness for autonomy: Investigating learner beliefs. *System*, 23 (Special issue on Learner Autonomy). 195-205. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0346-251x\(95\)00008-8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0346-251x(95)00008-8)
- DeTure, M. (2004). Cognitive style and self-efficacy: predicting student success in online distance learning. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 18(1), 21-38. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15389286ajde1801_3
- Dündar, Ş. (2015). Are prospective elementary school teachers' social studies teaching efficacy beliefs related to their learning approaches in a social studies teaching methods course? *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(7), 70-85. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n7.6>
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n7.6>
- Ellis, R. (2008). Learner beliefs and language learning. *Asian EFL Journal*, 10(4), 7-25.
- Feltz, D. L. (1982). Path analysis of the casual elements of Bandura's theory of self-efficacy and anxiety-based model of avoidance behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 42, 764-781. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.42.4.764>
- Gibson, S. & Dembo, M. (1984). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76(4), 569-582. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.76.4.569>
- Hackett, G., & Betz, N. E. (1989). An exploration of the mathematics self-efficacy/mathematics performance correspondence. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 20, 261-273. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/749515>
- Horwitz, E.K. (1985). Using student beliefs about language learning and teaching in the foreign language methods class. *Foreign Language Annals*, 18(4), 333-340. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1985.tb01811.x>

- Horwitz, E. K. (1987). Surveying student beliefs about language learning. In A. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning*, (119-129). London, UK: Prentice-Hall International.
- Horwitz, E.K. (1988). The beliefs about language learning of beginning university foreign language students. *The Modern Language Journal*, 72 (iii), 283-294.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1988.tb04190.x>
- Horwitz, E.K. (1989). Recent research on second language learners: Beliefs and anxiety. In D.A. Koike & A.R.M. Simoes (Eds.), *Negotiating for meaning: Papers on foreign language teaching and testing. Texas Papers in Foreign Language Education, Special Edition*, 51-60.
- Hosseini, S. B., Pourmandnia, D. (2013). Language Learners' Attitudes and Beliefs: Brief Review of the Related Literature and Frameworks. *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their implications*. 4 (4); 1309-6249.
- İnceçay, G. (2011). Effects of learning beliefs of pre-service teachers at an English as a foreign language certificate program on their practice teaching. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 2(4).
- Kanfer, R., & Zeiss, A. M. (1983). Depression, interpersonal standard, setting and judgments of self-efficacy. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 92, 319-329.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0021-843X.92.3.319>
- İşik, A. (2011). Language education and ELT materials in Turkey from the path dependence perspective. *Hacettepe University, Journal of Education*, 40, 256-266.
- Lent, R.W., Brown, S.D., & Larkin, K.C. (1984). Relation of self-efficacy expectations to academic achievement and persistence. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 31, 356-362. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.31.3.356>
- Locke, E.A, Cartledge, N. &Knerr, C. (1970). Studies of the relationship between satisfaction, goal-setting and performance. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performances*, 5, 135-158. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073\(70\)90011-5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(70)90011-5)
- Mori, Y. (1999). Epistemological beliefs and language learning beliefs: What do language learners believe about their learning? *Language Learning*, 49(3), 377-415.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.00094>
- Pajares, F. (1997). Current directions in self-efficacy research. In M. Maehr & P. R. Pintrich (Eds.), *Advances in Motivation and Achievement*, 10, 1-49. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Pajares, F. (2000). Self-efficacy Beliefs and Current Directions in Self-efficacy Research. Retrieved from: <http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/effpage.html>
- Pallant, J. (2005). *SPSS Survival Manual: A Step by Step Guide to Data Analysis Using SPSS for Windows*. 12. (Second edition). New York: Mc-Graw Hill.
- Puchta, H. (1999). Beyond materials, techniques and linguistic analyses: The role of motivation, beliefs and identity. *Plenary session at the LATEFL: 33rd International Annual Conference, Edinburgh*, 64-72.
- Tanaka, K. and Ellis, R. (2003). Study abroad, language proficiency, and learner beliefs about language learning. *JALT Journal*, 25, 63-85.
- Truitt, S. N. (1995). Anxiety and beliefs about language learning: A study of Korean university students learning English. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 56(06), 2155A. (UMI No. 9534977).
- Victori, R.M., (1992). Investigating the metacognitive knowledge of students of English as a second language. *Unpublished Masters Thesis*, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Victori, M., Lockhart, W. (1995). Enhancing Metacognition in Self-directed Language Learning. *System* 23, (Special issue on Learner Autonomy), 223-234.
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0346-251x\(95\)00010-h](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0346-251x(95)00010-h)

- Wenden, A. (1986). What do second language learners know about their language learning? A second look at retrospective accounts. *Applied Linguistics*, 7, 186– 201. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/applin/7.2.186>
- Wenden, A.L., (1987). Metacognition: An Expanded View on the Cognitive Abilities of L2 Learners. *Language Learning* 37, 573-598. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1987.tb00585.x>
- Wenden, A. (1987). How to be a successful learner: Insights and prescriptions from L2 learners. In A. Wenden and J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (103-117). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Wenden, A.L., (1991). *Learner strategies for learner autonomy: planning and implementing learner training for language learners*. Prentice-Hall International, Hertfordshire, UK.
- Woolfolk, A.E., & Hoy, W.K. (1990). Prospective teachers' sense of efficacy about control. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82, 81–91. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.82.1.81>
- Yalçın, Ç. G. (2013) Exploring preparatory school EFL learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning. *Unpublished masters thesis*. Gazi University. Ankara.
- Yang, J., & Kim, T. (2011). Sociocultural analysis of second language learner beliefs: A qualitative case study of two study-abroad ESL learners. *System*, 39, 325-334. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.07.005>
- Yanar, B.H., Bümen, N.T., (2012). Developing a Self-Efficacy Scale for English. *Journal of Kastamonu Education*, 20, (1), 97-110.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Attaining self-regulation: A social cognitive perspective. In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich, & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *Handbook of Self-regulation* (13-39). San Diego: Academic Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/b978-012109890-2/50031-7>