

Beliefs about language learning and context: A case study of Turkish EFL learners at a Northern Cyprus University

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Abstract

Recently, the role of context as a determining force in shaping the beliefs and perceptions of language learners has been brought to the forefront in many studies. Although the language learning beliefs of Turkish students in the context of Turkey have been adequately investigated, lesser attention has been paid to the beliefs of Turkish students studying abroad. Thus, by adopting a mixed-method approach, the current study attempted to examine the learners' beliefs of Turkish students in the context of Northern Cyprus. For this purpose, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected on a group of 56 Turkish-second language learners in the context under the study. The findings indicated that Turkish students have varying beliefs toward language learning in the context under the study, which also varied from those of the Turkish students in the context of Turkey underscoring the dynamic, complex, and context-dependent nature of beliefs about language learning.

Keywords: Beliefs; context; language; language learners; perceptions.

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1. Introduction

Second language learners, especially adults come to language classes with strong beliefs about their learning and instruction which are usually rooted in their “previous learning experience and assumption (right and wrong)” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 91) as well as cultural background, and personality traits (Ellis 2008). Such perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences have been reported to influence language learners’ learning process and their ultimate achievement (Breen, 2001). In this regard, some studies have reported the impact of learners’ beliefs on language proficiency and learners’ experiences and actions (Atkin, 1996; Hayashi, 2009; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Oxford, 1992; Peacock, 2001; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). Besides, wrong beliefs or misconceptions about learning can hamper students’ success in language learning; and hence influence other aspects of learning (Horwitz, 1988; Horwitz, 1999). On the other hand, contextual and sociocultural variables have also been observed to influence learners’ beliefs. For example, Sato and Storch (2020) maintain that context is a determining force in shaping learners’ beliefs and perceptions.

1.1. Literature review

The construct of beliefs constitutes a central position in every field that deals with human beings’ behaviors, actions, and knowledge (Ajzen, 1988; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In general education, Richardson (1996) defined beliefs as “psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true” (p. 103). Beliefs are also viewed as strong filters of reality (Arnold, 1999), “predispositions to action” (Rokeach, 1968, p. 113), guiding principles, and perceptual filters that influence students’ behaviors and actions (Puchta, 2010). A study by Baralt, Gurzynski-Weiss, and Kim (2016) on a comparison of learners’ task performance concluded that learners’ “attitudes towards task performance as well as towards their partner affected their cognitive engagement with form” (p. 233). Similarly, Sato’s (2017) study of EFL learners’ interactional behaviors, L2 development, and interaction mindsets reported that learning beliefs not only impacted the learners’ interactional behaviors but also influenced their ultimate L2 development. In cognitive psychology, beliefs about how learning and knowledge are acquired shape the fundamental aspects of metacognition (Flavell, 1987; Ryan, 1984). In this regard, Victori and Lockhart (1995) maintained that learners who hold negative beliefs or misconceptions about their learning tend to be less responsible students and usually have a less positive attitude about their learning.

In second language learning research, beliefs are seen as “general assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing learning and about the nature of language learning” (Victori & Lockhart, 1995, p. 224). Research on language learning beliefs was initiated by Horwitz (1988) who systematically surveyed the learning beliefs of a group of French, Spanish, and German students in the US. The study reported that some learners considered grammar, vocabulary memorization, and translation as the main components of language learning without considering its cultural aspects; whereas some learners believed that immersion in the target language is the best method of language learning. The study results concluded that study participants held various unrealistic beliefs and misconceptions about language learning, which were rooted mainly in the learners’ lived experiences and their cultural backgrounds.

Later research examined the relationships between language learning beliefs and language learning in general and beliefs and other learning factors in particular (Cotterall, 1995; Kern, 1995; Mercer & Ryan, 2010; Yang, 1999). For example, a study by Wenden (1987) found that language-learning beliefs could influence the choice of language-learning strategies by language learners. Similarly, Richards and Lockhart (1994) observed that beliefs affected “learners’ motivation to learn, their expectations about language learning, their perceptions about what is easy or difficult about a language, as well as the kind of learning strategies they favor” (p. 52). Further, Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) argued that stable factors, such as

learners' personalities could impact the nature of beliefs. On the other hand, Ellis (2008) pointed to the complex, dynamic, and contextually situated nature of learner belief and the indirect interrelationships between beliefs and language learning.

Moreover, language-learning beliefs have also been associated with other factors such as attitude, culture, gender, age, and importantly context (Bacon & Finnemann, 1992; Victori & Lockhart, 1995; Horwitz, 1999; Kuimova, Burleigh, Uzunboylu & Bazhenov, 2018; Sato & Storch, 2020). For example, a study conducted by Diab (2006) indicated that Lebanese university students found learning English easier than learning French in the context of Lebanon. Similar results were reported by Nikitina and Furuoka (2007) in the context of Malaysia on Malaysian students' belief toward Russian is a more difficult language than other languages. Further, another study focusing on the relationship between contextual factors and learning beliefs by Loewen et al. (2009) on a group of university students in the US identified six factors; namely "efficacy of grammar, negative attitude to error correction, a priority of communication, the importance of grammar, the importance of grammatical accuracy, and negative attitudes to grammar instruction" (p. 91) within that particular context. Moreover, Amuzie and Winke, (2009) examined the effects of studying abroad on the beliefs of a group of 70 English language learners before and after moving to the US. The study results showed that learners changed their beliefs regarding learner autonomy and teacher role and that the length of time abroad had a direct impact on the learners' belief systems. The study findings further demonstrated that the learning environment and duration of their stay affect belief changes and that beliefs are dynamic and socio-contextually situated and sensitive.

1.2. Related Studies

Several studies have also addressed the learning beliefs of Turkish language learners in the context of Turkey by focusing on the relationships between learning beliefs and other learner features or characteristics; namely learners' strategy use (Geyimci, 2015; Kayaoğlu, 2013), gender (Aktaş, 2001; Tercanlıoğlu, 2005; Çokçalışkan, 2018), epistemological beliefs (Munis, 2017; Dere, 2018), major (Altan, 2012; Büyükyazı, 2010), educational background (Çokçalışkan, 2018), teachers' beliefs (Doğruer, Meneviş, & Eyyam, 2010), and learner metacognition (Öz, 2005). In what follows, some of the most relevant studies on Turkish students' beliefs about learning will be reviewed.

Aktaş (2001) examined the relationship between Turkish language learners' beliefs and their major, English proficiency level, gender, and educational background. The findings revealed that female study participants viewed English as more complicated, and children as better language learners than adults. The study results also demonstrated that majors were a determining role in viewing the difficulty level of learning English and that a correlation was observed between proficiency level and observed difficulty in English. That is, more proficient students regarded English as a medium difficulty while the lower levels tended to view English as a difficult language. Further, using Horwit's (1987) BALLI, Tercanlıoğlu (2005) investigated the relationship between language learning beliefs and EFL learners' gender. The study reported no relationship between the two confirming the results of Aktaş (2001).

In another study, Çokçalışkan (2018) investigated a group of Turkish L2 learners' beliefs about learning English concerning gender and success. The study results indicated that male and female learners held similar views towards learning strategies, language aptitude, motivation, and the difficulty of language learning and that they believed everyone could speak another language. However, no significantly meaningful correlation was observed between beliefs about language learning and success, although proficient students were reported to hold more constructive beliefs about language learning.

In addition, in another study on a group of 470 secondary school students, Öz (2007) explored the learning beliefs about EFL concerning other factors such as age, grade level, gender, and social and school contexts. The study findings demonstrated that the study participants held a broad range of beliefs and conceptions

concerning social and educational contexts, age, gender, and stages of language learning and that such beliefs or knowledge were observed to be variably linked to the aforementioned factors.

Later, Ariogul, Ünal, and Onursal (2009) reported varying beliefs of Turkish students concerning the instruction of three languages, German, French, and English in the context of Turkey. The results of the study showed that French language learners had positive learning beliefs toward learning French and that the three groups of participants held some detrimental assumptions and misconceptions about their language-learning endeavors.

Recently, Thompson and Aslan (2015) observed that Turkish learners had varying perceptions towards making mistakes, using correct language in their speaking and writing, having good pronunciation, and having fear and ambiguity towards speaking English. Even more recently, Aslan and Thompson (2018) examined the relationship between learning beliefs and language anxiety in the context of Turkey and noted that positive beliefs about language learning affected the Turkish students' level of language anxiety and confidence in language learning. Furthermore, Arslan and Kafes (2021) explored Turkish EFL learners' beliefs about language learning concerning gender, age, and language proficiency level. The study findings reported no significant relationship between language learning and learning beliefs and the said features.

Overall, the results of the study on beliefs about language learning in the context of Turkey show that Turkish students hold a variety of similar or different beliefs about language learning and that such beliefs are dynamic, complex, and context-related (Ellis, 2008) requiring in-depth research. Moreover, the recent trends in second language research also seem to indicate a shift of research perspective on learning beliefs from a more cognitive construct into a more sociocultural one (Alanen, 2003; Barcelos, 2003; White, 2008). In line with these trends, the current study attempted to find answers to the following questions: What are the Turkish EFL learners' beliefs and perceptions about learning English in the Northern Cyprus context and how do such beliefs differ from the beliefs of Turkish students studying in Turkey and other contexts?

1.3. Purpose of study

Thus, theoretically and pedagogically this research can shed some light on the interrelationship between learning beliefs and context, and raise the awareness of second language teachers over any possible correlations between context and second language learning beliefs. Several studies have also addressed the language learning beliefs and perceptions of Turkish students in the context of Turkey while lesser attention has been paid to the learning beliefs of Turkish students studying outside the context of Turkey. Thus, the current study attempted to address this gap by investigating the learning beliefs of Turkish second language learners studying at an English Medium University in Northern Cyprus, by mainly exploring the relationships between beliefs and contextual variables.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of a group of 56 students at Northern Cyprus University. By analyzing several definitions offered by various scholars, Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) offered the following definitions of mixed methods:

In mixed methods, the researcher collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data rigorously in response to research questions and hypotheses, integrates (or mixes or combines) the two forms of data and their results, organizes these procedures into specific research designs then provide the logic and procedures for conducting the study, and frames these procedures within theory and philosophy.

Following this definition of a mixed method, the researcher in this study collected and integrated both quantitative and qualitative data to address the research question.

2.2. Participants

A total of 56 students who were studying in the English Preparatory school of one of the universities in Northern Cyprus took part in the current study. The student population of the university at the time was around 7000 students out of which around 650 were registered in the Preparatory school. The sampling was conducted based on convenience and 3 classrooms were mainly Turkish students from Turkey consented to take part in the study. A total of fifty-six students filled in the questionnaires, out of whom 8 consented to be interviewed. The students were from three different levels of English proficiency, A2, B1, and B2. For the ease of students, the two instruments in this study, Horwitz's (1987) Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) and interview questions adapted and used by Vibulphol (2004), were translated into Turkish. The instruments were first translated into Turkish by a professor of ELT and were later back-translated into English by one professional in the field of Translation and the author himself. Following the back translation, some minor modifications were made. Moreover, for internal consistency and reliability, Cronbach's alpha of the inventory was computed to be within the acceptable range. Subsequently, the questionnaire was distributed among thirty-one male (55.4%) and twenty-five female students (44.6%) whose ages ranged between 18 to 26 years.

BALLI consists of 34 items and has been extensively used in previous studies (Bernat, 2006; Horwitz, 1989) to measure learner beliefs concerning second or foreign language learning. The BALLI assesses learners' beliefs regarding five language learning areas, namely (1) the difficulty of learning a language, (2) language aptitude, (3) motivation and expectations, (4) learning and communication strategies, and (5) the nature of language learning. The questionnaire required the study participants to answer 32 of the items asking the participants to select answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). However, two items required the study participants to select different options; Item four asked learners about the difficulty of the English language ranging from very difficult (1) to very easy (5) and item fifteen inquired about the duration of time one needs to master English. The interview part consisted of 8 general questions regarding the study participants' beliefs in the context of the study. It delved into the students' thoughts and perceptions regarding their beliefs toward language learning at a Northern Cyprus university.

2.3. Procedure and Analysis

Since the context of the study was an international context, three classes with a population of around 60 students (mainly Turkish) were selected for the data collection. After obtaining consent to conduct research from the Preparatory School administration, the researcher secured the classroom teachers and their students' permission to conduct his research. It took around 20 minutes for the research participants to fill in the questionnaires. We asked students also to participate in the interviews and 8 participants willingly consented to participate in the interview sessions of the research. The eight study participants were then given different time slots during one of the weekdays lasting two and a half hours in total. As stated earlier, for ease of their participation, the interview questions were asked in Turkish, the student's first language.

After the collection of the questionnaires, the data were entered into the SPSS version 17 program and due to the limited number of participants only simple descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies for each questionnaire item were computed. The demographic information for the participants was also obtained and interpreted. Further, eight students were interviewed in the form of a semi-structured conversation; however, due to equipment failure, 2 interviews were removed from the study. Six interviews were content-analyzed (Patton, 2014) for any emerging patterns. All the interviews were conducted in Turkish, the first language of the interviewees, and were audio-recorded and transcribed.

3. Results

3.1. Quantitative data results

The results of the quantitative data analyses revealed a range of learning beliefs held by the study participants regarding their learning English in the context in question. Since the number of participants was limited, a simple statistical analysis of items by Mean and Standard Deviation was conducted. The results of the item analyses are provided in Table 1 below. As the table illustrates, 11 items received the highest score (mean) from the study participants. The frequency and percentage of the highest and lowest items will be discussed in the following sections. Table 1 displays 11 items with means higher than 4 (the double-starred ones), meaning that the study participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statements.

Table 1

Statistical Analyses of the Quantitative Data

| Questions | Mean | St. Deviation | Questions | Mean | St. Deviation |
|-----------|--------|---------------|-----------|--------|---------------|
| Q1 | 4.55** | .658 | Q18 | 4.43** | .599 |
| Q2 | 3.07 | 1.093 | Q19 | 2.38* | 1.169 |
| Q3 | 3.75 | .879 | Q20 | 3.66 | 1.066 |
| Q4 | 2.66* | .745 | Q21 | 2.71* | 1.155 |
| Q5 | 3.73 | .820 | Q22 | 3.09 | 1.254 |
| Q6 | 2.61* | .947 | Q23 | 3.57 | .988 |
| Q7 | 4.07** | .850 | Q24 | 2.98 | 1.183 |
| Q8 | 2.88* | 1.096 | Q25 | 2.95 | 1.102 |
| Q9 | 1.88* | 1.063 | Q26 | 3.86 | .841 |
| Q10 | 3.59 | .930 | Q27 | 3.82 | .765 |
| Q11 | 2.52* | 1.027 | Q28 | 3.57 | .951 |
| Q12 | 4.41** | .848 | Q29 | 4.59** | .682 |
| Q13 | 4.25** | .837 | Q30 | 2.70* | 1.205 |
| Q14 | 3.46 | 1.026 | Q31 | 4.70** | .601 |
| Q15 | 4.04** | 1.095 | Q32 | 4.34** | .695 |
| Q16 | 2.82* | .811 | Q33 | 4.09** | .940 |
| Q17 | 4.16** | .682 | Q34 | 3.34 | 1.149 |

As Table 1 demonstrates, around 94 percent of the study participants in the study wished and wanted to speak English well (item, 31). In line with this finding, the result of item number 29 shows that more than 90% of the students also believed that speaking English well would provide better opportunities for a good job in the future. Moreover, more than 80% of the study participants also believed that speaking English with an excellent accent was of great importance (item 7); and that saying things correctly in English was not very important when one could say something in English (question 9).

Additionally, more than 90 percent of the study participants believed that children could more easily learn a foreign language than adults (item 1). The students also were aware of the important role of repetition and practice in language learning as more than 84 percent of the students indicated so (item 18). The majority of the respondents (88%) also stated that learning English could best occur in an English-speaking country (item 12).

Further, more than 80 % of the research participants stated that they would like to have English friends (item 32), and enjoy practicing English with their English friends that they meet (item 13). These results are also consistent with the responses to items 31, 7, and 9 in which the study participants expressed their eagerness to speak English and their willingness to speak with a good accent.

Moreover, vocabulary (item 17) also received a higher rating from the study participants since a majority of them (83%) attached great significance to the role of vocabulary and its learning. Similarly, more than 80 percent of the respondents also believed that everyone could speak a foreign language (item 33). Finally, the students considered language learning a time-consuming endeavor, and around 80 percent of the participants indicated that it takes 3 to 10 years to learn a language very well by studying it for one hour a day.

On the other hand, the results of the quantitative data indicated that some of the items received very low ratings from the study participants (the single-starred ones). In this regard, more than 60 percent of the study participants did not regard women as better language learners than men indicating that gender role in language learning is not of significant importance.

Moreover, in response to item 11, the study participants did not consider aptitude of significance for learning languages. Also, in response to item 6, whether Turkish students are good at learning foreign languages, (mean 2.61), around 52% expressed that the research participants did not believe that Turkish students had any advantage over other nationalities in learning foreign languages and that English is neither a very difficult or easy language to be learned (around 53%, item 4).

Additionally, the study participants did not seem to believe that knowing more than one language means intelligence (item 30). The rating of item 21 (around 55%) somehow corroborates the study findings from interview insights that revealed students felt more anxious to speak English; the percentage of item 21 also shows that around half of the study participants experienced anxiety or fear while speaking English which again indicates the important role of speaking English for the study participants.

Another lowest-rated response by the study participants was having a special ability for learning foreign languages; around 40 percent of the participants said that they do not have a special ability for learning foreign languages. Finally, in response to item number 8, around 40 percent believed that culture is not an important aspect of learning English.

3.2. Qualitative data results

The analysis of the interview data revealed five themes namely context, peers and classmates, ideal students, ideal teachers, and important language learning skills. One of the cited themes by the study participants was the role of context in their language learning. In this regard, for some, context played a very facilitative role as it afforded them multiple learning opportunities to interact with international students and teachers and hence to be exposed to more English. In this regard, Northern Cyprus in comparison to Turkey offered a better environment to learn English; as reflected in the following extracts:

“In Turkey, English is not used as much as it is used here, it is hard for us because teachers speak all in English here” (Interviewee 1).

This context provides us with interaction with other students from other countries and as a result learning English is easier in here than Turkey, and besides, we gain experience as a result (Interviewee two).

This environment offers a better chance than Turkey for us to learn English since there are many students from other countries and as a result, we learn English more easily here (Interviewee 5).

The context was also seen by some as debilitating or hindering their progress in English since, in comparison to their international friends or peers, Turkish students did not have to use English outside the classroom, as reflected in the following extracts:

...since Turkish is spoken everywhere in Cyprus, no need is felt to learn English as a result (Interviewee 3).

International students have a better chance to practice English than Turkish students because they have to speak English and because they cannot speak Turkish, so this is an advantage for them (Interviewee 6).

The next emerging theme from the interview insights was the role of international and non-Turkish peers and classmates. The access to international peers and classmates afforded the Turkish students various socialization opportunities and hence more exposure to English both inside and outside the classroom. One extract is provided below:

In comparison to universities in Turkey, this university offers better opportunities for learners to learn English since there are many students from other countries, and English is a must to be able to make friends with them (Interviewee 2).

The next theme was the characteristics of good learners. In this regard, most of the interviewed students regarded being studious and active as a positive trait of an ideal student. Some also mentioned an ideal student as someone who followed or listened to his or her teacher. Another student also pointed to willingness or motivation as an important factor in language learning. Some representative extracts are given below:

.... the one who follows his schedule, does his daily homework, one who listens to his teachers, and acts as the teacher wants him or her to be (Interviewee 2)

...an ideal student is one who studies, goes to class on time, and does their homework (Interviewee 3)

.....someone who is willing and likes to learn English (Motivation) (Interviewee 4)

However, gender was not a determining factor in being a good learner, as interviewed students believed that male or female students do not have any difference although one of the students mentioned that “females have more time to study because of certain cultural restrictions for going out and making friends” (interviewee 1).

The next theme of the interview data was related to the role of the teacher. In this regard, they had varying beliefs concerning an ideal teacher namely, having the knowledge of or familiarity with the Turkish language, qualifications, and experience, being a native teacher as well as enthusiasm and supportiveness, as indicated below:

if they know Turkish that is better for us, however, teachers from different countries can also be good, age is not important, and being close to students, native or nonnative is good as long as they can make us understand the lesson better [qualified teachers] (interviewee 2)

An ideal teacher is someone supportive, good-humored, native since the medium of instruction in this school is English, they should be qualified and experienced (interviewee 6)

The last theme was associated with the important language skills for the students. In this regard, speaking and listening skills were considered the most important skills for the students although grammar and writing were also mentioned as other important skills by two interviewees:

...listening is most important, and writing is the most difficult, listening should be learned first, it is very important for us because we need English to be able to enter the faculty (interviewee 1)

.... the first to learn is speaking and if it is in the form of asking and answering, we can learn speaking more easily, the most important is listening though (interviewee 5)

4. Discussion

The present study explored the beliefs of Turkish Preparatory school students from Turkey studying English at a Northern Cyprus university. Our results revealed that Turkish L2 learners held varying beliefs, perceptions, and views towards learning English in Northern Cyprus which were somewhat at variance with those of Horwitz (1988) on American foreign language learners.

One set of results was related to the beliefs held by the study participants toward language learning skills. In this regard, the results highlighted the significance of speaking skills for students especially in their current English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs and in their future careers. The findings also showed the study participants' willingness to learn and improve their speaking skills as one of the main skills in the context under the study. Moreover, the findings of both quantitative and qualitative data demonstrated that around half of the respondents experienced anxiety or fear while speaking English. The students were also aware of the need to interact in an international environment and for that, they thought they needed listening and speaking as the most important skills. These findings seem to somewhat contradict the findings of Arslan and Kafes (2021) who observed that Turkish students equated language learning mainly to learning grammar and vocabulary.

Similarly, in line with our study findings on language learning skills in the previous section, the majority of the respondents also indicated that learning English could best occur in an English-speaking country (item 12) and that they said that they wished to have English friends (item 32), and enjoy practicing English with their English friends that they meet (item 13). These findings may show the significant role of context in shaping the beliefs of the study participants as the majority of the study participants in this study pointed to the need to develop their speaking and listening skills in an international context. This finding seems to be of lesser significance for the study participants of the studies reviewed in this paper (Aktaş, 2001; Tercanlıoğlu, 2005; Çokçalışkan, 2018; Kovacs, 2020; Arslan & Kafes, 2021) which were mainly conducted in the context of Turkey.

Additionally, an interesting finding from the quantitative data showed that the majority of the study participants (more than 90%) believed that children can more easily learn a foreign language than adults (question 1). This finding confirms the findings of the previous studies conducted in the context of Turkey (Aktaş, 2001; Munis, 2017; Arslan & Kafes, 2021; Sharifzadeh, Rahimi & Siahpour, 2022). Such a belief might at least hinder some of the research participants' efforts to learn English since the age factor in second language acquisition has been extensively debated as the relationship between age and success is "hardly less complex or controversial" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.67).

Moreover, the majority of the study participants (83%) attached great significance to the role of vocabulary and its learning, which is somewhat in line with the finding of Arslan and Kafes (2021). In this regard, Turkish L2 learners' awareness can be raised over the important role of academic, general, and specific vocabulary in EMI settings.

Further, the majority of (More than 80%) the respondents believed that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language and that there is no difference between male and female learners in learning a foreign language (more than 60%), lending support to findings of Arslan and Kafes (2021) and Çokçalışkan (2018). However, more than half of the study participants did not believe that Turkish students had any advantage over other nationalities in learning foreign languages, which was also stated in the interview insights of the study participants. This result also supports the findings of Arslan and Kafes (2021) and Altan (2012).

Moreover, somewhat surprisingly, the research participants thought of English as a language of medium difficulty. This can somehow raise the question regarding why despite viewing the English language as a language of medium difficulty, the participants did not hold positive opinions towards their compatriots to learn English. This result needs to be dealt with caution as some of the previous studies observed that proficiency level in English could affect the perception of language learners towards the language difficulty and the relationship between the two might not be a causal factor (Arslan & Kafes, 2021; Kubieva et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the role of culture in language learning was not perceived very positively by the study participants which might be rooted in the role of English in the context of the study as a *Lingua Franca*. In

this regard, only around 58 percent of the respondents believed that culture is an important aspect in learning of the English language. This could also be interpreted that around only half of the study participants are aware of the pragmatic aspects of language and the role of culture in understanding the language better. Thus, second language teachers need to raise the awareness of the students over the role of culture in learning English by including some instruction on the socio-pragmatic aspects of the English language in their classes. In this regard, language learners can be encouraged to practice and use situation-specific language in their lessons by receiving instruction on how to use various speech acts in their speaking (Gipal, Carrillo, & Mallonga, 2022; Salama, Chiparausha & Bsatar, 2022).

Finally, the results of the interview insights showed that most of the students' beliefs concerning the good or ideal language learner revolved around the traditional notion of a good student as studious, disciplined and organized, which might be mainly rooted in the traditional concept of a good student.

5. Conclusion

The results of the current study showed that Turkish second language learners studying in the context of this study held both similar and different views to those of the studies conducted in the context of Turkey. Since the number of participants in this study was limited, the results need to be approached with caution and no generalization can be made; however, some of the study findings seemed to be rooted in the contextual variables pointing to the dynamic and complex nature of beliefs towards learning English.

Yet, the study findings of this research can somewhat shed light on the beliefs held by Turkish students studying English in contexts other than Turkey. The researcher believes that language teachers can identify their learners' beliefs or misconceptions about learning English and raise their awareness of the effect of such beliefs on other aspects of their learning. Thus, future research can benefit from a longitudinal study design to examine Turkish students' beliefs about language learning in contexts other than Turkey by addressing such issues of the sociolinguistic status of the target language and instructional settings.

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