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PRE-SCHOOL TEACHING STUDENT TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Factors influencing English language learning have been one of the main concerns of English language researchers and practitioners. There have been many studies investigating different aspects in relation to language learning. For example, some researchers focused their attention on exploring the issues related to cognitive aspects of language learning. They tried to uncover what goes on in the mind of the learner while learning a foreign language. The concept of 'belief' has attracted the interest of many researchers for more than three decades. This study aimed to explore the English language learning beliefs of Pre-school Teaching Department students studying at one of the Universities in Northern Cyprus. It also investigated whether there were any differences in the student teachers' perceptions about English language learning regarding gender and age. 151 first year student teachers studying in the Department of Pre-school Teaching at a University in North Cyprus were the participants of the study. 135 female and 16 male student teachers participated in this investigation. In order to collect data about the student teachers' perceptions regarding English language learning "English Language Learning Beliefs Inventory (BALLI)" version 2 (Horwitz, 2013) was employed. The questionnaire consisted of 44 items and the participants replied to each item according to the 5-point Likert Scale. The findings did not reveal any significant difference between the male and female participants' perceptions about English language learning beliefs. The participant student teachers' perceptions about language learning beliefs differed significantly in relation to age.

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Purpose

Factors influencing English language learning have been one of the main concerns of English language researchers and practitioners. There

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have been many studies investigating different aspects in relation to language learning. For example, some researchers focused their attention on exploring the issues related to cognitive aspects of language learning. They tried to uncover what goes on in the mind of the learner while learning a foreign language. Issues such as increasing motivation for learning, learners' thinking and learner beliefs were the focus of their attention. Taylan (2017) emphasized the impact of different factors by referring to Gardner's (1985) socio educational model in which "intelligence, language aptitude, language learning strategies, language attitudes, motivation and language learning anxiety appear as the main variables and these variables affect the learners second language learning in formal and informal learning contexts" (p. 412) were pointed out.

The concept of 'belief' has attracted the interest of many researchers for more than three decades. This growing interest has stemmed from the recognition that the beliefs individuals hold influence their decisions and the choices they make during the course of everyday life (Bandura, 1986). In this respect, some researchers have focused their attention on investigating teacher beliefs (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Pajares, 1992; Higgins & Moseley, 2001, Katz, 2015) while some others have carried out research on learner beliefs (Bernat, 2005, 2007, Mesri, 2012, Liu, 2012, Yang & Rehner, 2015).

Learners' prior experiences in foreign language learning, the context that they experienced it and other personal factors may shape learners' beliefs about learning a language. They may have formed ideas about "how best to learn vocabulary or grammar; what kinds of people do best at language learning; the importance of translation; the significance of a foreign accent; the importance of practice, repetition, error correction, the value of group work and so on" (Richards, 2015, p. 138).

Learners bring different beliefs to the learning situation about what strategies they can use to learn a foreign language best, the appropriate classroom environment for language learning, the teacher's role, the learner's role, the techniques, language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening), language areas (grammar, vocab...) and so on.

What beliefs learners bring to the learning situation influence their decisions, intentions and actions about language learning and thus their beliefs can have positive or negative influence on their achievement. According to Victori and Lockhart (1995) "the way learners perceive language learning may have significance on their learning outcomes" (p.225). For example, learners who believe grammar is the most important think in language learning tend to give priority to grammar learning while learners who believe language needs to be learnt for communication are more likely to work on improving fluency rather than accuracy (Richards and Gravatt, 1998). In general, studies have shown that "students with positive beliefs about language learning tend to have stronger motivation, use a wider range of learning strategies, are less anxious about learning and achieve better results" (Richards, 2015, p. 138). Therefore, investigating learner beliefs about English language learning is believed to help educators understand their learners' thinking, and how they approach foreign language learning. "For learners, the

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process of exploring beliefs can lead to the development of more effective language learning behaviors as well as to self- knowledge and autonomy” (Altan, 2006, p. 51).

There have been a lot of studies investigating learner beliefs in relation to self-concept and identity, self-efficacy, personality traits, and other individual differences (Epstein, 1990; Furnham et. al., 1985; Langston & Sykes, 1997; Bernat, 2006). However, there is still paucity of research studies investigating English language learners' beliefs about learning a foreign language and individual differences such as gender and age. This study is believed to contribute to the area in providing some evidence about language learners' beliefs and whether their beliefs differ according to age and gender. It is also believed that such a study would raise awareness in English language teachers and researchers regarding the importance of exploring learners' beliefs in foreign language learning.

Method

This study aimed to explore the English language learning beliefs of Pre-school Teaching Department students studying at one of the Universities in Northern Cyprus. It also investigated whether there were any differences in the student teachers' perceptions about English language learning regarding gender and age.

For this purpose, the following key research questions were adopted:

- 1) What are the perceptions of the Pre-school teaching student teachers' **beliefs** about English language learning?
- 2) Do their perceptions about English language learning differ regarding **gender**?
- 3) Do their perceptions about English language learning differ in relation to **age**?

In this investigation, the student teachers' perceptions were investigated quantitatively, through a descriptive survey in which a questionnaire was employed.

151 first year student teachers studying in the Department of Pre-school Teaching at a University in North Cyprus were the participants of the study. 135 female and 16 male student teachers participated in this investigation. 78 participants were between 18 and 22 years old, 49 participants were between 23 and 27 years old, and 24 participants were between 28 and 32 years old. These students had to take English as a compulsory course for two semesters in their first year as a requirement of their curriculum.

In order to collect data about the student teachers' perceptions regarding English language learning “English Language Learning Beliefs Inventory (BALLI)” version 2 (Horwitz, 2013) was employed. The questionnaire consisted of 44 items and the participants replied to each item according to the 5-point Likert Scale. The reliability coefficient (Chronbach's Alpha) of the questionnaire was .79. The questionnaire assessed learners' beliefs in five major areas:

- Foreign language aptitude

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- The difficulty of language learning
 - The nature of language learning
 - Learning and communication strategies
 - Motivations and expectations

The collected data was statistically analyzed. For this purpose, SPSS 21 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used. To test the differences between the male and female student teachers' perceptions an independent samples t-test was employed. For the purpose of testing whether the student teachers' perceptions differed according to age, a one way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was employed. In order to test whether the significance was meaningful between the age categories, a Scheffe Test was administered after the ANOVA.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of this study revealed that although pre-school student teachers' beliefs did not significantly differ in relation to gender, the participants indicated significant differences in their beliefs about English language learning in relation to age. In other words, female and female participants regarding their perceptions about English language learning beliefs were not different. However, the perceptions of the participant student teachers English language learning beliefs in different age categories showed differences significantly. The participants who were in youngest age category held more positive beliefs to language learning. There might have been different reasons of these findings. It might have been possible that these learners had positive prior language learning experiences compared to the other participants who were in the other two age categories.

To sum up, although this study is limited to the specific context it was carried out in, I believe that it has the potential of creating awareness in English language teachers about the importance of exploring their learners' beliefs in the journey of English language learning.

Suggestions

It is of paramount importance to bear in mind the need for understanding the place of beliefs learners hold when learning English as a foreign language. Research studies regarding beliefs have indicated that decisions individuals make are closely related to their beliefs. Therefore, there is a need to help learners become aware of their beliefs about learning English language. There is also a need for teachers to explore what their learners believe about language learning, teaching and particularly about learning English as a foreign language. In this way, it is also possible to create learning environments and opportunities for learners to help them establish positive beliefs about language learning and thus facilitate their learning process. In this respect, teacher education programs can be redesigned in such a way that they consider the ways of exploring the learners' beliefs about learning and teaching.

Keywords: Learner beliefs, gender, age.

OKUL ÖNCESİ ÖĞRETMENLİĞİ ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENMEYLE İLGİLİ İNANÇLARI

ÖZET

İngilizce öğrenmeyi etkileyen etkenler birçok araştırmacı ve öğretmenin esas ilgi alanını oluşturmuş ve bu konuda dil öğretiminde birçok araştırma ve çalışma gerçekleştirilmiştir. Yabancı bir dil olan İngilizceyi öğrenmekle ilgili öğrenmeyi etkileyen faktörlerin dışında ELT (İngilizce Öğretmek) alanında farklı birçok çalışmaya rastlamaktayız. Örneğin, bazı araştırmacılar öğrenenlerin bu yabancı dili öğrenmedeki bilişsel düzey algıları konusunda bilimsel çalışmalar gerçekleştirerek dil öğrenenlerin bu süreçte zihininde neler olup bittiğine odaklanmışlardır. Bu bağlamda, bilişsel bir olgu olarak görülen inançların, bireylerin öğrenme ve öğretme süreci ile ilgili kararlarında önemli bir rol oynadığı vurgulanmış ve inançlar ile ilgili çalışmaların bireylerde farkındalık yaratarak daha etkin bir öğrenme ve öğretme sürecine olumlu yönde katkıda bulunabileceği ifade edilmiştir. Bazı çalışmalar öğretmen inançlarına odaklanırken, bazıları da öğrenci inançlarına odaklanan çalışmalar gerçekleştirmişlerdir. Bu çalışmalar arasında, inançların öğretmenlerin metodolojik tercihlerine ve uygulamalarına olabilecek etkileri gibi çalışmalar yer almaktadır. Gerçekleştirilen çalışmalarda öğretmenlerin inançlarını birçok faktörün etkilediği ve teoride inandıkları birçok şeyi uygulamada gerçekleştiremediklerinin gözlemlendiğini belirtmiştir. Bazı öğretmenlerin sahip oldukları inançlarla ilgili yeterince farkındalığa sahip olmadıkları veya çalışma ortamlarının, çalışma ortamının kültürel yapısının inançları ile uygulamaları arasındaki uyumsuzluğa sebep olabileceğini vurgulanmışlardır. Öğrencilerin inançları konusunda yapılan çalışmalarda ise bireylerin öğrenmelerini etkilen faktörlerden birisi olarak düşünülen inançların, öğrenenin öğrenme motivasyonuna, tercih ettiği öğrenme stratejilerine ve en önemlisi başarıya ulaşmasına etkileri konusunda çalışmalar gerçekleştirilmiştir. Literatürde karşılaştığımız diğer bazı çalışmalar ise inançların yapısı, nasıl oluştuğu ve değiştirmenin çok da kolay bir iş olmadığı konularında veriler sunmaktadır. Öğretmenlerin öğretme ve öğrenme süreçlerinin birbirini etkileyen süreçler olduğu dikkate alındığında, inançlar konusunda gerçekleştirilen nicel ve nitel çalışmaların dil öğrenimi ve öğretimi alanına önemli katkıları olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu nedenle, 'İnançlar' (Beliefs) kavramı, bilişsel bir algı olarak, otuz yılı aşan bir süreden beridir birçok araştırmacının konusu olmuştur. Bu araştırma, dil öğreniminde öğrenenlerin yabancı dil öğrenme ile ilgili sahip oldukları inançlarının bu sürece etki edebileceği varsayımından hareketle gerçekleştirilmiştir. Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği Bölümü'nde okuyan öğretmen adaylarının var olan inançlarının ve cinsiyet ve yaş gibi etkenlerin bu inançlarla ilgili farklılık gösterip göstermediğinin araştırılması gerektiğine inanarak, bu çalışma Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'nde yer alan bir üniversitedeki Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği Bölümü'nde okuyan öğretmen adaylarının İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenmekle ilgili inançlarını araştırmayı hedeflemiştir. Aynı zamanda, bu araştırmada sözkonusu öğretmen adaylarının dil öğrenme inançlarının cinsiyet ve yaş ile ilgili farklılıklar gösterip göstermediğine de bakılmıştır. Çalışmada, 135 bayan, 16 erkek olmak

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üzere toplam 151 Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği Bölümü birinci sınıf öğretmen adayı katılımcı olarak yer almıştır. Öğretmen adaylarının dil öğrenme ile ilgili inançlarına yönelik veri toplamak amacıyla “İngilizce ile İlgili İnançlar Envanteri|” (English Language Learning Beliefs Inventory (BALLI), version 2 (Horwitz, 2013)) kullanılmıştır. Veri toplama aracı olarak kullanılan ve 44 maddeden oluşan bu anketi, katılımcılar 5’li Likert ölçeği şeklindeki kategorilere uygun yanıtlar vererek doldurmuşlardır. Toplanan veriler, bayan ve erkek katılımcıların İngilizce’yi yabancı dil olarak öğrenme ile ilgili inançlarında farklılık olup olmadığını ölçmek amacıyla, bağımsız örneklemeler T-test’ine tabi tutularak analiz edilmiştir. Katılımcılar arasında yaşa göre anlamlı bir farklılık bulunup bulunmadığına ise verilere ANOVA testi uygulanarak analiz yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları, İngilizceyi yabancı bir dil olarak öğrenen, Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği Bölümü’de okuyan katılımcı öğretmen adaylarının dil öğrenmeyle ilgili algılarının cinsiyete göre anlamlı bir farklılık göstermediğini fakat yaş faktörünün sözkonusu öğretmen adaylarının inanç algıları arasında farklılığa neden olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğrenci inançları, cinsiyet, yaş.

Introduction

“Education is an important phenomenon that shapes the future of countries” (Maya & Yılmaz, 2017, p. 350). Foreign language education has not been an exception to this. Factors influencing English language learning have been one of the main concerns of English language researchers and practitioners. There have been many studies investigating different aspects in relation to language learning. For example, some researchers focused their attention on exploring the issues related to cognitive aspects of language learning. They tried to uncover what goes on in the mind of the learner while learning a foreign language. Issues such as increasing motivation for learning, learners’ thinking and learner beliefs were the focus of their attention. Taylan (2017) emphasized the impact of different factors by referring to Gardner’s (1985) socio educational model in which “intelligence, language aptitude, language learning strategies, language attitudes, motivation and language learning anxiety appear as the main variables and these variables affect the learners second language learning in formal and informal learning contexts” (p. 412) were pointed out.

The concept of ‘belief’ has attracted the interest of many researchers for more than three decades. This growing interest has stemmed from the recognition that the beliefs individuals hold influence their decisions and the choices they make during the course of everyday life (Bandura, 1986). In this respect, some researchers have focused their attention on investigating teacher beliefs (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Pajares, 1992; Higgins & Moseley, 2001, Katz, 2015) while some others have carried out research on learner beliefs (Bernat, 2005, 2007, Mesri, 2012, Liu, 2012, Yang & Rehner, 2015).

Dişlen & İşpınar (2017) stated that “As an indispensable part of learning process, beliefs can shape learners’ decisions, learning strategies, and lifelong learning tendencies” (p. 133). Learners’ prior experiences in foreign language learning, the context that they experienced it and other personal factors may shape learners’ beliefs about learning a language. They may have formed ideas about “how best to learn vocabulary or grammar; what kinds of people do best at language learning; the importance of translation; the significance of a foreign accent; the importance of practice, repetition, error correction, the value of group work and so on” (Richards, 2015, p. 138).

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Learners bring different beliefs to the learning situation about what strategies they can use to learn a foreign language best, the appropriate classroom environment for language learning, the teacher's role, the learner's role, the techniques, language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening), language areas (grammar, vocab...) and so on.

What beliefs learners bring to the learning situation influence their decisions, intentions and actions about language learning and thus their beliefs can have positive or negative influence on their achievement. According to Victori and Lockhart (1995) "the way learners perceive language learning may have significance on their learning outcomes" (p.225). For example, learners who believe grammar is the most important think in language learning tend to give priority to grammar learning while learners who believe language needs to be learnt for communication are more likely to work on improving fluency rather than accuracy (Richards and Gravatt, 1998). In general, studies have shown that "students with positive beliefs about language learning tend to have stronger motivation, use a wider range of learning strategies, are less anxious about learning and achieve better results" (Richards, 2015, p. 138). Therefore, investigating learner beliefs about English language learning is believed to help educators understand their learners' thinking, and how they approach foreign language learning. "For learners, the process of exploring beliefs can lead to the development of more effective language learning behaviors as well as to self- knowledge and autonomy" (Altan, 2006, p. 51).

There have been a lot of studies investigating learner beliefs in relation to self-concept and identity, self-efficacy, personality traits, and other individual differences (Epstein, 1990; Furnham et. al., 1985; Langston & Sykes, 1997; Bernat, 2006). Some other researchers have focused their attention on investigating how learner beliefs differed in relation to individual differences such as gender, age, nationality, learning style, and personality type among learners in language learning (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Wenden, 1999; Horwitz, 1999; Rifkin, 2000).

However, there is still paucity of research studies investigating English language learners' beliefs about learning a foreign language and individual differences such as gender and age. There are a small number of studies that have reported on these variables. For instance, Siebert (2003) who employed Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) (Horwitz, 1987) as an investigation tool, found significant differences among male and female English language learners' beliefs in relation to gender. Similarly, a study that focused on gender differences and learner beliefs conducted by Bacon & Finneman (1992) reported significant differences regarding these variables. On the other hand, Tercanlioğlu (2005) who carried out a research study with 45 male and 73 female participants found no significant gender related differences in the participant learners' beliefs. This study is believed to contribute to the area in providing some evidence about language learners' beliefs and whether their beliefs differ according to age and gender. It is also believed that such a study would raise awareness in English language teachers and researchers regarding the importance of exploring learners' beliefs in foreign language learning. This study has the significance of being the first since there has not been a study investigating the pre-school student teachers' English language learning beliefs in the North Cyprus.

Methodology

This study aimed to explore the English language learning beliefs of Pre-school Teaching Department students studying at one of the Universities in Northern Cyprus. It also investigated whether there were any differences in the student teachers' perceptions about English language learning regarding gender and age.

For this purpose, the following key research questions were adopted:

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- 4) What are the perceptions of the Pre-school teaching student teachers' *beliefs* about English language learning?
 - 5) Do their perceptions about English language learning differ regarding *gender*?
 - 6) Do their perceptions about English language learning differ in relation to *age*?

Research Design

In this investigation, the student teachers' perceptions were investigated quantitatively, through a descriptive survey in which a questionnaire was employed.

The Participants

151 first year student teachers studying in the Department of Pre-school Teaching at a University in North Cyprus were the participants of the study. *135 female* and *16 male* student teachers participated in this investigation. *78* participants were between *18 and 22* years old, *49* participants were between *23 and 27* years old, and *24* participants were between *28 and 32* years old. These students had to take English as a compulsory course for two semesters in their first year as a requirement of their curriculum.

Data Collection Instrument

In order to collect data about the student teachers' perceptions regarding English language learning "English Language Learning Beliefs Inventory (BALLI)" version 2 (Horwitz, 2013) was employed. The questionnaire consisted of 44 items and the participants replied to each item according to the 5-point Likert Scale. The reliability coefficient (Chronbach's Alpha) of the questionnaire was .79. The questionnaire assessed learners' beliefs in five major areas:

- Foreign language aptitude
- The difficulty of language learning
- The nature of language learning
- Learning and communication strategies
- Motivations and expectations

Data Analysis

The collected data was statistically analyzed. For this purpose, SPSS 21 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used. To test the differences between the male and female student teachers' perceptions an independent samples t-test was employed. For the purpose of testing whether the student teachers' perceptions differed according to age, a one way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was employed. In order to test whether the significance was meaningful between the age categories, a Scheffe Test was administered after the ANOVA.

Findings and Discussion

The findings indicated that the majority of the participants scored on "Foreign Language Aptitude" highest. Their perceptions regarding "Motivations and Expectations for Language Learning" received the lowest score. It seems that although the participants perceived themselves as having a high aptitude for learning English, they did not perceive themselves as being motivated enough to learn it and they did not possess high expectations for learning it. The most strongly agreed item was "It's easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language." (68.9 %) among the participants whereas the most strongly disagreed item was "You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly." (40.4 %).

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Beliefs and Gender

Table 1 below, shows the frequency and percentage of the participant student teachers.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of the Female and Male Participants

	Frequency	Percentage %
Female	135	89.4
Male	16	10.6
Total	151	100

As can be seen from Table 1, 135 female learners constituted 89.4 % while 16 male learners constituted 10.6 % of the participants in the study.

Table 2 below, shows the means and standard deviations of the female and male participants regarding language learning beliefs.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Female and Male Participants

Gender	n	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Female	135	106.0296	18.21142	1.56739
Male	16	116.3125	30.68924	7.67231

As can be seen from Table 2, the mean score of the female participants was 106.02 while male participants' mean score was 116.31.

Language Learning Beliefs in Relation to Gender (t-test)

Table 3 below, shows the t-test results of the male and female participants' perceptions about beliefs regarding language learning. The findings did not reveal any significant difference between the male and female participants' perceptions about English language learning beliefs.

Table 3: Independent Samples T-test Regarding Female and Male Participants' Perceptions about Language Learning Beliefs

Gender	n	Mean	t-value	df	p
Female	135	106.0296	-1.962	149	.052
Male	16	116.3125	-1.313	16.275	.207

Beliefs and Age

Table 4 below, shows the frequency and percentages of the participants in relation to age.

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of the Participants According to Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-22	78	51.7	51.7
	23-27	49	32.5	84.1
	28-32	24	15.9	100.0
	Total	151	100.0	100.0

According to Table 4, the participants ranged between 18 to 32 years old. 78 of the participants who constituted 51.7 % of all the participants were between 18 to 22 years old, 49 learners who constituted 32.5 % of all the participants were between 23 and 27 years old and 24 of the participants who constituted 15.9 % of all the participants were between 28 and 32 years old.

Table 5: Means and Standard Deviations According to Different Age Categories

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for		Minimum	Maximum
					Mean			
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
18-22	78	102.243	15.82386	1.79170	98.6759	105.8113	64.00	144.00
23-27	49	109.673	16.80822	2.40117	104.8456	114.5014	77.00	141.00
28-32	24	117.750	31.17587	6.36375	104.5856	130.9144	48.00	163.00
Total	151	107.119	20.01364	1.62869	103.9011	110.3373	48.00	163.00

As can be seen in Table 5, the participants who were in 28 to 32 age category had the highest mean score with 117.75 and the participants who were in 18 to 22 age category had the lowest mean score with 102.24.

Language Learning Beliefs in Relation to Age (ANOVA Test)

Table 6 below, shows the participants' perceptions of language learning beliefs in relation to different age categories. The ANOVA results indicated that the participants' perceived beliefs about English language learning significantly differed in relation to age ($p=.002<0.05$).

Table 6: Anova for Beliefs and Age

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4886.207	2	2443.103	6.551	.002*
Within Groups	55195.647	148	372.944		
Total	60081.854	150			

*Significance

Table 6 above illustrates that the participant student teachers' perceptions about language learning beliefs differed significantly in relation to age.

Language Learning Beliefs and Age (Scheffe Test)

Table 7 below shows the Scheffe Test results about the participants' perceptions about language learning beliefs in relation to age. The Scheffe Test results indicated that particularly the participants whose ages ranged between 18-22 held significantly different perceptions ($p=.003 < p.0.05$) about beliefs for English language learning than those between the ages of 28-32. The participants in 18-22 age category held more positive beliefs regarding English language learning.

Table 7: Scheffe Test about Beliefs and Age

Age	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
18-22	78	102.2436	
23-27	49	109.6735	109.6735
28-32	24		117.7500
Sig.		.230	.177

Limitations and Implications

The findings of this study cannot be generalized to a wider population since this study was carried out only at one university with a limited number of students. Therefore, there is a need for further studies to explore pre-school student teachers' perceptions regarding their beliefs about English language learning in other contexts with a larger number of participants. There is also a need for carrying out qualitative research studies for the in-depth investigation of learner beliefs.

Conclusions

The findings of this study revealed that although pre-school student teachers' beliefs did not significantly differ in relation to gender, the participants indicated significant differences in their beliefs about English language learning in relation to age. In other words, female and female participants regarding their perceptions about English language learning beliefs were not different. However, the perceptions of the participant student teachers English language learning beliefs in different age categories showed differences significantly. The participants who were in youngest age category held more positive beliefs to language learning. There might have been different reasons of these findings. It might have been possible that these learners had positive prior language learning experiences compared to the other participants who were in the other two age categories.

To sum up, although this study is limited to the specific context it was carried out in, I believe that it has the potential of creating awareness in English language teachers about the importance of exploring their learners' beliefs in the journey of English language learning.

It is of paramount importance to bear in mind the need for understanding the place of beliefs learners hold when learning English as a foreign language. Research studies regarding beliefs have indicated that decisions individuals make are closely related to their beliefs. Therefore, there is a need to help learners become aware of their beliefs about learning English language. There is also a need for teachers to explore what their learners believe about language learning, teaching and particularly about learning English as a foreign language. In this way, it is also possible to create learning environments and opportunities for learners to help them establish positive beliefs about language learning and thus facilitate their learning process. In this respect, teacher education programs can be redesigned in such a way that they consider the ways of exploring the learners' beliefs about learning and teaching.

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