



## Difficulties in English Language Learning: The Opinions of High School Students in EFL classes

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### Research Article

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the opinions of high school students on difficulties they faced as they were learning English and examining these opinions within the framework of some variables. It is a fact that some factors such as age can affect the level and type of difficulty that are experienced. Thus, it was searched that if the factors of gender, grade and parents' education level were related to the difficulties that English learners encountered. A descriptive survey study was conducted. The participants of the study were 305 high school students who enrolled in different high schools in Türkiye. In order to collect data, English Language Learning Difficulties Scale (ELLDS), which was developed by Mehdiyev, Uğurlu and Usta (2017) was used. Data analysis was performed on an R program. The total score of ELLDS and its sub-factors of Interest-Willingness (IW), Practice (P), Setting-Material (SM), and Social Opportunities (SO) were dependent variables, while gender, grade level, mother's education, and father's education were independent variables. The findings showed that the difficulties did not show significant differences according to gender and fathers' education level. On the other hand, grade level of students and mothers' education level were found to be related with the difficulties that the high school students encountered in English language learning.

**Keywords:** difficulty, English language learning, gender, parents' education level, high school

## Lise Öğrencilerinin İngilizce Öğrenme Güçlüklerine İlişkin Görüşlerinin Bazı Değişkenler Açısından İncelenmesi

\*Sorumlu yazar

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### ÖZ

Bu araştırma, lise öğrencilerinin İngilizce öğrenirken karşılaştıkları güçlüklerle ilişkin görüşlerini belirlemeyi ve bu görüşleri bazı değişkenler çerçevesinde incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Bazı değişkenlerin yaşanan zorluğun seviyesi ve türünü etkileyebileceği bir gerçektir. Bu nedenle bu çalışmada cinsiyet, sınıf ve anne-baba eğitim düzeyi faktörlerinin İngilizce öğrenenlerin karşılaştıkları güçlüklerle ilişkili olup olmadığı araştırılmıştır. Bu amaçla, betimsel tarama modeli kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın katılımcıları Türkiye'de farklı liselere devam eden 305 lise öğrencisidir. Verilerin toplanmasında Mehdiyev, Uğurlu ve Usta (2017) tarafından geliştirilen İngilizce Öğrenme Güçlükleri Ölçeği (İÖGÖ) kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizi bir R programında yapılmıştır. İÖGÖ toplam puanı ile İlgililik, Uygulama, Ortam-Materyal ve Sosyal İmkanlar alt faktörleri bağımlı değişkenler iken cinsiyet, sınıf düzeyi, annenin eğitimi ve babanın eğitimi bağımsız değişkenlerdir. Bulgular, güçlüklerin cinsiyete ve baba eğitim seviyesine göre değişmediğini göstermiştir. Öte yandan, sınıf düzeyi ve anne eğitim seviyesi ile algılanan güçlük düzeyi arasında anlamlı farklılıklar bulunmuştur. Cinsiyet ve baba eğitim düzeyine göre anlamlı farklılıklar gösterirken öğrencilerin sınıf düzeyi ve anne eğitim düzeyi lise öğrencilerinin İngilizce öğrenmede karşılaştıkları güçlüklerle ilişkili bulunmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** güçlük, İngilizce öğrenimi, cinsiyet, aile eğitim seviyesi, lise

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## Introduction

Language is not a monolithic ability but consists of various parts, and it is the most fascinating function of the human brain (Dingman, 2019). Hence, the acquisition of both first language and a second/foreign language is a complex process that researchers are still trying to comprehend. It is believed that this complexity causes challenges but it is a fact that learning a new language can be a painstaking process for learners. Many variables such as differences in environmental surroundings and personal characteristics of learners can affect the success of learning a new language (Fathman, 1976). Thus, some researchers have asked the question of what difficulties that students encounter while learning a foreign/second language and what the reasons are of these difficulties. Furthermore, it has been questioned why learners that are successful in other courses are underachievers in foreign language learning. One of the key answers suggested for this question is the native language effect which proposes that if the learners have deficiencies in their native language, they will encounter difficulties learning a foreign language (Ganschow, Sparks and Javorsky, 1998). Another issue with the role of native language in foreign/second language learning is the difference between the native language and the foreign/second language that is learnt. It has been assumed that the degree to which native language of learners differs from English causes most of the difficulties that learners experience while learning English (Khan, 2011). Likewise, in Türkiye, learning English is seen as a challenging process and the main reason for this is shown as the difference between Turkish and English. Turkish and English are in different language families and have great differences in grammar (e.g. Turkish has word order of S+O+V in comparison to English which has S+V+O). Moreover, Turkish is pronounced as it is written, which makes English pronunciation scary for Turkish learners.

Although the fact that Turkish is different from English is regarded as one of the main reasons of difficulties learning English by Turkish people, the scientific studies do not always support it. In order to find the difficulties that Turkish learners encounter while learning English, several researchers have conducted perception and opinion studies. While some of these studies targeted teachers, others were interested in learners' beliefs. Çelebi and Yıldız-Narinalap (2020) revealed that English language teachers in Türkiye thought that:

- examination system negatively affected teaching,
- students did not regularly repeat what they had learned in the classroom,
- the foreign language education program was not effective,
- the textbooks were not sufficient,
- adequate in-service training opportunities were not provided,
- the solutions of the Ministry of Education were not effective,

- the classroom sizes were crowded.

Similar findings were also observed in the study of Kızıldağ (2009) who examined English teachers' beliefs on the difficulties of learning English. The findings were busy curriculum, inappropriate textbooks, lack of institutional support and socio-economic challenges such as lack of support from families. In order to see the problem with a different lens, Hayırlı (2019) studied with foreign teachers teaching English in Türkiye. According to them, lack of motivation, weak teachers with bad English, lack of practice, poor materials and authoritarian and crowded classes were the difficulties of learning English.

With respect to learners, the situation is not different. The literature shows that the learners also complain about the same or similar difficulties. For example, Solak and Bayar (2015) showed that there were different challenges according to the university students learning English. These were: focus on grammar teaching, lack of materials, negative attitude of social environment, personal differences, lack of practice, structure of languages, methods of English teaching and low-qualified teachers. Similarly, Uğurlu, Mehdiyev and Usta (2016) studied on university students, and found that the participants believed that the main difficulties were quality of teachers, memorizing words, lack of practical use, grammar –based language teaching, lack of sufficient class time and crowded classes.

Focusing on secondary and high school students' perceptions, Özmat and Senemoğlu (2021) indicated that lack of adequate technology support and need for audiovisual equipment were the challenges that learners faced. Furthermore, Şahin, Çelik and Gök Çatal (2018) revealed that lack of technology support, limited class time, crowded classes, textbooks that were difficult and not clear to understand, and difficulty of retention of vocabulary were the difficulties that secondary school students faced as they were learning English.

The abovementioned studies show that although the groups (learner-teacher) differ, the problems are the same. The study of Akkuş (2009) is evidentiary for this inference. The participants of Akkuş (2009) consisted of managers, teachers and students. The results showed that the three groups agreed on those challenges: focus on grammar, low quality of teachers and textbooks, lack of technology use, crowded classes, limited classroom time, and lack of interest of students.

Although some studies examining teachers' and students' beliefs on the difficulties exist in literature, there are limited studies that search these difficulties in terms of different variables. It is a fact that some factors can affect the level and type of difficulty that are experienced. For example, lack of support from families were found to be a challenge in some studies (Kızıldağ, 2009; Solak and Bayar, 2015). Moreover, parents' level of education is related to the children's second/foreign language learning (Forey, Besser and Sampson, 2016;

Walczak et al, 2017; Zhou, 2020). In this study, the relation of parents' level of education with difficulties were searched. Moreover, the variables of gender and grade were included in the study. Gender was found to be an important factor in some behaviours of language learning such as learning strategies, motivation, aptitude, expectations, communication and beliefs about the difficulty of learning to use different language skills (Oxford, 1990; Kamarul et al, 2009; Mars and Yeung, 1998; Xiyang, 2010; Yeung et al. 2011; Daif-Allah, 2012; Özer and Akay, 2022). On the other hand, both female and male students perceived similar difficulties of learning English (Yahya, 2012). There is a limited number of study on the gender differences in English language learning difficulties and there is limited study in the context of Türkiye. Thus, this study aimed to determine the opinions of high school students about the difficulties they encounter in English language learning, and to examine these opinions within the framework of the variables of gender, grade and parents' education level. In this direction, answers to the following questions were sought;

Do difficulties in language learning show significant differences between; a) gender b) grade level c) maternal education level and d) paternal education level?

a) Does interest-willingness show significant differences between gender, grade level, maternal education level, and paternal education level?

b) Does practice show significant differences between gender, grade level, maternal education level, and paternal education level?

c) Does setting-material show significant differences between gender, grade level, maternal education level, and paternal education level?

d) Do social opportunities show significant differences between gender, grade level, maternal education level, and paternal education level?

## Method

### Research Design

The model of this research is the descriptive survey model, which is one of the survey models whose main

purpose is to accurately describe or portray the characteristics of a situation or phenomenon (Johnson and Christensen, 2014). In educational sciences, the survey model often gives information about the demographic characteristics of individuals as well as their attitudes, opinions, beliefs and motivations. This research is a descriptive survey study in which the views of high school students on English learning difficulties are discussed in terms of various variables.

### Participants

The participants consisted of 304 high school students enrolled in different high schools in the province of Sivas in Türkiye. The study was conducted in the first (fall) semester of the 2019-2020 academic year. The demographic information such as gender, grade and parents' level of education of participants were presented below. A total of 304 students participated in the research. Three of these students did not complete their gender and class level information, six of them did not complete their father's education level and eight of them did not complete their mother's education level. For this reason, while reporting the results of the research, analyzes were made by considering 301 students for the gender and grade level variable, 296 participants for the mother's education level variable, and 298 participants for the father's education level variable (see Table 1).

As can be seen in Table 1, the study group shows a balanced distribution according to gender and grade level. Approximately 56% of the group consists of female students and 44% of male students. Considering the distribution by grade levels, each grade level constitutes about 25% of the group.

In addition, to be used in comparisons in the study, the frequency and percentage values of parental education level variables of the study group are presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of the high school students by gender and grade level variables

Variable		f	%
Gender	Female	168	55.81
	Male	133	44.19
Total	301	100	
Grade Level	9	78	25.91
	10	76	25.25
	11	71	23.59
	12	76	25.25
Total	301	100	

Table 2: Frequency distribution of the high school students according to parental education level variable

Variable		f	%
Mother's Education Level	Primary	111	37.50
	High School	112	37.84
	Higher Education	73	24.66
Total		296	100
Father's Education Level	Primary	53	17.79
	High School	120	40.27
	Higher Education	125	41.95
Total		298	100

Table 3: CFA modeled goodness of fit criteria and calculated values

Goodness of Fit Indices	Criteria	Calculated Values
$\chi^2 /sd$	$2.5 \leq \chi^2 /sd \leq 5.00$	3.17
RMSEA	$0.00 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.10$	0.08
RMR	$0.00 \leq RMR \leq 0.10$	0.07
GFI	$0.80 \leq GFI \leq 0.95$	0.90
NFI	$0.80 \leq NFI \leq 0.95$	0.89
AGFI	$0.80 \leq AGFI \leq 0.90$	0.89

As can be seen in Table 2, maternal education of 37.50% of the students participating in the study is at primary level, which is defined as the first eight years of education, approximately 38% is at high school level and approximately 25% has higher education level (vocational school, undergraduate, postgraduate, doctorate) Paternal education levels are distributed as 18% primary, 40% high school and 42% higher education.

### Data Collection Tool

The research employs English Language Learning Difficulties Scale (ELLDS), which was developed by Mehdiyev, Uğurlu and Usta (2017). The scale consists of 15 items which is 5 points Likert scale under 4 subfactors which are *Interest-Willingness*, *Practice*, *Setting-Material* and *Social Opportunities* (see Appendix 1). The total reliability value of the scale was observed to be .89. The Cronbach's Alpha value of the items under practice (P) subfactor was .85, the Cronbach's Alpha value of the items under setting-material (SM) was .77, the Cronbach's Alpha value of the items under interest-willingness (IW) was .80 and the Cronbach's Alpha value of the items under social opportunities (SO) was .71. Confirmatory factor analysis results in the evaluation of ELLDS's construct validity revealed  $\chi^2=247.23$ ,  $sd=80$  and  $p$  value was found significant ( $p=.000$ ). The calculated value was  $\chi^2/sd=3.09$ . This value was considered as an indicator of a good harmony of the ELLDS in general.

Although ELLDS was originally developed for university students, it was thought to be applicable for high school students as well due to the structure of its items. Accordingly, the opinions of specialists in English teaching and assessment-evaluation were received. The item under SM subfactor "*Book contents not oriented towards profession*" was updated to "*Insufficient book contents*". Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed by

applying the scale to a similar group. As a result of CFA, goodness of fit values was observed to function for high school students as well. The values related to CFA results are given in Table 3.

When the criteria and calculated values given in Table 3 are compared, it can be seen that the fit values of the scale are in the acceptable interval.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed on an R program. In the study, the total score of ELLDS and variables of four sub-factors Interest-Willingness (IW), Practice (P), Setting-Material (SM) and Social Opportunities (SO) were dependent variables, while gender, grade level, mother's education and father's education were independent variables. In the study, in which multiple dependent variables were handled, descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used in the analysis of the data.

Prior to the MANOVA test, missing data and extreme outliers analyses were performed and the normal distribution of the dependent variables were examined. After the data mining process was completed, the assumptions for MANOVA were checked. Once the assumptions were met, MANOVA was applied and the results were reported.

The research had five missing data while no extreme value was observed. However, since the missing rate (1.64%) was under 5%, no imputation was applied (Çokluk, Şekerioğlu, Büyüköztürk, 2010). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov was performed to test the normality. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results revealed that the variables, the total score ELLDS (ELLDSKS=.96,  $p<.05$ ), Interest-Willingness (IWKS=.93,  $p<.05$ ), Practice (PKS=.96,  $p<.05$ ), Setting-Material (SMKS=.97,  $p<.05$ ) and Social Opportunities (SOKS=.96,  $p<.05$ ) did not show normal

distribution. However, when the skewness coefficients of the variables were examined, it was observed that the variables Interest-Willingness, Practice, Setting-Material and Social Opportunities (.45, -.17, -.20 and -.30 respectively) displayed near-normal distribution.

Before the data analysis, the assumptions for MANOVA were checked. First, Mahalanobis distance values were calculated to check the multivariate normality assumption. (Pallant, 2005; Tabachnick and Fidel, 2007). Mahalanobis p value lower than .001 was an indicator of extreme outlier (Maesschalck, Jouan-Rimbaud & Massart, 2000). When the assumption was examined, it was observed that all the p values were higher than .001, thus the multivariate normality was met. Levene's test was carried out to assess homogeneity of variances. P values of variances of the five dependent variables on the categories gender, grade level, mother's education level and father's education level were determined to be higher than .05. (Field, 2009). Box's M test was applied for another assumption, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices. Since Box's M test is highly susceptible to violations, .001 was taken as the criterion for significance (Tabachnick and Fidell 2012). As a result of the test, it was observed that the p values of the assumption were above .001, that is, the assumption of covariance matrices are equal, which is an H0 hypothesis, was met (Secer, 2015). To check the multicollinearity assumption, the correlation between variables were examined. Tabachnick and Fidell (2012) state that a correlation between variables lower than .90 achieves multicollinearity assumption. Accordingly, since the correlation between variables in the research varied between .35 and .90, multicollinearity assumption was seen to be met.

After it was demonstrated that the research data met the relevant assumptions, necessary analyses were made and the results were reported.

## Results

Difficulties in Language Learning, which are the dependent variables of the study, and its sub-factors, Interest-Willingness, Practice, Setting-Material, Social Opportunities variables were checked if they significantly

differ according to gender, grade level, maternal and paternal education level. Since the difference of multiple dependent variables were tested, one-way MANOVA was applied in order to keep the error margin at a minimum level. Analysis results were reported in a way that the difference of dependent variables under each independent variable was observed.

### Results related to difficulties in English learning, its sub-factors and gender variable

First, it was checked if the dependent variables of the study differ between female and male student groups. For this, the significance of Pillai's trace value was tested. Pillai's trace is considered to be the one of the strongest statistics that ranges from 0 to 1 (Olson, 1974). Test result revealed that difficulty in English learning and the linear combinations of sub-factors did not show a significant difference by gender. (Pillai=.004, F (2, 297)=.266, p=.899).

According to the one-way ANOVA results given in Table 4, which was performed for the high school students' perception about difficulties in English learning and sub-factors, no significant difference was observed between the variables of interest-willingness ( $F_{1-297}=.198$ ,  $p>.05$ ), practice ( $F_{1-297}=.081$ ,  $p>.05$ ), setting-material ( $F_{1-297}=.040$ ,  $p>.05$ ), social opportunities ( $F_{1-297}=.361$ ,  $p>.05$ ) and difficulties in English learning total ( $F_{1-297}=.102$ ,  $p>.05$ ) as to gender. Since the difference was not significant, the effect size was not mentioned. The test results revealed

that the perceptions of the high school students about the difficulties in English learning did not differ between female and male students. That is, both gender groups showed similar behaviors.

### Results for the difficulties in English learning, its sub-factors and grade level variable

It was examined whether the dependent variables differ significantly as to four-category grade level variable. When the Pillai's trace was checked, high school students' perception of difficulty in English learning and linear

Table 4: One-way ANOVA results related to perception of difficulty in English learning, its sub-factors and gender of the high school students

Dependent Variable	Gender	n	$\bar{X}$	Sd	df	F	P																																												
Interest-Willingness	Female	168	2.56	1.22	1	.198	.657																																												
	Male	133	2.57	1.24				Practice	Female	168	3.18	1.11	1	.081	.775	Male	133	3.13	1.05	Setting-Material	Female	168	3.23	1.12	1	.040	.841	Male	133	3.14	1.13	Social Opportunities	Female	168	3.19	1.07	1	.361	.548	Male	133	3.22	1.05	Difficulties in English Learning	Female	168	3.07	.91	1	.102	.749
Practice	Female	168	3.18	1.11	1	.081	.775																																												
	Male	133	3.13	1.05				Setting-Material	Female	168	3.23	1.12	1	.040	.841	Male	133	3.14	1.13	Social Opportunities	Female	168	3.19	1.07	1	.361	.548	Male	133	3.22	1.05	Difficulties in English Learning	Female	168	3.07	.91	1	.102	.749	Male	133	3.05	.95								
Setting-Material	Female	168	3.23	1.12	1	.040	.841																																												
	Male	133	3.14	1.13				Social Opportunities	Female	168	3.19	1.07	1	.361	.548	Male	133	3.22	1.05	Difficulties in English Learning	Female	168	3.07	.91	1	.102	.749	Male	133	3.05	.95																				
Social Opportunities	Female	168	3.19	1.07	1	.361	.548																																												
	Male	133	3.22	1.05				Difficulties in English Learning	Female	168	3.07	.91	1	.102	.749	Male	133	3.05	.95																																
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	Male	133	3.05	.95																																															

combinations of the sub-factors were observed to show significant difference by grade level variable. (Pillai=.048,  $F_{3, 296}=3.30$ ,  $p=.01$ ). Since there was a significant difference by grade levels, one factor ANOVA test results were analyzed to observe which dependent variable differed as to which grade levels. Test results are given in Table 5.

According to the ANOVA results given in Table 5, interest-willingness ( $F_{3-296}=2.36$ ,  $p>.05$ ) sub-factor does not display significant difference by the grade level variable. On the other hand, practice ( $F_{3-296}=6.46$ ,  $p<.05$ ), setting-material ( $F_{3-296}=5.39$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and social opportunities ( $F_{3-296}=13.10$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and difficulty in English learning total score ( $F_{3-296}=9.24$ ,  $p<.05$ ) show significant difference depending on the grade level variable. 9th grade students ( $\bar{X}=2.82$ ) have lower scores than 12th graders ( $\bar{X}=3.25$ ) regarding their general perceptions

about the difficulties in learning English. 10th, 11th and 12th graders share similar scores. When the sub-factors are examined, different grades are seen to show similarities concerning the difficulties related to interest-willingness. Regarding practice sub-factors, 9th graders have lower mean ( $\bar{X}=2.89$ ) than 12th graders ( $\bar{X}=3.38$ ). In other words, 12th graders consider English learning to be more difficult in terms of practice factor. The same applies for the social opportunities factor. 9th graders' perception of difficulty relating to social opportunities ( $\bar{X}=2.84$ ) are lower than those of 12th graders ( $\bar{X}=3.43$ ). Regarding setting-material, 9th grade students show lower scores ( $\bar{X}=2.90$ ) than 12th graders ( $\bar{X}=3.39$ ). The results revealed that, while the high school students' perception of difficulty in English learning was at low levels in their first year, it increased significantly as the grade level increased.

Table 5: One-way ANOVA results for the high school students' perception of difficulty in English learning, its sub-factors and grade levels

Dependent Variable	Grade Level	n	$\bar{X}$	Sd	df	F	p	$\eta^2$	Dif.
Interest-Willingness	9	78	2.59	1.23	3	2.36	.12	-	-
	10	76	2.32	1.22					
	11	71	2.62	1.20					
	12	76	2.75	1.25					
Practice	9	78	2.89	1.33	3	6.46	.01*	.03	9-12
	10	76	3.05	1.16					
	11	71	3.33	.98					
	12	76	3.38	1.10					
Setting-Material	9	78	2.90	1.10	3	5.39	.02*	.033	9-11
	10	76	3.21	1.05					
	11	71	3.39	1.04					
	12	76	3.34	.98					
Social-Opportunities	9	78	2.84	1.11	3	13.10	.000*	.035	9-12
	10	76	3.21	1.13					
	11	71	3.30	1.00					
	12	76	3.43	1.18					
Difficulty in English Learning	9	78	2.82	1.00	3	9.24	.002*	.039	9-12
	10	76	2.98	.94					
	11	71	3.20	.82					
	12	76	3.25	.87					

**Results for high school students' perception of difficulty in English learning, its sub-factors and mother's education level variable**

Pillai's trace value was checked following the MANOVA that tested the significance of the difference depending on the maternal education level variable, which was considered in three levels as primary, high school and higher education. High school students' perception of difficulty in English learning and linear combinations of the sub-factors were observed to differ significantly depending on mother's education level (Pillai=.050,  $F_{2, 292}=3.44$ ,  $p=.009$ ). The results of the one-way ANOVA, which was performed to observe the difference of difficulty in English learning and its sub-factors depending on mother's education level are given in Table 6.

ANOVA results given in Table 6 display no significant difference between interest-willingness ( $F_{2-292}=.77$ ,  $p>.05$ ), practice ( $F_{2-292}=2.57$ ,  $p>.05$ ), social opportunities ( $F_{2-292}=51$ ,  $p>.05$ ) factors, difficulty in English total score ( $F_{2-292}=1.08$ ,  $p>.05$ ) by mother's education level. The difference for the setting-material ( $F_{2-292}=4.03$ ,  $p<.05$ ) sub-factor, can be observed to be significant at a value of .05. When the direction of the difference between groups was examined, it was observed that setting-material related English learning difficulty perception of the students whose mothers' education was at primary level ( $\bar{X}=3.38$ ) was higher than those with high school ( $\bar{X}=3.10$ ) and higher ( $\bar{X}=3.09$ ) maternal education level. In conclusion, the students with maternal education at primary level

experience more difficulties. The students with high school and higher maternal education levels show similar behavior.

**Results for high school students’ perception of difficulty in English learning, sub-factors and father’s education level variable**

According to Pillai’s trace value that was checked following to the MANOVA test, high school students’ perception of difficulty in English learning and linear combinations of the sub-factors showed no significant difference depending on the father’s education level variable. (Pillai=.003,  $F_{2, 294}=.23$ ,  $p=.92$ ). Accordingly, the students in the categories of paternal education level show similar behavior in terms of the perception of difficulty in English learning and its sub-factors.

According to ANOVA results given in Table 7, no significant difference was observed between interest-willingness ( $F_{1-269}=.04$ ,  $p>.05$ ), practice ( $F_{1-269}=.04$ ,  $p>.05$ ), setting-material ( $F_{1-269}=.005$ ,  $p>.05$ ), social opportunities ( $F_{1-269}=.44$ ,  $p>.05$ ) sub-factors, difficulty in English learning total mean score ( $F_{1-269}=.03$ ,  $p>.05$ ) with regard to father’s education level. Since the difference was not significant, the effect size was not mentioned. In other words, there is not any relationship between the students’ perception of difficulties in English learning and paternal education level. Different levels of paternal education, such as primary, high school or higher education do not have any influence on student behaviors regarding the difficulties they face in learning English.

Table 6: One factor ANOVA results for high school students’ perception of difficulty in English learning, its sub-factors and mother’s education level

Dependent Variable	Mother’s Education Level	n	X̄	Sd	df	F	p	$\eta^2$	Dif.
Interest-Willingness	Primary	111	2.44	1.11	2	.077	.78	-	-
	High-School	112	2.74	1.27					
	Higher Education	73	2.48	1.33					
Practice	Primary	111	3.27	1.12	2	2.57	.11	-	-
	High-School	112	3.19	1.14					
	Higher Education	73	2.96	1.24					
Setting-Material	Primary	111	3.38	.99	2	4.03	.04*	.02	Primary-High school, Primary-Higher Education
	High-School	112	3.10	1.08					
	Higher Education	73	2.96	1.24					
Social Opportunities	Primary	111	3.19	1.11	2	.51	.47	-	-
	High-School	112	3.22	1.08					
	Higher Education	73	3.18	1.21					
Difficulties in English Learning	Primary	111	3.11	.83	2	1.08	.30	-	-
	High-School	112	3.08	.96					
	Higher Education	73	2.94	.98					

Table 7: One-way ANOVA results for high school students' perception of difficulty in English learning, its sub-factors and father's education level variable

Dependent Variable	Father's Education Level	n	X̄	Sd	df	F	p
Interest-Willingness	Primary	53	2.32	1.10	2	.04	.85
	High-School	120	2.67	1.19			
	Higher Education	125	2.57	1.31			
Practice	Primary	53	3.20	1.26	2	.04	.83
	High-School	120	3.25	1.15			
	Higher Education	125	3.05	1.14			
Setting-Material	Primary	53	3.27	1.08	2	.005	.94
	High-School	120	3.27	1.05			
	Higher Education	125	3.09	1.05			
Social Opportunities	Primary	53	3.15	1.19	2	.44	.51
	High-School	120	3.25	1.13			
	Higher Education	125	3.14	1.09			
Difficulties in English Learning	Primary	53	3.03	1.02	2	.03	.86
	High-School	120	3.14	.90			
	Higher Education	125	2.98	.90			

## Discussion and Conclusion

Despite its preliminary character in terms of searching difficulties within the context of parents' level of education, gender and grade; the study has produced some noteworthy data. The study had four key findings which were:

a) high school students' English learning difficulties and linear combinations of sub-dimensions did not differ significantly in terms of gender

b) high school students' English learning difficulties and linear combinations of sub-dimensions showed a significant difference in terms of grade level

c) high school students' English learning difficulties and linear combinations of sub-dimensions showed a significant difference in terms of mothers' level of education

d) high school students' English learning difficulties and linear combinations of sub-dimensions did not differ significantly in terms of fathers' level of education

Firstly, gender was not found to be important in terms of variation of difficulties of English learning. This finding supports some previous research. Yahya (2012) also found that there was no difference between male and female learners in terms of perceived difficulties. On the other hand, male and female students showed different levels of difficulty in learning to use different language skills (Daif-Allah, 2012). This shows that both female and male students perceive same difficulties as learning English in general. However, male students believe that it is easier to read and write in English than to speak it and also to speak than understand a foreign language more than female students (Daif-Allah, 2012). Özer and Akay (2022) also found that there was significant difference between

male and female secondary school students in their perceived difficulties.

Secondly, the survey indicated that there was a difference in difficulties of English learning in terms of grade. As grade level increased, the perceived difficulty increased. As learners grow and pass the upper class, they think that English is more difficult to learn. This finding is parallel with the study of Özmat and Senemoğlu (2021) who found that eleventh grade students experienced difficulties at higher levels than the seventh grade students did. This finding may be related to the nature of learning in which learning begins with simple skills and topics and goes on with more difficult topics and higher skills. As Bloom (1956) puts forward in his taxonomy, there are some levels of learning and these levels move beyond from simple to complex and from concrete and abstract. While knowledge that does not require skills and abilities is at the beginning of the continuum, evaluation requiring high-level of skills and abilities is at the end of the continuum.

Butler (2014) found that "parental indirect behaviours (i.e. the home literacy and language environment and indirect modelling) and parental direct behaviours (i.e. direct assistance with their child's studying and learning of English) were significantly positively correlated with their socio-economic status" (p. 431). Which includes education and English level of parents, income, and parents' behaviors etc. In this study, it was found that mothers' level of education was related to the perceived difficulties. The learners with mothers whose educational level is high school or higher education experience less difficulties than those whose mothers have elementary level of education. The support of families is one of the factors affecting learners' level of difficulties in English



learning. (Kızıldağ, 2009; Solak & Bayar, 2015). Thus, it can be supposed and commented that mothers with higher levels of education may be more conscious in some aspects such as the importance of knowing a foreign language or scaffolding their children. The most common reasons for difficulties that parents experience in scaffolding their children are lack of time, lack of skills, and not knowing enough English (Forey et al., 2016). Except for the lack of time, it can be said that two of the most common reasons are related to the level of education. Thus, parents who have higher level of education face fewer challenges in assisting their children with English learning, which can affect the perceived difficulties of learners.

On the contrary to the results seen in mothers, fathers' level of education did not show any significant difference. According to the traditional Turkish family culture, it is the mother who takes more responsibility for children. Thus, it is understandable to see such a result. In the study of Kalaycı and Öz (2018), a significant difference was observed between mother and fathers in terms of parents' perceptions of logistic and indirect help for their children. The same study showed that mothers were more keen on doing their children's homework than fathers. Although it (doing homework for children) is not appreciated, it is clear that this kind of help will require more knowledge and skills about the target language, which is directly related to the level of education.

The results of this study cannot be taken as absolute evidence for the variables of gender and fathers' level of education which did not show significant difference. On the other hand, there were some important data for grade and mothers' level of education, so it would be appropriate to suggest some pedagogical implications. When reading this finding, which is perceived difficulties were related to some variables such as gender and mothers' level of education, by comparing and relating it with the previous research, it can be highlighted that individual differences play an important role in both level and kind of perceived difficulties. Thus, the stakeholders of curriculum design and implementation should pay attention to the beliefs and differences of learners. Secondly, increasing the level of education of parents will positively affect the children's learning process. Türkiye's level of education attainment to both secondary (57%) and tertiary level (33%) is low compared to the OECD countries where the rate of 85% for secondary and 44% for tertiary is observed. (OECD report, 2020). Nevertheless, it is promising that Türkiye has experienced the second-largest increase in secondary education and the largest increase in tertiary education among the OECD countries between 2008-2018 (ibid).

The findings of this study are restricted to a few variables and learners of secondary schools. The further studies can focus on the learners at different levels. Moreover, parents' voices also can be heard in order to read these data with their eyes.

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## Genişletilmiş Özet

### Giriş

Türkiye'de İngilizce öğrenmek zorlu bir süreç olarak görülmekte ve bunun temel nedenlerinden biri Türkçe ile İngilizce dil yapıları arasındaki farklılıklar olarak gösterilmektedir. Türkçe ve İngilizce farklı dil ailelerindedir ve dilbilgisi açısından büyük farklılıklar göstermektedir.

Ayrıca Türkçenin yazıldığı gibi telaffuz edilmesi, İngilizce telaffuzunu Türkçe öğrenenler için ürkütücü hâle getirmektedir. Türkçe öğrenenlerin İngilizce öğrenirken karşılaştıkları zorlukları tespit etmek için bazı araştırmacılar algı ve görüş çalışmaları yapmışlardır. Bu çalışmaların bazıları öğretmenleri hedef alırken, diğerleri öğrenci görüşlerini temel almışlar. İngilizce öğretmenlerinin İngilizce öğrenmenin zorluklarına ilişkin inançlarını inceleyen çalışmalarda bulgular yoğun müfredat, uygun olmayan ders kitapları, kurumsal destek eksikliği ve ailelerden destek eksikliği gibi sosyo-ekonomik zorlukları ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bu alanda yapılmış bir diğer çalışma bulgularına göre ise motivasyon eksikliği, İngilizcesi zayıf öğretmenler, pratik eksikliği, malzeme yetersizliği ve otoriter ve kalabalık sınıflar İngilizce öğrenmenin zorlukları olarak bilinmektedir. Literatürde öğretmen ve öğrencilerin zorluklara ilişkin inançlarını inceleyen bazı çalışmalar bulunmakla birlikte, bu zorlukları farklı değişkenler açısından araştıran sınırlı sayıda çalışma bulunmaktadır. İngilizce öğrenme güçlüklerinde cinsiyet farklılıklarına yönelik sınırlı sayıda çalışma vardır ve bilimize göre Türkiye bağlamında herhangi bir çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Bu nedenle bu araştırma, lise öğrencilerinin İngilizce öğreniminde karşılaştıkları güçlüklerle ilişkin görüşlerinin belirlenmesini ve bu görüşlerin cinsiyet, sınıf ve anne-baba eğitim düzeyi gibi değişkenler çerçevesinde incelenmesini amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda aşağıdaki sorulara yanıt aranmıştır.

Dil öğrenimindeki güçlükler, dil öğrenimi güçlüğü alt boyutları olan ilgi ve İstek Uygulama, Ortam ve Materyal ve Sosyal İmkânlar,

1. Öğrencilerin cinsiyetlerine göre manidar farklılık göstermekte midir?
2. Öğrencilerin sınıf düzeyine göre manidar farklılık göstermekte midir?
3. Öğrencilerin anne eğitim düzeyine göre manidar farklılık göstermekte midir?
4. Öğrencilerin baba eğitim düzeyine göre manidar farklılık göstermekte midir?

### Yöntem

Bu araştırmanın modeli, temel amacı bir durumun veya olgunun özelliklerini doğru bir şekilde tasvir etmek ya da resmetmek olan tarama modellerinden betimsel tarama modelidir. (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Tarama modeli, eğitim bilimlerinde sıklıkla bireylerin tutum, görüş, inanç, motivasyon gibi özelliklerinin yanında demografik özellikleri hakkında da bilgi vermektedir. Bu araştırma lise öğrencilerinin İngilizce öğrenme güçlüklerine ilişkin görüşlerinin çeşitli değişkenler açısından ele alınmıştır. Çalışmaya Sivas'ta lisede öğrenim gören 305 öğrenci katılmıştır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak Mehdiyev, Uğurlu ve Usta (2017) tarafından geliştirilen İngilizce Öğrenme Güçlükleri Ölçeği (İÖGÖ) kullanılmıştır. Ölçek ilgi-İsteklilik, Uygulama, Ortam-Materyal ve Sosyal İmkânlar olmak üzere 4 alt faktör altında 15 maddeden oluşmaktadır. Veri analizi R programında yapılmıştır.

## Sonuç

Analiz sonuçlarına göre, ilgi-isteklilik ( $F_{1-297}=1.198$ ,  $p>.05$ ), uygulama ( $F_{1-297}=0.081$ ,  $p>.05$ ), ortam-materyal ( $F_{1-297}=0.040$ ,  $p>.05$ ), ve sosyal imkânlar ( $F_{1-297}=0.361$ ,  $p>.05$ ) alt boyutları ile İngilizce öğrenme güçlükleri toplamı ( $F_{1-297}=1.102$ ,  $p>.05$ ) cinsiyete göre farklılık göstermediği bulgulanmıştır. Yani her iki cinsiyet grubu da benzer davranışlar göstermektedir. Öte yandan, algılanan güçlüklerin sınıf seviyesine göre farklılaştığı görülmektedir. İlgi isteklilik ( $F_{3-296}=2.36$ ,  $p>.05$ ) alt faktörü sınıf düzeyi değişkenine göre anlamlı farklılık göstermemiştir. Ancak, uygulama ( $F_{3-296}=6.46$ ,  $p<.05$ ), ortam materyal ( $F_{3-296}=5.39$ ,  $p<.05$ ) ve sosyal imkânlar ( $F_{3-296}=13.10$ ,  $p<.05$ ) ve İngilizce öğrenme güçlüğü toplam puanı ( $F_{3-296}=9.24$ ,  $p<.05$ ) sınıf düzeyi değişkenine göre anlamlı farklılık göstermektedir. 9. sınıf öğrencilerinin ( $X=2.82$ ) İngilizce öğrenme güçlüklerine ilişkin genel algıları 12. sınıf öğrencilerine ( $X=3.25$ ) göre daha düşük puanlara sahiptir. 10, 11 ve 12. sınıflar benzer puanları paylaşmaktadır. Sonuçlar, lise öğrencilerinin İngilizce öğrenmede zorluk algılarının ilk yıllarında düşük seviyelerdeyken sınıf seviyesi arttıkça önemli ölçüde arttığını ortaya koymuştur.

Anne eğitim düzeyi, ilgi isteklilik, uygulama ve sosyal imkânlar alt faktörlerine göre değişkenlik göstermezken toplam puan ve ortam-materyal boyutuna göre farklılaştığı görülmektedir. Gruplar arasındaki farkın yönüne bakıldığında, annesi ilköğretim düzeyinde öğrenim gören öğrencilerin ( $X=3.38$ ) ortam-materyal ile ilgili İngilizce öğrenme güçlüğü algısının lise mezunu olanlardan ( $X=3.10$ ) daha yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. Sonuç olarak, ilköğretim düzeyinde anne eğitimi alan öğrenciler daha fazla zorluk yaşamaktadır. Lise ve üzeri anne eğitim düzeyine sahip öğrenciler de benzer davranışlar göstermektedir. Anne eğitim düzeyinde görülen bu farklılaşmaya rağmen baba eğitim düzeyinin öğrencilerin algıladıkları zorlukları etkilemediği bulgulanmıştır.

## Tartışma

Çalışmanın ilk bulgusu İngilizce öğrenme güçlüklerinin değişkenliği açısından cinsiyetin önemli olmadığıdır. Bu bulgu önceki araştırmaları desteklemektedir. Yahya (2012) de algılanan zorluklar açısından kız ve erkek öğrenciler arasında bir fark olmadığını bulmuştur. Öte yandan, erkek ve kız öğrenciler farklı dil becerilerini kullanmayı öğrenmede farklı düzeylerde zorluk göstermişlerdir (Daif-Allah, 2012). İkinci olarak, anket İngilizce öğrenme güçlüklerinde sınıf bazında farklılık olduğunu göstermiştir. Sınıf düzeyi yükseldikçe, algılanan zorluk artmaktadır. Bu bulgu, Özmat ve Senemoğlu'nun (2021) on birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin yedinci sınıf öğrencilerine göre daha fazla düzeyde zorluk yaşadıklarını saptayan çalışmasıyla paralellik göstermektedir. Bu bulgu, öğrenmenin basit beceri ve konularla başlayıp daha zor konular ve daha yüksek becerilerle devam ettiği öğrenmenin doğasıyla ilgili olabilir. Bloom'un (1956) taksonomisinde öne sürdüğü

gibi, öğrenmenin bazı düzeyleri vardır ve bu düzeyler basitten karmaşığa, somuttan soyuta doğru ilerler. Beceri ve yetenek gerektirmeyen bilgi sürekliliğinin başında yer alırken, yüksek düzeyde beceri ve yetenek gerektiren değerlendirme sürekliliğinin sonundadır.

Ailelerin desteği, öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenmedeki zorluk düzeylerini etkileyen faktörlerden biridir (Kızıldağ, 2009; Solak ve Bayar, 2015). Ebeveynlerin çocuklarına yardımcı olurken yaşadıkları zorlukların en yaygın nedenleri zaman eksikliği, beceri eksikliği ve yeterli İngilizce bilmemektir (Forey ve diğerleri, 2016). Annelerde görülen sonuçların aksine babaların eğitim düzeyleri anlamlı bir farklılık göstermemiştir. Geleneksel Türk aile kültürüne göre çocuklardan daha çok anne sorumludur. Kalaycı ve Öz'ün (2018) çalışmasında, ebeveynlerin çocuklarına yönelik lojistik ve dolaylı yardım algıları açısından anne ve babalar arasında anlamlı bir farklılık gözlemlenmiştir. Aynı araştırma, annelerin çocuklarının ödevlerini yapmaya babalardan daha istekli olduklarını göstermektedir.

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