T.C.

BURSA ULUDAĞ UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES TEACHING

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME

ACADEMIC LOCUS OF CONTROL: VOLUNTARY ENGLISH PREPARATION PROGRAM STUDENTS OF A TURKISH UNIVERSITY

MASTER THESIS

Ayça KILIÇ

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SUPERVISOR

Assist. Prof. Dr. Pınar SALI

BURSA

2021

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29/01/2021

EĞİTİM BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

YÜKSEK LİSANS İNTİHAL YAZILIM RAPORU

ULUDAĞ ÜNİVERSİTESİ

EĞİTİM BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

YABANCI DİLLER EĞİTİMİ ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih: 29/01/2021

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: Türkiye'de Bir Üniversitenin İsteğe Bağlı İngilizce Hazırlık Programında Okuyan Öğrencilerde Akademik Kontrol Odağı

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Adı Soyadı : Ayça Kılıç 29/01/2021

Öğrenci no : 801793010

Anabilim Dalı : Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı

Programı : İngilizce Öğretmenliği Programı

Statüsü : Yüksek Lisans

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Pınar SALI

22/02/2020

* Turnitin programına Uludağ Üniversitesi Kütüphane web sayfasından ulaşılabilir.

YÖNERGEYE UYGUNLUK ONAYI

“Akademik Kontrol Odağı: Türkiye'de Bir Üniversitenin İsteğe Bağlı İngilizce Hazırlık Programında Okuyan Öğrenciler” adlı Yüksek Lisans tezi, Uludağ Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü tez yazım kurallarına uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.

Tezi Hazırlayan | Danışman

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ULUDAĞ ÜNİVERSİTESİ

EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE,

Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bilim Dalı öğrencisi 801793010 numara ile kayıtlı Ayça KILIÇ'ın hazırladığı "Akademik Kontrol Odağı: Türkiye'de Bir Üniversitenin İsteğe Bağlı İngilizce Hazırlık Programında Okuyan Öğrenciler" konulu yüksek lisans çalışması ile ilgili tez savunma sınavı, 12/02/2021 günü 11:00-12:00 saatleri arasında yapılmış, sorulan sorulara alınan cevaplar sonunda adayın tezinin/çalışmasının (başarılı/başarısız) olduğuna (oybirliği/oy çokluğu) ile karar verilmiştir.

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Abstract

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Field : Foreign Languages Education

Branch : English Language Teaching

Degree Awarded : MA Thesis

Page Number : xv+94

Degree Date : 23.02.2021

Thesis : Academic Locus of Control: Voluntary English Preparation Program Students of A Turkish University

Supervisor : Asst. Prof. Dr. Pınar SALI

ACADEMIC LOCUS OF CONTROL: VOLUNTARY ENGLISH PREPARATION PROGRAM STUDENTS OF A TURKISH UNIVERSITY

Academic locus of control (ALOC) has been an area of interest since it was developed by Trice (1985) as a construct. ALOC is concerned with the belief that one can control one's own academic success (Trice, 1985). English, in addition to being a language, is included as an academic course in the curriculum all over the world, which also makes it both an academic topic to question its effect on academic success and a concept whose relation to the area of ELT can be investigated. Also, its relations to attributions have also been investigated all over the world, as the attributions to success and failure might shed light on language learning process of individuals. However, very few studies have been conducted to see the relationship between the ALOC scores and attributions of students in a voluntary English preparation program. Thus, this study was conducted to investigate the ALOC scores of achievers and underachievers in the

preparatory program they attended, if there was a significant relationship between the ALOC scores of achievers and underachievers, the attributions of those students to their success or failure and their extra activities to improve their English. To achieve this aim, a mixed-method study was carried out. Quantitative data about the ALOC scores of the students (*N*=184) in the program was gathered via an ALOC scale by Akın (2007) and analyzed via IBM SPSS 22.0 statistical package. For the qualitative part of the study, open-ended Google surveys with five open ended questions were sent to both achievers (*N*=36) and underachievers (*N*=30) with slightly changed versions. Data gathered via the surveys was coded, analyzed and deductions were made. The results of the quantitative phase of the study indicated that both achievers and underachievers had higher internal ALOC scores. Also, there were no significant relationships between the ALOC scores of achievers and underachievers. As for the qualitative part of the study, the students reported that they mostly decided to study in this program by their own will and that they mostly wanted to improve their English. The achievers mainly attributed their success to strategy use, effort and teachers, whereas the underachievers attributed their failure to lack of effort, program-related reasons and *COVID-19 pandemic*. Extra-curricular activities done by both groups of students were also investigated. In conclusion, all these and other key findings were discussed in relation to language teaching and learning at tertiary settings. In the light of all these then, implications and insights for further research were also presented.

Keywords: Academic Locus of Control, English Language Teaching. English preparation program.

Özet

Yazar : Ayça KILIÇ

Üniversite : Uludağ Üniversitesi

Ana Bilim Dalı : Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bilim Dalı

Bilim Dalı : İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bilim Dalı

Tezin Niteliği : Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Sayfa Sayısı : xv+94

Mezuniyet Tarihi : 23.02.2021

Tez : Akademik Kontrol Odağı: Türkiye'de Bir Üniversitenin İsteğe Bağlı İngilizce Hazırlık Programında Okuyan Öğrenciler

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AKADEMİK KONTROL ODAĞI: TÜRKİYE'DE BİR ÜNİVERSİTENİN İSTEĞE BAĞLI İNGİLİZCE HAZIRLIK PROGRAMINDA OKUYAN ÖĞRENCİLER

Akademik kontrol odağı, Trice tarafından 1985 yılında ortaya atıldığından beri ilgi çekmektedir. Akademik kontrol odağı, bir kişinin kendi akademik başarılarını kontrol edebileceği inancı ile ilgilidir (Trice, 1985). İngilizce, bir dil olmasının yanında, akademik bir ders olarak bütün dünyada akademik müfredatta yer almaktadır ve bu da onu hem akademik başarı üzerinde etkisi sorgulanabilecek bir konu, hem de dil öğrenmeyle olan ilişkisi incelenebilecek bir kavram yapar. Dahası, akademik kontrol odağının başarıya ve başarısızlığa atfedilen sebepler ile olan ilişkisi de bütün dünyada incelenen bir konu olmuştur. Başarı ve başarısızlık için atfedilen sebepler bireylerin dil öğrenme süreçlerine ışık tutmuştur. Fakat, çok az çalışma akademik kontrol odağı ile atıfların ilişkisini isteğe bağlı İngilizce hazırlık programında incelemiştir. Bunun bir sonucu olarak, bu çalışma Türkiye'de bir üniversitenin isteğe bağlı hazırlık programında

başarılı ve başarısız olan öğrencilerin akademik kontrol odağı ölçeği sonuçlarını tespit etmek, bu sonuçlar arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olup olmadığını incelemek, bu öğrencilerin başarı ve başarısızlık için atfettikleri sebepleri öğrenmek ve bu öğrencilerin İngilizce bilgilerini geliştirmek için yaptıkları ders dışı etkinlikleri anlamak için gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu amacı gerçekleştirmek için de karma yöntemli bir araştırma yöntemine başvurulmuştur. Programdaki öğrencilerin (*N*=184) akademik kontrol odağı sonuçlarını gösterecek nicel veriler, Akın (2007) tarafından geliştirilen Akademik Kontrol Ölçeği kullanılarak toplanmış ve IBM SPSS 22.0 istatistik programı ile analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmadaki nitel veriyi toplamak için ise, 36 başarılı ve 30 başarısız öğrenciden Google anketleri aracılığıyla bilgi toplanan beş açık uçlu sorudan oluşan anket kullanılmıştır. Anketten elde edilen bilgi kodlanmış, analiz edilmiş ve çıkarımlar yapılmıştır. Nicel bölümdeki sonuçlar hem başarılı hem de başarısız öğrencilerin içsel akademik kontrol odağı ölçeklerinin daha yüksek olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca, başarılı ve başarısız öğrencilerin akademik kontrol odağı sonuçları arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunamamıştır. Nitel bölüme gelince, öğrencilerin çoğu bu programa katılmaya kendi istekleriyle karar verdiklerini ve İngilizce bilgilerini geliştirmeye kendilerinin karar verdiklerini doğrulamışlardır. Başarılı öğrenciler başarılarını en çok strateji kullanımı, çaba ve öğretmen faktörlerine, başarısız öğrenciler ise başarısızlıklarını çoğunlukla yeterli çaba göstermeme, program ile ilgili bazı konulara ve Kovid-19 salgınına atfetmiştir. İki grup öğrenci tarafından da gerçekleştirilen ders dışı etkinlikler de incelenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, tüm bu ve diğer önemli bulgular üniversite seviyesinde dil eğitimi ve öğretimi ile ilgili olarak tartışılmıştır. Tüm bu bilgilerin ışığında yeni çalışmalar için öngörüler de sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Akademik Kontrol Odağı, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi. İngilizce Hazırlık Programı.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has helped me to start and complete this invaluable journey. My biggest gratitude is to my supervisor, Asst. Prof. Pınar Salı, who paved my way for the study and guided me throughout my way. Without her invaluable support, I would never be able to walk through this process so smoothly.

I also want to thank my school administration who supported me to complete my degree, my colleagues who helped me carry out the study, the students who voluntarily joined the study and made it possible.

As for my family, like they have done all my life, they have supported me by all means to finish my study. I dedicate my work to my beloved son, Alkım Gönen, hoping he would understand me one day for spending some of our valuable time on carrying out my study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALOC	: Academic Locus of Control
EFL	: English as a Foreign Language
FLE	: Foreign Language Education
GPA	: Grade Point Average
LOC	: Locus of Control
L2	: Second Language

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Individual differences have been the focus of a wealth of research in a number of areas including the field of psychology and education, since the importance of them was realized in the 1960s. Dörnyei (2010) defines individual differences as features of individuals that differ from each other and make each of them unique. Individual differences directly affect learning processes, so they have become a focal point of research in every educational area, including foreign language education (FLE henceforth). According to Ellis (2004), the ultimate goal of research on individual differences is to examine who will achieve learning a foreign language. As foreign language classes consist of many individuals different from each other, individual differences should be taken into account to address the students' needs in classes and to prepare the curricula which try to respond to those needs both per groups and individuals (Ellis & Shintani, 2014).

There are plenty of individual differences which unquestionably influence language learners and their success in their language learning process. Moreover, there are different classifications for them. One of the most common categorization of individual differences is done by Ehrman, Leaver and Oxford (2003). In their article, Ehrman et al. (2003) classify individual differences into three categories: learning styles, learning strategies and affective factors. They state that a learning style is the way information is acquired and processed in the brain such as analytic-holistic or ectasis-synopsis styles. Learning strategies are actions or behaviors that are used to complete a second language (L2 henceforth) task successfully (Ehrman et al., 2003). Oxford (1990) divides language learner strategies into six categories: cognitive, metacognitive, memory-related, compensatory, affective and social strategies. Finally, affective factors comprise

of many variables such as motivation, autonomy, anxiety, self-efficacy and locus of control (LOC henceforth).

Another commonly referred classification belongs to Ellis and Shintani (2014). Ellis and Shintani (2014) classify individual differences into three categories as permanent/stable factors, mutable/dynamic factors and mediating factors. Permanent/stable factors are the ones that cannot be changed by teachers, so they should adapt their teaching such as language aptitude, working memory or personality. Mutable/dynamic factors are the ones that can be modified by teachers to enhance students' learning such as motivation and anxiety. The third group consists of the variables, which are related to factors affecting learning such as learner beliefs, strategy use and LOC (Ellis & Shintani, 2014).

Although there are various categorizations of individual differences, it is certain that understanding individual differences is essential for language learning as they determine the speed of acquisition and level of achievement (Ellis, 2004). Thus, one of the factors, LOC has been an essential part of individual differences research since it was put forward by Rotter (1954) and elaborated (Rotter, 1966) as a part of 'Social Learning Theory'. According to Rotter (1966), people attribute different reasons to their own success and failure. If they attribute their success or failure to themselves, their personalities or behaviors, which means they believe they have the control of the events, they have an internal LOC. On the other hand, if they think their success or failure is the result of other things like luck, chance, fate or powerful others, they have an external LOC. LOC has a significant role in learning environment to understand learning situations and individual differences (Rotter, 1966). Thus, it has been investigated for language learning in many different educational areas including elementary schools (Moorman, 1987), secondary schools (Fakeye, 2011), high schools (Hemmat & Rahimi, 2012; Landine & Stewart, 1998), universities (Ghabanchi & Golparvar, 2011; Ghonsooly & Elahi, 2010; Ghonsooly &

Shirvan, 2011; Gifford, Briceño-Perriott & Mianzo, 2006; Golparvar, 2014; Hashemi & Zabihi, 2011; Hassaskhah & Jahedi, 2015; Joo, Lim & Kim, 2013; Naseri & Ghabanchi, 2014; Nejabati, 2014; Onyekuru & Ibegbunam, 2014; Park & Kim, 1998; Pasceralla, Edison, Hagedorn, Nora & Terenzini, 1996; Nodoushan, 2012; Yazdanpanah, Sahragard & Rahimi, 2010) and self-instructed learning (Bown, 2006; Joo, Lim & Kim, 2013; Soriano-Ferrer, M. & Alonso-Blanco, 2020; Şahin, 2020).

After Rotter (1966) puts forward his theory of LOC, it has influenced many scientists working in the area. One of them, Weiner (1972, 1979, 1985) uses it as one of the bases of his new theory, 'Attribution Theory'. In this theory, Weiner (1985) explains how people interpret their life events, which causes, or attributions, they make for the reasons and how these attributions affect their future decisions or motivation. He claims the most attributed reasons to success or failure in academic life are ability, effort, luck and task difficulty (Weiner, 1985). According to Weiner (1985), these attributions have three causal dimensions: locus, stability and controllability, so he classifies all attributions under these categories, for example, ability is an internal, stable and uncontrollable attribution, while luck is external, unstable and uncontrollable. As many people succeed or fail in their aim to learn English every year, 'Attribution Theory' draws a lot of attention in FLE. As Dörnyei (2010) states, it is very common to fail to learn a language worldwide, so attributional theories have key roles to explain the motivation of people and the results of their processes.

LOC also becomes one of the focal points in individual differences research and starts to be used extensively for academic purposes. Thus, Trice (1985) defines a new term in the area: academic locus of control (ALOC henceforth). ALOC is related to people's beliefs about whether they can affect their own academic outcomes or whether their academic success or failure is determined by the factors within themselves or from other exterior factors. While learners may

attribute their academic success or failure to internal reasons such as effort or lack of it, they may also attribute it to external reasons like the teacher, the difficulty of the lesson or luck. Therefore, it has widely been investigated to understand its relations with different areas in academic contexts such as academic probation, self-efficacy, college dropouts and language learning.

To sum up, ALOC is related to FLE and is proved to be a good predictor of success and failure in academic contexts. Furthermore, learners' attributions for success and failure help to understand the process of language learning and its successful or unsuccessful results. What first triggered this research was the urgent need to understand the high drop-out and failure rate (above 60% each year) in the voluntary English preparation program at the state university in Turkey the study is to take place. Although it is a voluntary program and students decide to study in this program by their will, they fail to complete it successfully, which makes it vital to study the phenomenon to understand the causes and to solve the ongoing problem. Moreover, there have been many studies about ALOC and attributions in FLE, very few studies seek the relationship of ALOC and attributions of success and failure to learn English at tertiary level intensive English programs. In addition, there are nearly no studies investigating their relationship in a voluntary English preparation program at university in Turkey. To achieve these aims, this study investigates ALOC of tertiary level voluntary English preparation program students and their attributions for success and failure in a Turkish state university context.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

There are a great many people who attempt to learn a foreign language around the world, some of whom are successful in doing so, while others fail. Some of these people choose to learn a foreign language by themselves, while others are influenced by other factors to do so. These learners attribute their success or failure to different reasons. Identifying such attributions is

apparently of significance so as to support the students both academically and emotionally, which will help to get better learning outcomes during the language learning process (Dörnyei, 2007).

This study is about a voluntary English preparation program at a state university in Turkey. The students choose to study in this program in order to learn English at their first year of university education for internal reasons like having a good job in the future or going to abroad with the Erasmus student exchange program, or external reasons such as the will of their parents and recommendation of their teachers. This makes this program one of the ideal environments to investigate the relationship between English language learning and ALOC. ALOC of the students affects the whole process of learning English either they succeed or fail. Also, as attributions are situational, the attributions of the achievers, who attend 80% of the classes and get 60 points or higher at the end of their overall evaluation throughout the year and the underachievers, who do not attend 80% of the classes, drop out due to different problems, or cannot get 60 points or higher at the end of their overall evaluation throughout the year, should be investigated to understand the problem of high rate of failure (about 60% each year) in the program better and to solve it for the coming years.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The present study attempts to identify the relationship between ALOC and success or failure of the students who study in a voluntary English preparation program of a state university in Turkey. For this purpose, the ALOC scores of the students are investigated to see what kind of ALOC the achievers and the underachievers have and to understand if there is a significant difference between the ALOC scores of the achievers and the underachievers. Also, the students' attributions for their success or failure are further analyzed to have future implications for the program.

Moreover, there are some points that make such a study vital in this program. One of these points is that while learning English is crucial for these students for their academic lives and future careers, there are many students who fail to finish the program successfully by getting low grades or drop out before the end, as it is not compulsory to finish it as they can still continue their university education next year even if they fail. The ALOC scores of these students and their attributions for failure will both help this institution and similar institutions develop some strategies to prevent students' failure and drop-outs in English preparation programs and enrich our understanding of the problems related to ALOC and attributions in the language learning process. Furthermore, the information gathered from these students will help guide prospective students as to whether to choose studying English in this program or not according to their ALOC. On the other hand, ALOC of the students who successfully finish the program and their attributions for their success will help the administrators and programmers increase the success of the program. This information could also be of use in other similar instructional settings in the context of the present study.

1.4. Research Questions

This study is carried out to identify ALOC of the students who succeed or fail in a voluntary English preparation program at a state university in Turkey and to examine if there is a significant difference between their ALOC scores. It is also aimed to have further understanding about the students' attributions to their success or failure. To achieve these purposes, the research questions below are posed:

1-What is the academic locus of control of the students who completed the voluntary English preparation program successfully?

2- What is the academic locus of control of the students who could not complete the voluntary English preparation program successfully?

3- Is there a statistically significant difference between academic locus of control of the achievers and underachievers?

4-What are the attributions of the students who completed the voluntary English preparation program successfully for their success?

4.1. What are the extra activities of the achievers that helped them in their English learning process?

4.2. How did the distance learning affect the achievers' learning English and their studies in English preparation program?

5- What are the attributions of the students who could not complete the voluntary English preparation program successfully for their failure?

5.1. What are the extra activities of the underachievers that helped them in their English learning process?

5.2. How did the distance learning affect the underachievers' learning English and their studies in English preparation program?

1.5. Significance of the Study

There are plenty of academic studies related to ALOC studying the relationship between ALOC and college absenteeism (Trice & Hackburt, 1989), ALOC and study skills (Onwuegbuzie & Daley, 1998), ALOC and success in life (Findley& Cooper, 1983), ALOC and self-efficacy (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005; Landis, Altman & Cavin, 2007; Yeşilyurt, 2014), ALOC and GPA (grade point average henceforth) (Agnew, Slate, Jones & Agnew, 1993), ALOC and academic dishonesty (Pino & Smith, 1983), ALOC and waiting time to do homework (Janssen & Carton,

1999), ALOC and college adjustment (Mooney, Sherman & Lo Presto, 1991), ALOC and academic procrastination (Albayrak, 2014), ALOC and internet addiction (İskender & Akın, 2010), ALOC and gender differences (Kazak-Çetinkalp, 2010; Sarıçam, Duran, Çardak & Halmatov, 2012), ALOC and web-based classes (Wang & Newlin, 2000), ALOC and drop-outs in e-learning (Levy, 2007), ALOC and self-beliefs (Jones, 2007), ALOC and achievement goals (Akın, 2010), ALOC and intention to apply for graduate schools (Landrum, 2010), ALOC and student academic support (Arslan, Çardak & Uysal, 2013), ALOC and metacognition (Arslan & Akın, 2014), ALOC and student failure (Gürsoy& Çelik Korkmaz, 2015) and ALOC and writing performance (Abbas, 2016). However, there seems to be a scarcity of research on ALOC in English preparation programs at the tertiary level to find out the effect of ALOC on language learners' success or failure. There have been some studies investigating the relationship between LOC and English as a university course (Fakeye, 2011; Ghonsooly & Elahi 2012; Yazdanpanah et al., 2010), but they have been interested in the success in passing a course, not the success in learning a language. Secondly, the achievers' ALOC and attributed reasons to their success will contribute to the understanding of success and failure of the students studying in English preparation programs in Turkey and inform young adults who want to learn English in Turkey. Finally, this study will help discover the attributed reasons of absenteeism and failure experienced every year by people who decide to learn English by internal or external causes at the beginning of an academic year. Armed with this knowledge then, language educators and language program designers could provide adult language learners with assistance in accomplishing their goals to learn a language.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

Although the present study offers useful insights into the research issues under scrutiny, there are also some limitations of it. First of all, the study was conducted only in a voluntary English preparation program at a specific institute, which may be a hindrance to generalize the conclusions. The study needs to be done in other institutions to compare the results and make generalizations.

Moreover, when the first quantitative data was gathered, until the necessary official permissions were taken, nearly one hundred students had already dropped out. Therefore, their data was missing in the study.

Finally, the study aimed to provide some answers to the ongoing problems of the system; however, the way that the instruction was delivered in the program had to be changed due to the *COVID-19 pandemic.* Thus, the students had to continue their learning via distance education and some students could not continue the classes and had to drop out, whereas some students continued despite ongoing problems.

1.7. Conclusion

The first chapter aimed to provide an account into the background of the study, the research questions to be answered and the significance of the study for the program in which it was carried out and FLE in general and the limitations of the study were all mentioned. With the given outline, the detailed overview of the topics and previous studies were provided in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, research design, the population and sample of the study, the instruments used, how the data was collected and analyzed were described in detail. In Chapter 4, all the research questions were answered and the findings were presented. Chapter 5 was the part where all the findings were discussed and in Chapter 6, conclusions related to the study were made.

1.8. Definitions

Locus of Control (LOC): Locus of control is defined as individuals' perceptions of whether they control the reinforcements in their lives (Rotter, 1966).

Internal Locus of Control: Internal locus of control is defined as individuals' perceptions that the reasons of the events are controlled by personal behaviors or features (Rotter, 1966).

External Locus of Control: External locus of control is defined as individuals' perceptions that the reasons of the events are controlled by external factors (Rotter, 1966).

Attribution: An attribution is a cause made by people for life events (Weiner, 1985).

Academic Locus of Control (ALOC): Academic locus of control is defined as people's beliefs that they can affect their own academic outcomes (Trice, 1985).

Voluntary English Preparation Program: It is an eight-month long language learning program to learn English as a foreign language where students can study in the first year of their university education. At universities where the medium of instruction is English this program is compulsory, while the universities whose medium of instruction is Turkish may have it as a voluntary program.

The achievers: Students who attend 80% of the classes and get 60 points in average at the end of the year as a result of plenty of types of evaluation such as quizzes, progress tests, presentations, portfolios and final exams are counted as the achievers. Although there are also successful vs unsuccessful terms used in similar situations in the studies, it was decided to use achievers vs underachievers in this study, because of the fact it was important to emphasize that the achievers achieved their goals to choose the program. Although the underachievers failed in the program, they still improved their English, so they also achieved some goals, but it was not enough for them to pass the program. The distinction between achievers vs underachievers is clearer to emphasize this situation.

The underachievers: Students who do not attend 80% of the classes and fail due to absenteeism, or do not get 60 points in average at the end of the year as a result of plenty of types of evaluation such as quizzes, progress tests, presentations, portfolios and final exams are counted as the underachievers. This term was chosen to refer to these students as they could not manage to finalize their goals in the program although they improved their English to some extent.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this chapter, three key topics are reviewed in keeping with the focus of the present study. Locus of control (LOC), 'Attributions Theory of Motivation' and academic locus of control (ALOC) are defined, described and related previous studies in the field of FLE are provided.

2.1. Locus of Control (LOC)

LOC has been an important concept for education and FLE since it was introduced by Rotter (1954) as a part of the 'Social Learning Theory'. As Rotter (1966) identifies, LOC is about individuals' perceptions of whether they control the reinforcements, whether they are rewards or punishments, with some internal factors, or some external factors affect them. LOC is a continuum with internal and external LOC in the ends. Internal locus of control is defined as individuals' perceptions that the reasons of the events in their lives are controlled by personal behaviors or features such as ability or effort, while external locus of control is defined as individuals' perceptions that the reasons of the events are controlled by external factors such as luck, chance, or powerful others (Rotter, 1966). Nowadays, LOC is accepted as a trait-like feature which affects language learning directly. In addition, it has strong relationships with different theories and other individual differences, which shows it also affects the process indirectly. LOC is an essential concept to analyze and focus on learning environment, since the learners who believe they have the control over their own learning have the possibility to succeed more than the learners who believe they cannot control their learning process (Williams & Burden, 1997).

People with an internal LOC believe that they themselves affect the reinforcements and they perceive control over events, so they tend to put more effort to succeed (Landis et al., 2007).

Internal LOC is often associated with success and better academic performance (Findley & Cooper, 1983; Ghanpachi & Golparvar, 2011; Ghonsooly & Elahi, 2010; Gifford et al., 2006; Golparvar, 2014; Hassaskhah & Jahedi; 2015; Naseri & Ghabanchi; 2014; Onyekuru & Ibegbunam, 2014; Park & Kim, 1998; Stipek & Weisz, 1981; Yazdanpanah et al., 2010). This is because individuals with an internal LOC are more persistent with their effort; they do their best to perform well, which in return results with better academic performance (Landis et al., 2007). Internals take the responsibility for their learning and its outcomes, success or failure (Findley & Cooper, 1983). Nodoushan (2012) summarizes that people with an internal LOC have their long-term goals, they are less likely to have depression and anxiety and they may work to achieve things harder. Fakeye (2011) claims that foreign language learners need to have necessary level of competence, aptitude and intelligence to learn a foreign language and if the learners with an internal LOC do not have the necessary competence, aptitude or self-efficacy, they may feel depressed, anxious, or quit the language learning totally.

On the other hand, people with an external LOC believe that their reinforcements are affected by external factors, so they do not think that their effort has an influence on their success and failure. Thus, they tend to struggle less, which may harm their academic performance. Also, externals blame other people or things for the outcomes of their learning (Findley& Cooper, 1983). Nodoushan (2012) summarizes that people with an external LOC are less motivated to achieve, they are more likely to have learned helplessness and they are in need of encouragement and guidance more than internals.

There are a number of studies conducted to investigate the relationship between LOC and academic achievement. In one of them, Findley and Cooper (1983) complete a literature review and conclude that LOC is significantly and positively related to academic achievement and this relationship is more significant for males than females. Gifford et al. (2006) study with 3066

students who completed their first year at university and find that internals have significantly higher GPAs than externals. Hassaskhah and Jahedi (2015) study 387 university students with English major and their study show that there is a significant relationship between LOC and students' achievement according to their GPAs. Yazdanpanah et al. (2010) carry out a study with 120 undergraduate EFL learners who study English literature to see if there is a relationship between LOC and academic achievement of these students and they discover that LOC has a significant relation with academic achievement in this context with no significant difference of gender or year of study at university. Moreover, they state that internals perform significantly better than externals. On the other hand, Nodoushan (2012) studies the relationship between LOC and semester-end GPA with 198 EFL students, but cannot determine a significant relationship between these factors.

There are also some studies that investigate the relationship between LOC and self-instructed learning. In one of these studies, Joo, Lim and Kim (2013) investigate the relationship between LOC, self-efficacy and task value in an online university context with a study including 973 students who enroll an elective online three-credit course and find that LOC, self-efficacy and task value are important at predicting learner satisfaction.

LOC has been interrogated a lot since its rise in language learning. There are some studies which investigate its relationship with general English courses at university. Ghanpachi and Golparvar (2011) study if there is a relationship between LOC and general English achievement in the university entrance exam with 144 undergraduate students and the results indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between them. Ghonsooly and Elahi (2010) study this relationship in Iran with 240 students of three different faculties. They find a strong relationship between General English achievement and LOC. Ghonsooly and Shirvan (2011) examine if there is a relationship between LOC and reading and writing achievement of 136 undergraduate EFL

learners and their study demonstrates a strong correlation between them. Golparvar (2014) carries out a study to see if there is a relationship between LOC and general English achievement of 50 students studying Medicine and 50 students studying Theology and finds there is a significant positive relationship between them. He also finds a significant difference between LOC and general English achievements of these two groups. Naseri and Ghabanchi (2014) carry out a study with 81 undergraduate EFL learners to discover the relationship between LOC, self-efficacy beliefs and reading comprehension and they find that there is a significant correlation between LOC and self-efficacy beliefs and LOC and reading comprehension. Moreover, the learners with internal and external LOC significantly differ from each other for their EFL reading comprehension (Naseri & Ghabanchi, 2014).

In Nigeria, Onyekuru and Ibegbunam (2014) conduct a study with 498 students studying Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology to investigate the correlation between LOC and academic achievement of university students according to their term achievements and confirm a significant positive relationship between them.

Nejabati (2014) carries out an experimental study to find out if there is a relationship between LOC and students' reading comprehension with 24 undergraduate EFL students and if the researchers can train students to improve their reading comprehension. The researcher applies LOC training and reading comprehension activities in experimental group while there is only reading comprehension in control group. At the end of the month, experimental group performance significantly better than control group in reading tests and the study shows LOC training is possible to improve reading comprehension.

2.2. Attribution Theory of Motivation

Heider (1958) introduces his new idea to social psychology saying that what people think about events is more important than what really happens, since these believed reasons affect people's future decisions. He also asserts that people attribute some personal or situational reasons to the events in their lives. When Rotter (1966) puts forward his much-referred 'Social Learning Theory', he explains his new concept, LOC and what people attribute to their success and failure. According to Rotter (1966), people who believe their success or failure is due to some internal reasons like effort or lack of it, they have an internal LOC, whereas people who think their success or failure is due to some external reasons like luck or task difficulty, they have an external LOC. Weiner (1979) investigates the theory and LOC and he develops these ideas claiming that locus and control are two different concepts to deal with the reasons of the events. Thus, he introduces a new theory called 'Attribution Theory of Motivation' with a multi-dimensional point of causality. This theory is unique in that it relates people's experiences in the past with their achievements in the future (Dörnyei, 2010). It is also significant in achievement settings as it may affect the future activities, how much effort will be put or what to do in case of failure (Weiner, 1972). William and Burden (1997) think 'Attribution Theory' is important to understand individual students better. Attributions are also strong predictors of academic performance (Banks & Woolfson, 2008).

When Weiner starts his studies related to causes of events in the 1970s, he realizes that there are plenty of causes, so he thinks there is a need for the classification of causes (Weiner, 1979). Therefore, he starts explaining the causality with internal and external dimensions of locus. He states that the reasons attributed to an event can be internal which are rooted from the people themselves like ability, or external which are influenced by the environment (Weiner, 1985).

Weiner (1979) also realizes that some of the attributions have the dynamic nature while some others are constant. For example, ability and effort are both internal factors. Ability is innate and does not change much, whereas effort changes according to the task or period or even moment to moment. Also, task difficulty like learning English is stable, while luck is an unstable factor. In the end, he defines the property called stability (Weiner, 1979). If people think that their attributed reason to a previous event is stable, they may expect the future performances to have the same consequences (Demetriou, 2011).

The third dimension of the theory, controllability is also a factor which is found after the analysis of attributions by Weiner (1979). He states that some reasons attributed like effort is under our control, while some factors like aptitude are not controllable (Weiner, 1979). When students feel that they can control their learning process, they are more motivated and they are more likely to put more effort (Demetriou, 2011).

Although there are plenty of attributions discovered due to the high number of investigations carried out in many different areas, four attributions outnumber all the others for both success and failure, namely, ability, effort, task difficulty and luck (Weiner, 1985). Upon looking into the reasons of success and failure in a classroom, Weiner claims eight important and common reasons: ability, typical effort, mood, immediate effort, task difficulty, teacher bias, luck and unusual help from others (Weiner, 1979). Also, these factors may change in different situations and from culture to culture (Graham, 1991; Williams, Burden & Poulet, 2004; Demetriou, 2011). For example, to investigate this phenomenon, Brown, Gray and Ferrara (2005) make a cross-cultural study to compare attributions of Turkish, Japanese and Chinese students to their success and failure and they find that all groups attribute effort and ability to their success; however, while the Chinese and Turks attribute effort to their failure, the Japanese attribute both

effort and ability to their failure. They also state that the studies conducted in European cultures or the USA had different results for attributions (Brown et al., 2005).

Weiner (1985) also asserts that emotions are related to attributions and dimensions of locus, stability and controllability. He relates self-esteem, pride and gratitude with the dimension of locus; hopefulness or hopelessness and expectancies with stability; and anger, gratitude, guilt, pity and shame with controllability (Weiner, 1985). He elaborates that if people attribute their success to internal reasons, they feel proud of themselves, whereas they feel shame when they fail. If people attribute their success to external causes, they feel grateful; however, they feel angry or blame others when they fail. If people attribute their success or failure to stable causes, they may expect similar results in the future, so they expect if things will improve or not in the future (Weiner, 1985). Thus, attributions and the emotions they evoke may motivate or demotivate students for future actions (Graham, 1991; Demetriou, 2011). While successful students who attribute their success to their high ability feel proud of themselves, unsuccessful students who attribute their failure to their low ability may have a low self-esteem, or stop trying to achieve new things (Graham, 1991; Demetriou, 2011). In language learning situations, students who think that they have the necessary ability to acquire an L2 persist longer, while students who think that they lack of the L2 ability quit and have strong negative feelings such as low self-esteem or helplessness (Tse, 2000). Learners who have tried and failed to learn a new language before may put less effort in the future, or they may even avoid the situations they need to try to learn a new language. When students can attribute their failure to controllable reasons like lack of effort, they feel guilty; however, when they attribute their failure to uncontrollable reasons such as ability, they feel shame (Weiner, 1985).

Every year, millions of people try to learn a new language. Some people succeed, while some others fail. Everyone has their own reasons to attribute to their success or failure, which

may also coincide with each other. Moreover, the process of attributions is claimed to be in the center of new educational reforms and understanding of how students succeed or fail to learn, so studying attributions are useful and necessary in FLE (Mohammadi and Sharififar, 2016). Hence, 'Attribution Theory' has been an area of interest for people who study in FLE. Many studies have been conducted to have an insight about attributions to success and failure in FLE around the world (Besimoğlu, Serdar & Yavuz, 2011; Brown, 2004; Brown et al., 2005; Gabillon, 2013; Genç, 2016; Gobel & Mori, 2007; Gobel, Mori, Thang, Kan & Lee, 2011; Gobel, Thang, Sidhu, Oon & Chan, 2012; Hashemi & Zabihi, 2011; Hsieh, 2004; Kun & Liming, 2007; Lei & Qin, 2009; Mohammadi & Sharififar, 2016; Mori, Gobel, Thepsiri & Poianapunya, 2010; Paker & Özkardeş-Döğüş, 2017; Park & Kim, 1998; Pishghadam & Zabihi, 2011; Thang, Gobel, Mohd Nor & Suppiah, 2011; Tse, 2000; Wu, 2011; Yavuz & Höl, 2017; Yılmaz, 2012).

Many studies have investigated students' attributions for success and failure in Asia. Brown (2004) studies self-attributions of 127 first year students studying English at a Japanese university and finds that they attribute not only their success but also their failure to their effort which is internal, unstable and controllable. Gobel and Mori (2007) do a study with 233 Japanese first year students about their attributions in English and show that those students attribute their success to external reasons like class atmosphere and teacher influence, whereas they attribute their failure to internal reasons such as effort and preparation. In addition, they check if there are any significant relations between these attributions and success and failure and they discover ability, task difficulty and likes are significantly related to both success and failure (Gobel & Mori, 2007). Gobel et al. (2011) do a study to describe cross-cultural differences in attributions of 300 Thai, 298 Japanese and 292 Malaysian tertiary level students for their success or failure to learn English and their results show that although these students differ about their attributions for their success and failure, their common point is that while they attribute their success to external

reasons (getting good grades, teacher influence and getting good grades respectively), they attribute their failure to internal reasons (lack of interest, lack of effort and lack of ability respectively). Kun and Liming (2007) study achievement attributions with 112 undergraduate Chinese students learning English and find they attribute both their success and their failure to effort the most. Lei and Qin (2009) study success and failure attributions of undergraduate Chinese EFL students to learn English and find that they attribute their success to both internal and external factors like effort and teacher the most and their failure to internal reasons such as lack of confidence and lack of effort; in addition, teacher and effort factors are found to be the best predictors of students' achievements. Mori et al. (2010) study 335 Thai and 350 Japanese tertiary level students' attributions for their English performance to see if there are any significant differences between these two cultures and find out that both groups attribute their success to external reasons such as teachers and classroom setting, whereas they attribute their failure to internal factors such as effort and lack of ability; in addition, there are no significant differences between two groups' attributions. Thang et al. (2011) study 835 tertiary level English learners' attributions in Malaysia studying in six different universities and the results demonstrate that two most important attributions to success are getting a good grade and teacher influence respectively, whereas students' most attributed causes of failure are preparation and ability which are internal. Wu (2011) studies the attributions of 97 undergraduate students studying in non-English majors at a university in China for success and failure. The researcher finds that the students attribute their success to stable, internal and controllable factors such as effort, interest and confidence, while they attribute their failure to external and uncontrollable factors such as task difficulty or luck. No significant differences are explored between genders. Gobel et al. (2012) investigate success and failure attributions of 1156 undergraduate Malaysian students learning English and to see if there is a significant difference between urban and rural students'

attributions and their study demonstrates that although both groups attribute their failure to the same factors like tasks, urban group attribute their success to internal factors like ability, effort and study skills significantly more than rural group.

In recent years, there have been a number of research studies about attributions for success and failure in EFL in Iran. Hashemi and Zabihi (2011) carry out a study with 96 EFL students trying to learn English to find the relationships between causal attributions and multiple-choice English proficiency test scores and find that internal effort is related to high scores the most, while external task difficulty is related to low scores the most. Mohammadi and Sharififar (2016) study 200 young adult and adult learners' attributions to success and failure in English in Iran. They find that these students mostly attribute their success and failure to external reasons; however, the most attributed cause is effort which is internal and they also discover significant relationships between students' attributions and gender or proficiency. Pishghadam and Zabihi (2011) search foreign language attributions of 209 adult learners in Iran and their study demonstrates that internal effort attribution is the best predictor of success and lack of effort is the best predictor of failure; moreover, internal ability attribution is found to be significantly correlated with foreign language achievement.

Some studies have been conducted in Europe and the USA to investigate language learning attributions, too. Gabillon (2013) carries out a qualitative study with eight French people learning English to investigate their attributions and she learns that these learners attribute their failure to external uncontrollable factors like teachers and learning environments or internal uncontrollable ones like low ability and low efficacy. Hsieh (2004) studies 500 undergraduate students' attributions to success and failure as a part of the doctoral dissertation. The students study Spanish, German and French at university in the USA. The researcher administers the questionnaires after the first and third exams and finds that successful students attribute their

success to internal causes, effort and ability namely, whereas unsuccessful students attribute their failure to both internal and external causes such as lack of effort and difficulty of the task. Soriano-Ferrer and Alonso-Blanco (2020) investigate the causal attributions of 407 Spanish students, either A1 or B2 level students. According to the results, A1 level students attribute their success to both internal reasons such as effort and strategy and external reasons such as teacher, task difficulty and class, while they attribute their failure to only internal reasons like lack of ability, interest and effort. On the other hand, B2 level students attribute their success to internal reasons such as ability, interest and preparation, whereas they find external reasons like teacher, luck or task difficulty as their reasons of failure. Tse (2000) investigates the attributions of 51 graduate and undergraduate adult learners who study at least one L2 to success and failure in a qualitative study. According to the results of the study, students attribute their success to two external factors mostly; their teachers and families, whereas they think their failure is due to internal reasons; mainly lack of effort.

There are also a number of studies carried out in Turkey. Besimoğlu, Serdar and Yavuz (2011) conduct a study to explore 240 tertiary level Turkish students' attributions to success and failure in learning English and they find that these students attribute both their success and failure to internal reasons, the most widely use of strategy for success and lack of strategy use for failure. Genç (2016) studies the attributions of 291 undergraduate EFL students studying English preparation classes and according to the results of the study, these students attribute their success to interest most, whereas they attribute their failure to the effort most; however, the overall results show that they attribute their success to internal reasons and their failures to external reasons. He also realizes that students' attributions significantly differ from teachers' attributions. Paker and Özkardeş-Döğüş (2017) study with 223 English preparation class students learning English at a state university to find out their achievement attributions and learn that these students mostly

attribute their success to the teacher, which is external and uncontrollable, while they mostly attribute their failure to lack of enough vocabulary knowledge which is internal and controllable. In her thesis, Şahin (2020) studies the attributions of 274 tertiary level students to their success and failure in English and finds that they attribute both their success and failure to internal uncontrollable causes such as love, ability, interest and effort. Yavuz and Höl (2017) investigate 204 English preparation class students' attributions to success and failure and discover that they attribute their success and failure to both internal factors such as their background, self-confidence or lack of effort. Yılmaz (2012) investigates the attributions of 91 tertiary level EFL students and 17 teachers to reading comprehension and he discovers that strategy, mood and interest are the most attributed causes to success, whereas lack of interest and lack of time are mostly attributed to failure by the students; in addition, the attributions of different genders are significantly different, but the level of proficiency does not cause any significant differences.

2.3. Academic Locus of Control (ALOC)

When LOC's relation with academic achievement in academic contexts becomes the focus of attention, Trice (1985) develops a new term "academic locus of control" – ALOC - with a new scale – 'Academic Locus of Control Scale for College Students'. He defines ALOC as one's attributing academic success or failure to internal or external reasons (Trice, 1985). While learners may attribute their success or failure to internal reasons such as hard work or lack of it, they may also attribute it to external reasons like the teacher, the difficulty of the lesson, or simply luck. ALOC term has made it easier to investigate the relationship between ALOC and some academic concepts easier such as course grades, attendance to the classes, procrastination and success or failure in some courses (Curtis & Trice, 2013). Students with a high internal ALOC are effective and independent learners (Hashway, Hammond & Rogers, 1990; Jones,

Palincsar, Ogle & Carr, 1987). On the other hand, students with a low ALOC do not believe they can control their academic performance, so they are less interested in planning or revising (Jones, et al., 1987).

Research on ALOC has yielded some important findings. Agnew et al. (1993) investigate 149 agriculture students to see if there is a relationship between ALOC and student achievements and discover that external ALOC and lower GPAs are correlated. Albayrak (2014) studies with 885 tertiary level students and finds that external ALOC is a significant predictor of academic procrastination. According to Findley & Cooper (1983), the students with an internal ALOC become more successful in academic life and this relationship is clearer with male students. Moreover, in a study done with 311 tertiary level students, the students with an internal ALOC are found to be less addicted to the Internet (İskender & Akın, 2010). In another study, 42 tertiary level students are investigated and it is found that the students with an internal ALOC start their homework approximately three days earlier and finish earlier than the students with an external ALOC (Janssen & Carton, 1999). Landis et al. (2007) study with 127 undergraduate students to find out if there is a relationship between ALOC and self-efficacy and find that students with an internal ALOC use study skills better. Mooney et al. (1991) investigate the relationship between ALOC and college adjustment with 88 university students and discover that internal ALOC has a significant relationship with college adjustment. Onwuegbuzie and Daley (1998) investigate 149 students with different majors to see if there is a relationship between ALOC and students' study skills and find out that students who have best study skills also have an internal ALOC. In their study, Pino & Smith (1983) study the academic dishonesty with 345 tertiary level students and find that the students with an internal ALOC skip classes less, they do not study for the sake of GPA and they are less inclined to make plagiarism. Trice and Hackburt (1989) report a correlation between college absenteeism and ALOC results of 96 tertiary level students

participating in their research. Furthermore, according to Yeşilyurt (2014) who search the relationship between self-efficacy and ALOC with 256 teacher candidates, ALOC is a strong predictor of self-efficacy along with academic dishonesty and test anxiety.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the methodological procedures followed in the study. Therefore, it gives a detailed framework of the research design adopted, the population and sample of the study, the instruments used to collect data and finally how the data was collected and analyzed.

3.1. Research Design

In this study, a sequential explanatory mixed method design was used (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003). A mixed method research design allows researchers to gather both quantitative and qualitative data as both have its own advantages (Creswell, 2012). As Dörnyei (2007) puts forwards, having a mixed methodology, in other words, data triangulation, has its advantages such as getting the positive features of both methods while eliminating the negative ones. It also helps to gain a more detailed insight into complex concepts, provides a developed validity and it helps the study to reach a wider audience. A sequential explanatory mixed method design helps to validate quantitative data gathered from questionnaires by explaining the patterns in detail with the help of qualitative data (Dörnyei, 2007). Thus, in the present study, after the quantitative data was gathered via a questionnaire, open-ended Google surveys were used to gather the qualitative data to obtain enriched and in-depth insights into the research issues under investigation.

3.2. Population and Participants

The population of the study was Turkish learners of English studying in an English preparation program at the first year of their university education. The present study used a

convenience sampling procedure and the sample of this study consisted of 184 students (*N*=184, 106 male, 78 female) (see Table 1 on page 32) who were registered for an English preparation program at a state university in Turkey during the 2019-2020 academic year and still continued studying in that program during data collection. Their age range was between 17 and 29, (with a mean of 18 years ten months). 24 students were studying in B1 level and 160 students were studying in A2 level classes, who had been placed in the groups with a proficiency test in September. The students were enrolled in different faculties at university: 26 students (14,1%) in Faculty of Maritime, 26 students (14,1%) in Faculty of Engineering, 32 students (17,4%) in Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 3 students (1,4%) in Faculty of Health Sciences, 8 students (4,3%) in Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences, 36 students (19,6%) in Faculty of Applied Sciences and 53 students (28,8%) in Vocational Schools. The participation in this study was voluntary and the students were asked to sign consent forms before they participated in the study. The consent forms included all the necessary information about the aim of the study and the researcher. Since the students would be called back according to their success or failure to gather further information at the end of the year, they were assigned numbers before the start of the study on their consent forms and scales. They were also asked to write their phone numbers on the forms. The permission of the institution where data would be collected was also warranted.

3.2.1. The context of the study. The study took place in a voluntary English preparation program at a state university in Turkey. The students can apply for the program at the first year of their university education. The program includes two semesters, 15 weeks each semester. The students have 26 hours of English lessons a week including main course, listening & speaking, reading & writing and grammar lessons. Each lesson is taught by a different instructor. They have six quizzes which evaluates grammar and vocabulary development, four progress tests (skill-

based exams evaluating listening, reading, writing and everyday English) and they give two presentations and two portfolios to evaluate their progress throughout the year. At the end of the year, they have final exams consisting of four steps. The first exam has grammar and vocabulary questions, the second exam evaluates reading and writing skills, the third exam is related to listening and everyday English and the last exam is speaking exam. The students are supposed to attend 80% of the lessons and get 60 points or above as an overall mark at the end of the evaluation process to succeed in this program. If they fail to attend 80% of the lessons, or if they fail to get 60 points or above at the end of the academic year, they become underachievers. The achievers get a certificate to show that they successfully finished the program.

3.3. Instruments

In this study, data triangulation was employed so as to validate the quantitative data gathered via a questionnaire with the qualitative data acquired via open-ended Google surveys to provide in-depth insights (Dörnyei, 2007). Defining the term ALOC, Trice (1985) developed an ALOC scale for university students and the scale was used in a lot of academic studies (Ogden & Trice, 1986; Trice & Hackburt, 1989; Ecker & Lester, 1991; Agnew et al., 1993; Wang & Newlin, 2000; Jones, 2007; Nordstrom & Segrist, 2009; Landrum, 2010; Hassan & Khalid, 2014). In Turkey, Akın (2007) developed an ALOC scale by translating and reevaluating the scale of Trice (1985). This scale was also used in various studies in Turkey and ALOC's relations to some other factors were investigated (Akın, 2010; İskender and Akın, 2010; Kazak-Çetinkalp, 2010; Akın, 2011; Arslan et al., 2013; Arslan & Akın, 2014; Gürsoy & Çelik Korkmaz, 2015). To collect the quantitative data, Academic Locus of Control (ALOC) scale was used in the present study (Akın, 2007).

The scale is a self-report questionnaire with 17 items using a five-point Likert scale. It has two subscales: The one which aims to identify internal ALOC and the other external ALOC. The Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficients were found to be .94 for internal and .95 for external ALOC. The test-retest reliability coefficients were .93 for internal and .97 for external ALOC. At the end of factor analysis, factors were loaded between .57 and .92 in each subscale (Akın, 2007).

First of all, a small-scale pilot study was carried out with A1 level class students (*N*=16) of the same program to measure the reliability of the scale. These results were not included in the total data collected later. As there were two factors of the scale, each factor's reliability was calculated separately. There were six items in the internal ALOC factor and Cronbach's alfa value of the internal consistency reliability test for this factor was .751. As it is above .70, it is possible to call internal ALOC factor of the scale as reliable (Dörnyei, 2007). On the other hand, external ALOC factor had eleven items and Cronbach's alfa value of the internal consistency reliability test for this factor was .636. As it was below .70, the factor was analyzed to find if there were any items which needed to be deleted. It was seen if the items 5 and 6 were to be deleted, Cronbach's alpha value would increase to .718, which is above .70 and can be considered as reliable (Dörnyei, 2007). In the actual study, those items were not included.

The scale consisted of two parts: In the first part of the scale, some demographic information was collected such as gender, age and the faculty of the students. In the second part of the scale, there were 15 questions with a five-point Likert scale which asked the participants to state if the given statement suitably reflected their view (1=totally unsuitable, 2=unsuitable, 3=indecisive, 4=suitable, 5=totally suitable). The scale was applied in Turkish to avoid any misunderstandings which could be resulted from the English proficiency levels of the students.

With regard to the qualitative part of the study, the researcher planned to have semi-structured interviews with both groups of students; however, due to *the Covid-19 pandemic*, she changed it to two open-ended Google surveys including five questions to gather some in-depth data to enable multiple level analyses (Dörnyei, 2007). The surveys were useful to provide some in-depth data. One of the surveys was prepared for the students who completed their English preparation program successfully. In these surveys, they were asked how they chose to study in this program, why they wanted to learn English, the attributed reasons to their success, the things they thought they did to learn English better and how the distance learning process because of *COVID-19 pandemic* affected their learning process. The other survey was prepared for the students who failed to complete the program successfully. In their surveys, they were asked the same aforementioned questions: how they chose to study in this program, why they wanted to learn English, the attributed reasons to their failure, the things they thought they did to learn English better and how the distance learning process because of *COVID-19 pandemic* affected their learning process. The students were given three days to complete the surveys. It was expected they would finish answering the surveys in half an hour.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

First of all, the research approval and the approval to administer the questionnaire were obtained from the Ethics Committee of The Institute of Educational Sciences at Bursa Uludağ University. Also, the necessary permission was obtained to collect the quantitative data from the administration of the School of Foreign Languages. All the students were given numbers in their class lists, which they would be asked to write in their questionnaires. In this way, they would not have to write their names for ethical reasons, but the researcher could still reach them out at the end of the year according to their success or failure. Firstly, the consent forms and questionnaires

were administered in all morning or evening groups at the same time on 15th December, 2019. All the teachers were informed on how to apply it and the researcher also visited the classes to help. It took about 15 minutes for the participants to complete the questionnaire. To analyze the collected quantitative data, IBM SPSS 22.0 statistical package was utilized. After the data was collected via the scale, a confirmatory factor analysis was carried out. As Akın (2007) found two factors, two factors were chosen. With the accepted limit .157, all the items were loaded in two designated factors.

Secondly, descriptive statistics were conducted to calculate the mean scores of the individual questions and frequencies were calculated to summarize the general information about the participants. To find out the overall ALOC scores of the students, the mean scores for internal ALOC and external ALOC were calculated separately. The more students get higher scores in each factor, the more they have internal or external ALOC scores calculated (Akın, 2007).

To answer the first research question, a case summary report was formed to find out internal and external ALOC scores of the achievers. They were compared and analyzed to find out their ALOC. Furthermore, to answer the second research question, a second case summary report was formed so that internal and external ALOC scores of the underachievers could be compared and analyzed.

To answer the third research question, the test of normality was conducted to check if the data distribution was normal. When the skewness and kurtosis values are between +1.0 and -1.0, the data can be considered to be normally distributed (Barrett, Morgan, Leech and Gloeckner, 2011). When the data was found to be normally distributed, a parametric test was decided to be applied. As the mean scores of the achievers and underachievers with external and internal ALOC would be compared, an independent samples t-test was applied to see if there was a

significant difference between internal and external ALOC scores of both the achievers and underachievers in the preparatory program, which was the context of the present study.

The open-ended Google surveys were prepared in Google forms to answer the fourth and the fifth research questions. The students were in their hometowns since distance learning was carried out because of *COVID-19 pandemic*, therefore, 46 achievers and 46 underachievers were contacted via mobile phones and requested to fill out an open-ended Google survey with one closed, four open ended questions. Their surveys were slightly different from each other (See Appendix 3 and 5). They were given three days to complete the surveys and were offered 20 Turkish liras when they sent the pictures which showed they finalized the surveys. 36 achievers and 30 underachievers completed the surveys. The answers of the surveys were recorded in excel documents and their content was analyzed to see if there were any meaningful patterns in the students' answers for each question. To analyze the qualitative data, latent content analysis was applied (Dörnyei, 2007) and the students' answers were coded to discover the themes in them. This coding was repeated until there were no longer new codes to be discovered over several days. It was performed with some intervals to check whether the codes were consistent. When the codes were listed, a colleague from the same program was asked to check the coding performed by the researcher. After a few suggestions were made by the colleague, the codes were finalized, new patterns were investigated and interpretations were made by combining the findings in the study, the theory and the findings from the previous studies.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter is devoted to the report of both the quantitative and qualitative findings in the present study. First, the findings coming from the quantitative data are reported. Second, the qualitative findings are presented. All the research questions and related findings are addressed one by one in this report.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

As it can be seen from Table 1 below, 184 students (M=106, F=78) participated in this study. Their age range is between 17 and 29, however, the majority of the students are at the age of 18 (39,7%) and 19 (39,1%). The students entered their faculties, vocational schools and departments with the results they had got from the national university entrance exam, so their entrance marks change according to their faculties, vocational schools and departments. However, they chose to study in English preparation program at the beginning of the year, so there were students from each faculty or vocational school in the sample. In this study, 28,8% of the students were the ones who would study in vocational schools, 19,6% of the students were from Faculty of Applied Sciences, 17% of the students were from Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 14% of the students were from Faculty of Maritime, 14% of the students were from Faculty of Engineering, 4,3% were from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and 1,6% were from Faculty of Health Sciences. Out of 184 students, 46 students (25%) passed the program successfully, while 138 students (75%) failed either due to low marks or lack of attendance.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the participants' demographic information and frequencies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	106	57,6	57,6	57,6
	Female	78	42,4	42,4	100,0
	Total	184	100,0	100,0	
Age	17	3	1,6	1,6	1,6
	18	73	39,7	39,7	41,3
	19	72	39,1	39,1	80,4
	20	25	13,6	13,6	94,0
	21	5	2,7	2,7	96,7
	22	2	1,1	1,1	97,8
	24	1	,5	,5	98,4
	25	1	,5	,5	98,9
	28	1	,5	,5	99,5
	29	1	,5	,5	100,0
	Total	184	100,0	100,0	
Faculty	Maritime	26	14,1	14,1	14,1
	Engineering	26	14,1	14,1	28,3
	Economics and Administrative Sciences	32	17,4	17,4	45,7
	Health Sciences	3	1,6	1,6	47,3
	Humanities and Social Sciences	8	4,3	4,3	51,6
	Applied Sciences	36	19,6	19,6	71,2
	Vocational Schools	53	28,8	28,8	100,0
	Total	184	100,0	100,0	
Success	Fail	138	75,0	75,0	75,0
	Pass	46	25,0	25,0	100,0
	Total	184	100,0	100,0	

Table 2 below shows the mean scores for the individual items in the scale. The items from 1 to 9 belongs to the sub-factor external ALOC. Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8 included statements referring to the external ALOC. The mean scores showed that most of the students reported that the statements did not reflect their perceptions. However, three items, namely, 4, 7 and 9

demonstrated that the students were indecisive about their peers' and teachers' effect on their ALOC. Items 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 consisted of statements related to the internal ALOC. In an overall evaluation, the students mostly scored them as suitable or totally suitable. (To see the questions, see Appendix 1.)

The students answered the scale thinking of their English learning process. Thus, it can be concluded that the participants of the study mostly think that the students in this study affect their own English learning process such as hard work, laziness, efforts, desires, their own mistakes, rather than external factors. However, two important external factors seem to affect their learning process above others, namely, their teachers and peers. The items about the external factors such as fate, others' expectations and luck have low mean scores, so it can be inferred that the participants believe that they affect them less.

Table 2
Mean scores of individual scale items

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMEAN(Q1)	184	2,079	1,1036
SMEAN(Q2)	184	1,674	,9966
SMEAN(Q3)	184	2,361	1,3269
SMEAN(Q4)	184	2,750	1,3151
SMEAN(Q5)	184	1,765	,9887
SMEAN(Q6)	184	1,809	1,0514
SMEAN(Q7)	184	3,104	1,3450
SMEAN(Q8)	184	2,087	1,1888
SMEAN(Q9)	184	2,598	1,2978
SMEAN(Q10)	184	4,126	1,2416
SMEAN(Q11)	184	4,576	,6732
SMEAN(Q12)	184	4,386	,8734
SMEAN(Q13)	184	4,005	1,0889
SMEAN(Q14)	184	4,530	,7227
SMEAN(Q15)	184	3,913	1,0312
Valid N (listwise)	184		

4.2. ALOC Scores of the Achievers in the Program

The first research question asked about the ALOC scores of the students who completed the voluntary English preparation program successfully. First of all, to find out the ALOC of the achievers in the study, the mean scores of both internal and external ALOC factors were

calculated via IBM SPSS 22.0. Then, a case summary report for the achievers was calculated. It enabled the researcher to compare and analyze the mean scores for each scale factor. Using the report, the frequencies and percentages were calculated. Evaluating the scores in each factor, the mean scores between 0 and 2,99 was counted low, the mean scores between 3 and 3,99 was counted as undecided, the mean scores from 4 to 5 were called high. As it can be seen from Table 3, 37 students (80,44%) scored low on external ALOC and high on internal ALOC. None of the students scored high on external ALOC. One student (2,17%) chose the option that they could not decide on their views both on external and internal ALOC factors. 8 (17,39%) students scored low on external ALOC but undecided on internal ALOC factor. To sum up, it is possible to conclude that most of the achievers (80%) have internal ALOC.

Table 3
Case summaries for the achievers

Ranges	Frequency	Percent
High internal, low external	37	80,44
Undecided internal, low external	8	17,39
Undecided on internal and external	1	2,17
Total	46	100,0

4.3. ALOC Scores of the Underachievers in the Program

The second research question aimed to identify the ALOC scores of the students who could not achieve to pass their voluntary English preparation program. To be able to answer this research question, a case summary report was employed to demonstrate both external and internal ALOC scores of each student. The scores were evaluated in each factors, the mean scores between 0 and 2,99 was regarded low, the mean scores between 3 and 3,99 was regarded as undecided, the mean scores from 4 to 5 high. The scores were compared and analyzed. The frequencies and percentages were calculated. The results showed that out of 138 students, 90 students (65,2% of the whole underachievers) got high internal ALOC and low external ALOC, while 26 students (18,9%) scored undecided for internal ALOC but also got low on external ALOC. 10 students (7,2%) got high internal ALOC but also they expressed they could not decide

on their opinion on the external ALOC. Seven students (5.1%) were undecided about their opinions on both internal and external factors. Four students (2,88%) scored low on both external and internal ALOC factors. One student (0,72%) had undecided on external ALOC and low on internal ALOC. To sum up, most of the students (72,4%) scored higher on internal ALOC factor, whereas none of the students scored high on external ALOC.

Table 4
Case summaries for the underachievers

Ranges	Frequency	Percent
High internal, low external	90	65,2
High internal, undecided external	10	7,2
Undecided internal, low external	26	18,9
Undecided on internal and external	7	5,1
Low on internal and external	4	2,88
Low internal, undecided external	1	0,72
Total	138	100,0

4.4. The Difference between the ALOC Scores of Achievers and Underachievers

To begin with, to answer the third research question, the test of normality was conducted to check if the data distribution was normal. As the skewness and kurtosis values are between +1.0 and -1.0, the data can be considered to be normally distributed (Barrett, Morgan, Leech and Gloeckner, 2011). An independent samples t-test was applied to analyze the quantitative data gathered via a scale, namely internal and external ALOC mean scores of students and one independent factor, the success situation of students.

The mean score of external ALOC scores for the underachievers was 2,27 (*SD*=.60), while it was 2,17 (*SD*=.47) for the achievers. The result of the independent samples t-test demonstrated that there was no statistically significant difference between the external ALOC scores of the achievers and underachievers (.315>.05).

Moreover, the mean score of internal ALOC for the achievers was 4,23 (*SD*=.66), whereas it was 4,32 (*SD*=.56) for the underachievers. The t-test result showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the internal ALOC scores of the achievers and underachievers (.369>.05).

4.5. The Attributions of the Achievers

To answer the fourth research question about the attributions of the achievers to their success, a five-question open-ended Google survey was sent to each achiever (N=46). 36 of the students filled in the survey in their three days-time. When the time was over, their answers for each question were analyzed, coded and some conclusions were drawn.

4.5.1. The reasons to study in English preparation program for the achievers. The first question in the survey asked the students how they decided to study in the voluntary English preparation program at the first year of their university education. As the results can be seen in Table 5 below, 34 students (94,46% of the students) said it was their own decision to study in this program. Only one student (2,77%) said his/her family wanted him/her to attend the program. Also, one student (2,77%) expressed that s/he decided to do so because of someone's advice who worked in the area s/he would work.

Table 5
The reasons of the achievers to study English in the program

Sub-Category	Frequency	Percent
Own decision	34	94,46
Family	1	2,77
Future Colleague	1	2,77
Total	36	100,0

4.5.2. The reasons why students decided to learn English. The second question asked the participants how they decided to learn or improve English. Each student gave one to four reasons for their decisions. According to the results of the analysis which can be seen in Table 6 below, 21 students gave their future career (35,6% of all reasons) as a reason to study English. Nine students said their university education, mostly their departments (15,25%) was the reason to improve their English, while other nine students also mentioned the importance of learning a second language (15,25%) in today's world as their reasons. Also, five students expressed that they were interested in English (8,47%), so they wanted to learn it. Moreover, four students said they would need English to go abroad in the future (6,78%). Four students decided to study English to improve themselves (6,78%) via English, whereas other four students they decided to participate in the program to improve their insufficient English level (6,78%). Finally, three students claimed they wanted to learn English, because they thought they needed it in social life (5,09%).

Table 6
Reasons of the achievers to learn/improve English

Sub-Category	Frequency (n)	Example Meaning Unit
Career	21	"İngilizce iş hayatımda bana fayda sağlayacağını düşündüğüm için bu kararı verdim (S11)." (I made this decision because I thought English would benefit me in my career.)
Education	9	"Üniversitede kazandığım bölüm dolayısıyla buna mecbur olduğumu gördüm (S29)." (I realized I had to do this because of the department I got into.)
Importance of an L2	9	"21. yüzyıldayız ve bu dönemde İngilizce bilmemek büyük kayıp (S14)." (We are in the 21st century and it is a big loss not to know English in this era.)
Interest	5	"Zaten ilgim olduğu için daha da geliştirip… (S28)" (I already have the interest so I decided to improve…)
Going abroad	4	"Hayatımın bir bölümünde yurt dışında olmak istediğim için…(S21)" (As I want to be abroad in a part of my life, …)
Improving self	4	"Kendimi geliştirmek için (S23)." (To improve myself.)
to have better English	4	"Ingilizcemi geliştirmek için hazırlığa gelmiştim (S15)." (I participated in the English preparation program to improve my English.)

Social life	3	"…hem iş hayatımda hem de sosyal hayatımda bana çok faydasının olacağını düşündüğüm için… (S32)." (As I thought it would benefit me both in my career and social life…)

4.5.3. The attributions of the achievers to their success. The third research question on the Google survey asked about the attributions of the students to their success. Every student attributed their success in the program to one to three causes. The summary of the analysis can be seen below in Table 7. 19 students mentioned studying English (21,84% of all attributions) as the attribution to their success, which made it the most common attribution of success in this study. They used such words as *regulary/hard* and *enough* to describe the way they study. The second most common attribution was teachers (14,94%). Nine students wrote the attribution of attending classes (10,35%), while also nine students mentioned their success was due to their revision (10,35%) of what they had learned. Seven students included their desire to learn English helped them to be successful and also other seven students stressed that they listened to lectures carefully (8,04%). Moreover, seven students said practicing skills and what they learned were keys to their success. Five students mentioned participating in lessons actively (5,75%) affected them positively, while other five students said that lessons themselves (5,75%) were helpful for their success. Four students attributed their dedication as a cause (4,6%). One student said his/her vocabulary knowledge was the reason for his/her success (1,15%) and another student said his/her friends helped him/her (1,15%) when s/he did not understand something.

Table 7
Attributions of the achievers to their success

Sub-Category	Frequency (n)	Example Meaning Unit
Studying	19	"Düzenli çalıştım (S34)." (I studied regularly.)
Teachers	13	"…öğretmenlerimizin bize İngilizceyi öğretmek için ek çaba sarfetmeleri. (21)" (…our teachers' extra efforts to teach us English.)
Attending Classes	9	"Dersi düzenli takip etmek önemli (S10)." (It is important to attend classes regularly.)

Revision	9	"Hergün olmasa da 2-3 günde bir derste öğrendiklerimi tekrar etmem…(S33)." (Revising of what I have learned in class, not every day but once in two or three days…)
Desire to Learn	7	"Heves tek cavabı bu bence (S12)." (Desire, I think it is the only answer.)
Listening to lectures	7	"…hocalarımdan dikkatle dinleyerek aldığım eğitimden… (S17)" […(because of) the education I had by listening to my teachers carefully…]
Practicing	7	"…ders sonrasında kendi yaptığım pratiklerle başarımın attığını düşünüyorum. (S17)" (I think practicing on my own after class increased my success.)
Participating in lessons	5	"Sınıf içinde cok fazla katılımda bulundum (S7)." (I participated in lessons a lot.)
Lessons	5	"…derslerin dikkatli, düzenli ve aktif bir şekilde işlenmesi… (S20)." (…lessons' being taught regularly and actively…)
Dedication	4	"Ondan sonra gelen şey bence pes etmemek (S19)." (After that, I think the most important thing is not to give up.)
Vocabulary Knowledge	1	"Hazırlık sınıfında başarılı olmamın nedeni kelime bilgimdir (S35)." (The reason for my success in an English preparation program is my vocabulary knowledge.)
Friends	1	"…anlamadığım yerleri başta öğretmenlerime sonrada arkadaşlarıma sorarak… (S25)" (…by asking what I did not understand to my teachers and friends…)

Evaluating the sub-categories shown in Table 7 with the codes above, some patterns were discovered to understand the students' causal attributions. The results were demonstrated in Table 8 below. The mostly used attribution was *strategy use*, which comprised of 48,28% of all attributions of the achievers. The second most common attribution was *effort* (21,84%). They are 70,12% of all causal attributions and both are internal, unstable and controllable. Moreover, the *teacher* factor (14,94%) and *lessons* (5,75%) were the only external attributions of the achievers, both of which are stable. Finally, *interest in learning an L2* (8,04%) and *background knowledge* (1,15%) were attributed by these students to success. They are both internal, stable and controllable.

Table 8
Dimensional classification for causal attributions of the achievers

Attributional Factors	Percentage (%)	Dimensions		
		Locus	Stability	Controllability
Strategy use	48,28	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Effort	21,84	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Teacher	14,94	External	Stable	Uncontrollable
Interest	8,04	Internal	Stable	Controllable
Lessons	5,75	External	Stable	Uncontrollable
Background	1,15	Internal	Stable	Controllable

4.5.4. Extra activities of the achievers. The fourth question on the open-ended Google survey sought to answer the research question 4.1 and to achieve this aim it asked if the students did any extra activities that they thought helped them learn English. Four students wrote that they did not do anything extra to be successful. The other 32 students wrote one to seven extra activities they did to learn English better. As Table 9 indicates below, as the mostly preferred activity, 17 students said they watched TV series, films and/or videos in English (24,29% of all activities referred) to learn English better. Secondly, 10 students reported that they listened to songs in English (14,29%). Seven students mentioned that they spoke English out of classroom (10%). Six students said that they used applications in English (8,57%), while other six students said that they preferred reading in English (8,57%) hard copy or online. Translating things from or into English (7,14%) was mentioned by five students, whereas playing games in English was also told by five students. Three students expressed that they chatted in English by writing (4,28%). Thinking in English, studying with online materials, writing a diary or stories, studying with friends were all mentioned by two students each, consisting of 2,86% each. Last of all, one student said s/he used his/her phone and computer in English (1,42%) to learn English better.

Table 9
Activities of the achievers

Sub-Category	Frequency (n)	Example Meaning Unit
Watching something	17	"Filmleri ve dizileri İngilizce altyazıyla izledim (S16)." (I watched films and TV series with English subtitles.)
Listening to music	10	"İngilizce şarkıları sözleriyle takip edip söylemeye çalışmanın bile etkili olduğuna inanıyorum (S21)." (I believe even following songs in English with the lyrics and trying to sing them are effective.)
Chatting (oral)	7	"Arkadaşlarım ile sohbetlerimizi İngilizce yapıyorduk (S14)." (We were chatting with my friends in English.)
Applications	6	"İnternette ve telefondaki İngilizce pratik uygulamalarını kullandım (S27)." (I used practicing English applications on the Internet and my phone.)
Reading	6	"…İngilizce makaleler ya da hikayeler okudum (S18)." (I read articles and stories in English.)
Translation	5	"Bunun yanı sıra ara sıra İngilizce makaleleri çevirmeye anlamaya çalışıyodum (S12)". (Other than this, I sometimes used to try to translate articles in English and understand.)
Playing games	5	"Haftanın bi kaç günü İngilizce tabu oyunu oynardık (S26)." (A few times a week we played taboo in English.)
Chatting(written)	3	"Arkadaşlarımla mesajlaşırken İngilizce yazıştım (S32)." (I texted my friends in English.)
Studying Vocabulary	2	"Kendime kelime kartları ayarladım. Hergün onlara çalıştım. (S34)" (I made myself vocabulary cards. I studied them every day.)
Thinking in English	2	"Günlük hayatımda yaptığım her aktiviteyi kendi içimden İngilizce ifade etmeye çalıştım (S3)." (I tried to express everything I did in my daily life in English to myself.)
Studying online	2	… internetten eğlenceli testler çözdüm (S7)." (I solved enjoyable tests online.)
Writing	2	"İngilizce günlük tutuyordum" (S14)." (I was keeping a diary in English.)
Studying with friends	2	"…sınavlardan önce kütüphanede toplanıp arkadaşlarla ders çalışmıştık (S11)." (… I studied together with my friends before the exams.)
Using Devices in English	1	"…telefonu,bilgisayarımı İngilizce dilinde kullanmam (S9)." (…using my phone and computer in English.)

4.5.5. The effect of distance learning on the achievers. The research question 4.2 on the Google survey asked how distance learning affected the achievers' learning English and their English preparation program process. Table 10 shows that 28 students (77,78% of all students who completed the survey) expressed distance learning affected their learning English badly,

while only three students (8,33%) said distance learning affected them positively. Five students (13,89%) mentioned distance learning did not influence them either positively or negatively. The students, who said to be affected negatively, mostly expressed they could not have enough speaking practice online, online classes were less effective and they had personal problems joining online classes.

Table 10
Ideas of the achievers about distance learning

Sub-Category	Frequency	Percent
Affected Negatively	28	77,78
Not affected	5	13,89
Affected Positively	3	8,33
Total	36	100,0

4.6. The Attributions of the Underachievers

The last research question of the study asked what the attributions of the students, who could not complete their voluntary English preparation program successfully, were for their failure. In order to answer the last research question, a five-question open-ended Google survey was sent to randomly chosen underachievers (N=46) and they were asked to complete them in three days. 30 of those students filled in the survey. When their time was over, all the answers of the students were analyzed, coded and conclusions were made if possible.

4.6.1. The reasons of the underachievers to choose English preparation program.

The first question on the Google survey for the underachievers was how they chose to study in the voluntary English preparation program. Table 11 below illustrates that 26 students (86,67 % of all students who filled in the survey) said that it was their own decision to join in the program. Three students (10%) said it was their family who wanted them to join, whereas one student (3,33%) expressed that it was his/her teacher's advice that made him/her participate in the program.

Table 11
The reasons of the underachievers to study English in the program

Sub-Category	Frequency	Percent
Own decision	26	86,67
Family	3	10
Teacher's advice	1	3,33
Total	30	100,0

4.6.2. The reasons the underachievers decided to learn English. Out of 30 students who filled out the survey, 29 students mentioned why they wanted to learn or improve English. As can be seen in Table 12 below, 12 students said they wanted to learn/improve English, because they thought that it was important for their department (30% of all reasons). Eight students mentioned that they wanted to learn/improve it to help their future career (20%). Also, five students expressed that they wanted to learn/improve English because of its importance (12,5%) to know it in today's world. Three students said that they wanted to learn English, because they loved English (7,5%), whereas other three students mentioned that they wanted it for their social life (7,5%). Three students also mentioned that they wanted to learn/improve English on someone else's will (7,5%). Moreover, two students said that they wanted to learn/improve English to go abroad in the future (5%), whereas two other students expressed that they wanted it due to their interest in learning an L2 (5%). Only one person said that s/he wanted to improve herself/himself (2,5%), while one person said s/he had been planning to learn/improve English (2,5%).

Table 12
Reasons of the underachievers to learn/improve English

Sub-Category	Frequency (n)	Example Meaning Unit
Education	12	"Okuduğum bölüm için yararlı olucağını düşünmüştüm (S11)." (I thought it would be useful for the department I would study.)
Career	8	"Edinmek istediğim meslekte kendimi geliştirebilmek için gerekli olduğuna karar verdim (S28)." (I decided that it was necessary to improve myself for the job I wanted to get.)

Importance of an L2	5	"İngilizce'nin önemli bir dünya dili olduğu bilincindeydim (S16)." (I was aware of the fact that English was an important world-wide language.)
Love of English	3	"İngilizce dersini sevdiğim için seçtim (S1)." (I chose it because I like English lessons.)
Social life	3	"…sinema, müzik gibi çeşitli alanlarda İngilizce bilerek daha çok şey öğrenmem gibi (S26)." (… like learning a lot more in the areas such as cinema and music by knowing English.)
Someone else' will	3	"Halamın isteği üzerine karar verdim (S14)." (I decided on my aunt's will.)
Interest	2	"Yeni bir dil öğrenmeyi hep istemişimdir (S30)." (I have always wanted to learn a new language.
Going abroad	2	"Erasmus sınavına girip kazanmayı çok istiyordum (S21)." (I wanted to take the Erasmus exam and pass it.)
Improving self	1	"..ve kendimi geliştirmek için İngilizce öğrenmeye karar verdim (S10)." (…and I decided to learn English to improve myself.)
Plan	1	"Zaten planlarım arasında hazırlık okumak vardı (S23)." (It was already among my plans to study in an English preparation program.)

4.6.3. The attributions of the underachievers to their failure. The third question of the survey asked what the attributions of the underachievers were to their failure. Each student wrote one to five attributions for their failure. As Table 13 below shows, the most frequent attribution was *Covid-19 pandemic* and distance learning (21,95 % of all attributions) which started as a result of the pandemic in March. The second most frequent attribution was absenteeism (14,62%), which meant the students went over the absenteeism limit of 20% and failed. Five students mentioned that they were not interested in learning English (12,2%), while five other students expressed that they did not study English (12,2%). Moreover, four students reported that they felt they had a different level of English from their class (9,75%). Three students claimed that the lessons were inefficient for them (7,32%), whereas three other students said that it was difficult for them to wake up early (7,32%). Two students said that the program was very challenging (4,88%) for them and other two students expressed that they had personal problems

(4,88%). One student said that s/he did not like the class environment (2,44%), another student mentioned that s/he thought some teachers were more effective than others (2,44%).

Table 13
Attributions of the underachievers to their failure

Sub-Category	Frequency (n)	Example Meaning Unit
Covid-19 and Distance learning	9	"Pandemi dönemimde online eğitimine bağlı kalamadım ve başarısız oldum (S30)." (I could not keep up with the distance learning during the pandemic and failed.)
Absenteeism	6	"Devamsızlık yaptığım için başarısız oldum (S10)." (I became unsuccessful due to absenteeism.)
Disinterest	5	"İlgisiz olmam (S5)." (My not being interested.)
Not studying	5	"…ve sınavlara çalışmadan girdim (S26)." (…and I took the exams without studying.)
Wrong level class	4	"Sınıfımdan daha yüksek seviyede bildiğim için derslere pek katılmadım (S20)." [As I knew (English) better than my class, I did not attend classes much.]
Inefficiency	3	"Derslerden verim alamadım bu yüzden (S17)." (I could not make the most of the lessons, that is why.)
Waking up early	3	"Dersler erken başlıyordu (S16)." (Lessons started early.)
Challenge	2	"…çok zorlayıcı olması da bir etken (S3)." („,its being very challenging is another factor.)
Personal problems	2	"Pek çok nedeni var ve çoğu benim suçum (S25)." (There are many reasons and most of them are my fault.)
Class environment	1	"Sınıf ortamı idi (S6)." (It was the class environment.)
Teachers	1	"Okulda ise bazı öğretmenlerimin girdiği ders sayisi daha fazla olsaydı diğer bizimle ilgilenen öğretmenlerimize göre daha yararlı olurdu diye düşünüyorum (S27)." (At school if some of our teachers' lessons had been more than the other teachers who took care of us, it would have been more useful.)

Analyzing these sub-categories deeper, the causal attributions of the underachievers to their failure were concluded (Table 14 below). The most common attribution was lack of effort (31,8%), which was the only internal attribution. The other attributions were program-related problems (24,39%), *Covid-19 pandemic* (21,95%) which broke out during that year, English lessons (7,32%) and teachers (2,44%). Four of the attributions were external and uncontrollable, consisting of 68,2% of all attributions.

Table 14

Dimensional classification for causal attributions of the underachievers

Attributional Factors	Percentage (%)	Dimensions		
		Locus	Stability	Controllability
Lack of effort	31,8	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Program	24,39	External	Stable	Uncontrollable
Covid-19	21,95	External	Unstable	Uncontrollable
Lessons	7,32	External	Stable	Uncontrollable
Teacher	2,44	External	Stable	Uncontrollable

4.6.4. Extra activities of the underachievers. The question 5.1 asked the underachievers what kind of extra activities they did to learn/improve English. One student said that s/he did not do anything extra, while other 29 students wrote one to six things they did. As it is demonstrated in Table 15, the most frequent activity was to watch TV series and films in English (24,07% of all extra activities). After that, eight students mentioned that they tried to speak in English (14,82%). Also, six students expressed that they listened to music in English (11,11%). Moreover, five students said that they used applications to learn English (9,26%). Four students studied vocabulary (7,41%) to improve their English. Three students said that they used their computers and/or mobile phones in English (5,56%), while three other students said they read books and paragraphs in English (5,56%). Three students mentioned that they played online games (5,56%) in English. Two students reported to be writing paragraphs to improve their English (3,7%) and two of them thought things in English in their minds (3,7%). Two students translated things to help them learn (3,7%), whereas two other students used websites to learn English (3,7%). Only one student said that s/he went to a language course to support his/her learning (1,85%).

Table 15
Activities of the underachievers

Sub-Category	Frequency (n)	Example Meaning Unit
Watching something	13	"Yabancı diziler izledim (S17)." (I watched foreign TV series.)
Chatting (oral)	8	"Çevremdeki İngilizce öğrenmeye çalışan arkadaşlarımla beraber yaptığımız speaking etkinlikleri yardımcı oldu (S29)." (The speaking activities we did together with my friends around me who wanted to learn English helped.)
Listening to music	6	"Yabancı müzikler dinledim (S26)." (I listened to music in English.)
Applications	5	"Telefonuma İngilizce uygulamalar indirdim.. (S18)" (I downloaded applications in English to my phone.)
Studying Vocabulary	4	"İlk başlarda sürekli kelime ezberlemeye çalışıyor(dum) (S2)." (At first I was constantly trying to memorize vocabulary.)
Using Devices in English	3	"Bilgisayarımı ve telefonumu dil olarak İngilizce kullanıyorum (S8)." (I use my computer and mobile phone in English.)
Reading	3	"…,,kitap okudum (S21)." (…,I read books.)
Playing online games	3	"Online oyun (Pubg) oynuyorum (S10)." [I play an online game (Pubg).]
Writing	2	"Boş vakitlerimde konu belirleyip essay yazıyordum (S16)." (In my free times, I used to find topics and write essays.)
Thinking in English	2	"… ve kendi kendime konuşmaya çalıştım (S22)." (…and I tried to talk to myself.)
Translation	2	",,,,yabancı şarkılar dinleyip sözlerini çevirmeye çalışmak,…(S28)" (…, listening to English songs and trying to translate the lyrics,…)
Websites	2	"Bunlardan ilki ders dışında çeşitli internet sitelerinden İngilizce etkinlikler yaptım (S12)." (First of these, I did Englis practice in various websites.)
Language course	1	"Ekstra bir kursa katıldım (S1)." (I attended an extra course.)

4.6.5. The effect of distance learning on the underachievers. The question 5.2 sought to answer how distance learning affected the underachievers' learning English and their English preparation program processes. Four students expressed that they did not join distance learning at all, so they had no ideas about it. According to Table 16, twenty-three students (88,45% of all students who expressed their ideas about distance learning) said distance learning process affected their learning English negatively. Two students (7,7%) said the process helped them, whereas one student (3,85%) expressed distance learning did not influence him/her positively or

negatively. The students, who claimed that they were negatively affected, said that online classes were not as effective as face-to-face lessons, they had problems joining the lessons and they could not keep themselves motivated to join online classes.

Table 16
Ideas of the underachievers about distance learning

Sub-Category	Frequency	Percent
Affected Negatively	23	88,45
Affected Positively	2	7,7
Not affected	1	3,85
Total	26	100,0

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1. Overview of the Study

This study seeks to identify if there is a relationship between ALOC and success or failure of the students who are students in a voluntary English preparation program of a Turkish state university. To realize this purpose, the ALOC scores of the students are examined to identify whether they have an internal or external ALOC, to find out if there is a significant difference between ALOC scores of the achievers and underachievers and to have a deep understanding of attributions of the achievers and underachievers to their success and failure.

In this chapter, the findings of the research questions will be addressed to draw conclusions in the light of the related literature and will be compared with previous research in the field. Each finding will be evaluated separately in the order they were provided in the findings chapter.

5.2. Discussion of ALOC of the Achievers in the Program

The first research question was asked to find out the ALOC of the achievers in the voluntary English preparation program where the study was carried out. To answer this question, the mean scores of internal and external factors were calculated for each achiever. Out of 36 students who agreed to join the study, most of the students (80%) were high on internal ALOC and nearly all of the students (98%) had higher scores on the internal factor than the external one. This can be due to the fact that these students studied for the university entrance exam in Turkey last year and were successful so that they could enroll a university program. Besides, they wanted to study in a voluntary preparatory program to learn English and they chose to do it by their own

will, which means they took the responsibility of their own English learning process in their academic life. Thus, they can be expected to have a high internal ALOC.

The studies which investigated ALOC in academic contexts, the studies which investigated the relationship between LOC and success in English language learning (Fakeye, 2011; Ghabanchi & Golparvar, 2011; Ghonsooly & Elahi, 2010; Ghonsooly & Shirvan, 2011; Golparvar, 2014; Naseri & Ghabanchi, 2014) in academic contexts all found a significant relationship between success and LOC aspect. In all these studies, successful students had an internal LOC. The current study was carried out in an academic context in a first-year English preparation program to teach English. Also, it was about learning English, as the students were tested and evaluated during the semesters and at the end of the year on their language development. Therefore, the findings of the first research question of the study comply with the existing literature, which claimed that the achievers had an internal LOC.

5.3. Discussion of ALOC of the Underachievers in the Program

The second research question aimed to investigate the ALOC scores of the students who were not successful to finish the program. The mean scores of students were calculated both on external and internal ALOC factors to find out each student's scores for both factors. 138 students who participated in the first part of the study failed to graduate from the voluntary English preparation program successfully. None of these students had higher scores on external ALOC factor than internal ALOC factor. 72,4% of all the underachievers turned out to have higher internal ALOC scores. These results complied with the results of Gürsoy and Çelik-Korkmaz (2015) who studied ALOC of the students who failed in a university course for teacher trainees and discovered that unsuccessful students had an internal ALOC.

The results showed that the underachievers did not have an external ALOC. Rather, most of them had their internal ALOC scores higher. This finding contradicted with the ones in some previous studies. Daum and Wiebe (2003) found in their study that the first-year students at the tertiary level had an external LOC. According to Jones et al. (1987), low achieving students have an external LOC. However, in this study, none of the underachievers had a higher external ALOC. It can be owing to the reason that even if these students failed, it was their own decision to take the responsibility to study English at the first year of their university education, so there must be other reasons to explain their failure. Fakeye (2011) and Tse (2000) state that if the students with an internal LOC do not have the necessary competence, they tend to drop out. As most of the underachievers in the program quitted the program, it can be related to the fact that they believed to have low language ability, so they quitted. Moreover, many Turkish students including the students in the program have a background that they have failed to learn English many times throughout their national education. Weiner (1985) claims that students who failed in a task before puts less effort to accomplish the task next time.

One of these reasons could be the *COVID-19 pandemic*. When the pandemic broke out, these students had to continue their education in the form of distance learning, which they were not prepared to. Some of the students did not even have the means to log in their classes. In these extraordinary circumstances, it is hard to predict how their results would be if face-to-face education continued. Furthermore, there are some program related reasons mentioned by the students. Some of them are morning classes, intense program which required a lot of efforts from students and 80% attendance rule. Some of the students explained that due to one of these reasons, they failed as they went over the attendance limit, so they quitted the program.

5.4. Discussion of the Difference between ALOC Scores of Achievers and Underachievers

The third research question sought to answer whether there was a significant difference between ALOC scores of the achievers and underachievers. As the data was found to be normally distributed, independent samples T-tests were applied for each factor to explore if there was a statistically significant relationship between students' ALOC scores and their success or failure. First of all, the mean scores of the achievers and underachievers for the external ALOC factor were analyzed and no statistically significant relationships were found (.315>.05). Following this, the same process was completed for the internal ALOC scores of both groups of students and no statistically significant relationships were found (.369>.05).

Both the achievers and underachievers had higher internal ALOC scores (for the results in detail, see the parts 5.2 and 5.3). Thus, there were not any significant differences between ALOC scores of the achievers and underachievers. To understand this phenomenon, it was essential to think of these students' background. The students in this program were from different faculties, different family and educational backgrounds, had different exam results, however, they had one thing in common: They wanted to learn English and applied for the program in their first year of their university education. They wanted to take the control of their language learning process. Therefore, they turned out to have higher internal ALOC scores than external ALOC scores. For this reason, no statistically significant differences were discovered between the ALOC scores of the achievers and underachievers. This finding was supported when most of the students expressed that they chose to study in the program on their own, which demonstrated that their decisions were the signs of an internal ALOC. This finding can be due to a few reasons such as the ones found in the previous studies. Gürsoy and Çelik-Korkmaz (2015) found that effort and critical thinking skills made the difference between successful and unsuccessful students. Jones et al. (1987) stated that low achievers did less planning, monitoring and revising. Thus, new studies

need to be conducted in different contexts to see if the results will be consistent and in the same program to understand the reasons behind better.

5.5. Discussion of the Attributions of the Achievers

To answer the fourth research question and to understand the achievers better, a five-question open-ended Google survey was prepared and sent to the achievers. 36 achievers completed the survey and their answers were investigated in depth to have a better understanding of the research issues under investigation.

The first question in the survey was concerned with how they decided to study in the program. These students turned out to have an internal ALOC according to the questionnaire. All students but two expressed that it was their own decision to learn English in this program. Thus, the results complied with the results of the questionnaire.

The second question in the survey asked the students to state their reasons to learn/improve English. Some students gave one reason, while others gave up to four reasons to study/learn English at the first year of their university education. Learning English for their future career was the most popular reason (35,6% of all reasons). Other reasons were the necessity to learn English for their future departments at university (15,25%), the importance of learning an L2 in the globalized world (15,25%), their personal interest in learning English (8,47%), the desire to go abroad in the future (6,78%), improving themselves by learning English (6,78%), improving their insufficient English level (6,78%), the necessity to use it in social life (5,09%) in the order of frequency. Analyzing these, it is possible to conclude that the achievers chose to learn English for their academic, business and social lives in the future and self-development. All of these are internal reasons and the findings support each other to prove they have an internal ALOC. Having an internal ALOC must have helped the students to be successful in the program

so that they can realize their dreams. As students who could take the responsibility for their own learning, academic lives and careers, they tried their best and became successful. As Landis et al. (2007) states internals put more effort to succeed and they are more persistent with their efforts, which in turn bring them success. As internals, they put all the effort to achieve their long-term goals (Nodoushan, 2012).

The next question in the survey asked the students what their attributions were for their success in the program and learning English. Firstly, sub-categories were created to understand what the achievers attributed to their success. These students' most common attribution to their success was studying, which comprised of 21,84% of all. Secondly, the students said their success was thanks to their teachers (14,94%). Attending classes and revision were in the third row, comprising of 10,35% each. The desire to learn English (8,04%), listening to the lectures carefully (8,04%), practice (8,04%), active participation in lessons (5,75%), lessons (5,75%), dedication (4,6%) and vocabulary knowledge (1,15%) are the other reasons given for success respectively.

To understand these subcategories better and to compare the results of the study with the previous studies, the causal attributions were generalized and their dimensions were concluded. The most frequently attributed reason was *strategy use*, comprising of 48,28% of all attributions, whereas the second most frequently used attribution was *effort* 21,84%. Both of these attributions are internal, unstable and controllable. Therefore, it can be concluded that the achievers in the study thought they could affect their own learning, this effect is unstable and up to themselves and they can control it. As the achievers in the study had an internal ALOC, the results of the attributions of the achievers comply with it. The third attribution was *teacher* and the fourth attribution was *lessons*, both of which were external. The least mentioned attributions discovered in the study by the achievers were *interest* and *background knowledge*, both internal, stable and

controllable. Overall, most of the attributions (79,31%) were internal and controllable, so it is possible to think that these students think of themselves as responsible for their own learning (Findley & Cooper, 1983), they have better study skills (Onwuegbuzie & Daley, 1998), they are good strategy users (Jones et al, 1987) and they have the control over the process.

The results were compared to the existing literature about attributions in second/foreign language learning. In Turkey, there are five studies in FLE to the knowledge of the researcher about language learners' attributions to their success and failure to compare the results of the current study. Besimoğlu et al. (2011) found that strategy use, interest and effort were the most frequent attributions to success in their study, respectively. Genç (2016) found that the students attributed their success in language learning to interest, ability, task difficulty and effort. According to Paker and Özkardeş-Döğüş (2017), the attributions to the success in their study were teacher, self-confidence and interest. Yavuz and Höl (2017) stated that students attributed their success to their background and self-confidence. In conclusion, in other studies in Turkey, some of the attributions revealed were strategy use, interest, effort, teacher and background, so the findings of the study comply with the aformentioned previous studies in Turkey. Yılmaz (2012) investigated the success in reading comprehension and found the most common attributions as strategy use, mood and interest. However, it is really interesting that in the current study not a single student attributed their success to their self confidence, ability or task difficulty. As these were the achievers, they may have not talked about task difficulty, because although they were successful, learning English was not easy. Still, they thought that they managed that by using correct strategies, putting in enough effort and being interested in learning English. Moreover, except the teacher factor and lessons, all the other attributions are internal, which shows success in language learning can be related to internal ALOC and mostly internal attributions.

There are also studies investigating into success in language learning and attributions to it around the world. In 2004, Brown studied Japanese students' attributions and revealed that the most common attribution to success was effort. In their cross-cultural study, Brown et al. (2005) found that Turkish, Chinese and Japanese students attributed their success to internal reasons of ability and effort more than external reasons. Gobel et al. (2011) carried out a cross-cultural study with Thai, Japanese and Malaysian English learners and found that they mostly attributed their success to teacher and effort. Hashemi and Zabihi (2011) found that Iranian students attributed their success to effort the most. According to the study of Kun and Liming (2007), Chinese students mostly attributed their success in learning English to ability and effort. Moreover, Pishghadam and Zabihi (2011) investigated Iranian students' attributions to success and effort was the most commonly used attribution to success. The current study's findings also comply with these attributions to success although the most common attribution, strategy use, was not frequent in those studies. As it was in Turkish studies, it can be concluded that the attributions are partly a result of their cultural background (Dörnyei, 2007).

On the other hand, Gobel and Mori (2007) studied with Japanese students and they found the most frequent attributions to success were class and teacher. Also, Mori et al. (2010) investigated the success attributions of Japanese students and found that two external factors, teacher and classroom, were most frequent ones again. Furthermore, Thang et al. (2011) studied Malaysian students' attributions to success and found that they mostly attributed their success to grades and teacher. The results of these studies contradict with the ones in the current study, which showed students in these studies attributed their success to external reasons, class, teacher and grades more than internal reasons. As the studies are all conducted in Asia, it can be the result of cultural bias.

The fourth question in the survey asked if the students were engaged in any extra activities to help themselves learn English. This part of the study was dedicated to understanding the activities of the achievers, comparing them with the activities of the underachievers to see if there were any quantitative or qualitative differences between them. This insight may be used to increase the rate of the achievers in the program in the future. Only four students accepted not doing anything to improve their English. The remaining 32 claimed to do one to seven extra activities to improve their English, which, in their case, seemed to work. In total, 70 extra activities were reported. The most frequent skill to improve was listening, which consisted of 38,58% of all strategies applied by these students. It is expected as it is one of the weakest skills in Turkish national education system, so they needed to improve it. It is fun to work on it, as watching things and listening to things are very common in today's world. Moreover, these students claimed to use technology to improve their English (11,43%) and this is not surprising thinking that the younger generations are more into technology and that is an important part of their daily lives. Their using technology to learn English is very expectable. The third skill to improve was speaking skill, consisting of 10% of all the strategies used. Although these students mostly wanted to speak English, the percentage is lower than expected, which can be due to the reason that English is learned in Turkey as a foreign language. Thus, it might be more difficult to work on ways to improve speaking than other skills in question.

Furthermore, the students reported to be engaged in with reading (8,57%), translation (7,14%), playing games (7,14%), writing (7,14), studying vocabulary (2,86%), thinking in English (2,86%), peer support (2,86%) and using technological devices in English (1,42%) to improve their English levels. Although there is a scarcity of previous literature to compare these results of the study, it can be said that these are the strategies language teachers recommend their students to employ in learning English. Thus, it can be concluded that the achievers, who also

have an internal ALOC, are good at using correct strategies to learn English. Good strategy users are also more autonomous learners; thus, less anxious language learners (Savaşkan, 2017). These terms need to be investigated further to prove this viewpoints.

While this program was in progress, the *COVID-19 pandemic* broke out and the students had to continue their education in the form of distance learning. When it happened, the attendance of the students decreased extensively, so the last question was dedicated to seeing what kind of effect it had on students. 28 students out of 34 students stated that distance learning affected their English learning process negatively, also expressing that they lost their chance of face-to-face practice that the classroom environment provided them with, online classes were not like real classes and not as much effective as them. Many also said they had problems joining the classes regularly due to the lack of necessary technological devices, internet connection or their home environment. They also stated that speaking skill was the hardest to improve in the distance learning. Five students told they were not affected, either positively or negatively, while three other students thought distance learning was better for them as they had the opportunity to rewatch the classes or they had more extra time to study at home. In conclusion, as 77,78% of the students expressed, the pandemic affected their language learning negatively.

5.6. Discussion of the Attributions of the Underachievers

In the last research question of the study, the students who were not successful in completing the voluntary English preparation program were asked about their attributions. A five- question open-ended Google survey was designed to administer to the students and 30 of them managed to complete it in the given time. The answers were analyzed, coded and some conclusions were made.

The first question of the survey asked how these students decided to study in a voluntary English preparation program. Out of 30 students, 26 students (86,67%) said that it was their own decision, which makes it an internal decision to take the responsibility of their own learning. Three students said their family was effective on their decision, while one student said his/her teacher advised him/her to study in this program. Students with an internal ALOC are expected to be successful as they already turned out to be higher on external ALOC factor, which is not the case in this study. In their study Gürsoy and Çelik-Korkmaz (2015) carried out, they also found that the students who failed in their course had an internal ALOC and the differences were effort and critical thinking skills. Nodoushan (2012) carried out a study if there was a relationship between success in language learning and LOC, but he could not find any relations. Despite being rare, there are studies with similar results such as the studies of Nodoushan (2012) and Gürsoy and Çelik-Korkmaz (2015). This can be due to the reason that these students took the responsibility of their learning when they wanted to study English, but they could not make the necessary effort to achieve their aims. It can be due to the belief they did not have the necessary competence (Fakeye, 2011; Tse, 2000), or they put less effort as they already believed they would fail again like they did in the past (Weiner, 1985). More studies are needed to understand the phenomenon better.

The second question in the survey asked the students about their reasons to decide to learn or improve English. One of the students said s/he suddenly decided to do that. The rest of the students explained their reason(s) as follows: The most cited reasons to learn/improve English was the idea that they would need it in their department (30%), followed by for their future career (20%) and the importance of learning an L2 in today's global world (12,5%). This demonstrates that the students were aware of the necessity to learn English for their future, either for their academic or occupational life, but still failed to do what it took to learn English. Moreover,

although they have a slightly different order, the reasons to learn English are the same for the achievers and underachievers. As they come from similar backgrounds and they had the same basic education until their university education, these results should not be a surprise. The other reasons mentioned were the love of English (7,5%), the desire to use it in social life (7,5%), the effect of others (7,5%), going abroad (5%), the interest in learning English (5%) and the need of improving their English level (5%). The only different reasons from the ones of the achievers were the love of English and the effect of others. The underachievers also did not mention anything about improving themselves by learning a new language. However, these reasons have small percentages, so it would be plausible to say that both the achievers and underachievers had similar reasons to choose to learn/improve English.

The next question in the survey asked the students the reason(s) why they failed in the program. The most frequent reason to fail was the *Covid-19 pandemic* (21,95%), as it changed the education from in-class learning to distance learning. It was sudden and unexpected. Many students did not have the necessary technological devices, wired internet connection, or even the Internet connection at all. Online education and exams were so unfamiliar for them. Thus, having this result was quite expected. The second most frequent reason was absenteeism (14,62%). The absenteeism right is 20% in this program. When the students went over it, they officially failed, so it can be true to say that they did not make effort to attend their classes and failed. It is strange that although the achievers talk about this as attendance, an internal contributing factor to their success, the underachievers referred to it as absenteeism, making it an external factor, a rule of the school. The other factors were lack of interest (12,2%), not studying English (12,2%), wrong level (9,75%) meaning they did not feel at the same level with their classmates, ineffective classes (7,32%), waking up early for classes (7,32%), having a challenging and intense program (4,88%), personal problems related to the program and schedule (4,88%), classes (2,44%) and

teacher-related factors (2,44%). Comparing the reasons with the ones of the the achievers, attending classes, interest in learning English, studying and lessons are given by both the achievers and underachievers. It is clear that opinions about classes and lessons are subjective, but effective on a student's success.

These sub-categories were further analyzed and grouped to infer the causal attributions of the underachievers. The lack of effort (31,8%) was the most common attribution to failure for these students. It was the only internal attribution to failure, which is also controllable, demonstrating that these students somewhat believed they could control their own learning, but they could not do so. However, the rest of the attributions (68,2%) were external, a lot higher than the achievers (20,69%). Thus, it is possible to conclude that the underachievers attributed more external reasons than internal reasons to their failure. Weiner (1985) states that students with external attributions tend to feel angry and blame others when they fail. 24,39% of the attributions were *program-related*, like the need to wake up early for classes, or having an intense program. The *Covid-19 pandemic* consisted of 21,95% of the attributions to failure, which can be expected, as it changed the education totally for these students. They suddenly had to return to their hometown and in a week the distance learning was announced to start. All the shops were closed, so some of them even did not have the chance to get the necessary devices or internet connection. *English lessons* (7,32%) and *teachers* (2,44%) were also attributed to these students' failure in the program. To sum up, students must have felt they were not in their control of their own learning, because all these external reasons are also uncontrollable. Uncontrollable atttributions result in less effort and motivation (Demetriou, 2011).

The results were compared with the existing literature in Turkey. In their study, Brown et al. (2005) found that the most common attribution to failure for Turkish students was lack of effort. Besimoğlu et al. (2011) explored that the students attributed their failure to strategy use,

lack of interest and lack of effort. Yılmaz (2012) studied the success in reading comprehension and according to the results of his study, the students attributed their failure to lack of interest and time. Genç (2016) expressed that the students in the study attributed their failure to many different reasons such as lack of effort, lack of interest, teacher, school and ability. Paker and Özkardeş-Döğüş (2017) carried out a study in a preparation program and lack of effort, preparation and strategy use were the most attributed reasons to failure. Yavuz and Höl (2017) also studied English preparation program students and their results demonstrated that the students attributed their failure to their background and lack of effort. Lack of effort is very frequently mentioned in these studies, as it is the most frequent attribution of the underachievers in the current study. However, the rest of the attributions to failure are quite different from the ones emerged in the present study despite all being carried out in Turkey. This may have resulted from the fact that the study took place in a different context from the other studies, namely, in a voluntary English preparation program.

From the studies all around Asia, Brown (2004) found out Japanese students attributed lack of effort to their failure. Gobel and Mori (2007) studied with Japanese students and found that lack of effort, preparation and strategy use were the attributions to failure. According to Gobel et al. (2011), the students in their study attributed their failure to ability, preparation, lack of effort and inefficient strategy use. Kun & Liming (2007) found lack of effort and ability were attributed to failure. Mori et al. (2010) reported that the students in their study thought lack of ability and effort were the attributed reasons for their failure. The study of Thang et al. (2011) demonstrated that lack of preparation and ability were the reasons for their failure with Malaysian students. The studies all took place in Asia. As attributions have been found to have cultural bias, it is possible to conclude that Asian students attributed their failure to internal reasons. In nearly all these studies, lack of effort is one of the most important attributions to failure, which supports

the findings of the present study. However, ability did not appear as an attribution to success in the study, neither did it appear as an attribution to failure although it seems to be quite frequently cited in other studies. Also, insufficient strategy use, lack of preparation, or lack of interest were not mentioned in the current study. It can be due to the fact that this study was conducted in an unusual situation because of the *Covid-19 pandemic* affecting everyone in Turkey including the students in the program. Therefore, one of the most important attributions to failure in the study was the pandemic. The underachievers did not talk about lack of strategy use, which may have been owing to the fact that strategy use was not included in Turkish education system and that they may not have an idea about it. The students may not have realized the importance of preparation before classes, which makes them ready for classes and help them learn. They probably did not mention the lack of interest, because many students were interested in learning English, which was the reason they chose to study in the program. Furthermore, the attributions related to school were not possible to generalize and should be considered further by the administration.

The fourth question in the survey asked the underachievers to state what kind of extra activities they did to learn/improve English. All students but one talked about extra activities they did. 54 activities were reported by the students. The most frequently mentioned extra activity was listening (35,18%). It can result from the fact that the students in Turkey are weaker in listening skill, as the FLE in the Turkish education system is not much listening-focused and it is fun and common to watch TV series, online videos and films, or listening to music or podcasts. As the weakest point to be improved, the students reported to be working on their speaking skill (14,82%). They have different reasons to learn English, yet for each reason they need to be able to speak. Thus, it is logical to have this result. The third one was using technology to learn/improve English (12,96%). This generation is quite good at using technology and

technology is a vital part of their everyday life. Thus, it is expected they used it to learn English as well. The other activities reported were studying vocabulary (7,41%), using technological devices in English (5,56%), reading (5,56%), playing computer games (5,56%), writing (3,7%), thinking in English (3,7%), translation (3,7%) and attending a language course (1,85%).

The activities carried out by the achievers and underachievers differed in quantity, but not in quality. The achievers reported 70 different activities, whereas the underachievers said they had used 54 activities. However, there are only two different activities carried out by these two groups. Only the achievers mentioned studying with in collaboration with their peers, while only one underachiever talked about attending a language course. In conclusion, the results demonstrated that the activity range of both groups do not differ from each other. What made the difference can be the quantity of the students who did extra activities and had the persistence and motivation or put more effort to learn a language.

The last question was about the effect of distance learning on the underachievers' English learning process. Four students expressed they could not join distance learning at all. Out of 26 students, 23 students (88,45%) said that distance learning had a negative effect on them. Two students (7,7%) said distance learning helped them improve their English, while one student (3,85%) was neutral about distance learning. Most of the underachievers wrote that they mainly could not attend the classes due to the low motivation and technical problems, the online classes were not as effective as in-class lessons. Although the percentages changed, the overall result demonstrated that distance learning process due to the *Covid-19 pandemic* affected nearly all the students negatively, which was also difficult for the whole world. It was not planned or expected; however, it had an extensive influence on the students in this program like all the other students around the world. Levy (2007) claims that students have lower satisfaction in e-learning courses, so drop-outs are higher than campus courses, which explains why drop-out rate in the program

went up to 75% from 60% of the previous years and they attributed the situation to their failure and stated they were not satisfied with the online learning.

Agormedah, Henaku, Ayite and Ansah (2020) did a study in higher education in Ghana to investigate the effect of *the Covid-19* and found that the students in the study were not prepared for online learning and had problems related to internet connectivity, so it resulted in less satisfaction, participation, motivation and poor academic performance. Dutta and Smita (2020) studied tertiary level students' perceptions of the pandemic and its effects and the results showed that lack of devices, internet problems and difficulties in online platforms mainly resulted in student dissatisfaction and unhappiness related to online education and decrease in social interactions. Onyema et al. (2020) also studied the impact of *Covid-19* with a multi-cultural study and found that educational activities were negatively affected due to inadequate facilities, connection issues, lack of training and loss of interest. Tang et al. (2020) carried out a study to investigate the effectiveness of online-based teaching and their study showed that the students were dissatisfied with the online courses, especially for communication and question-answer aspects. These studies also showed that there were many students around the world who were affected negatively by online education due to a variety of reasons, which comply with the findings of the current study. All these studies demonstrate *Covid-19* had a negative effect on many students around Asia and Africa including the students in the current study. Also, the problems related to internet connection and the use of online learning platforms and lack of devices and training demotivated the students. Under all these circumstances, students were less satisfied with online learning. These results comply with the findings of the current study as these are the problems both the achievers and underachievers complained about.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study was conducted in a voluntary English preparation program in a state university in Turkey. As Turkey is an EFL environment, the students have had many problems learning English. As a result, some of them choose to study English in their first year at university. This is a voluntary program with many student dropouts and underachievers. The study was carried out to find if the ALOC of the students affected their success or failure in the program and to have an insight about the differences between the attributions of the achievers and underachievers. These results would help the program and the future students of it. Future students can be encouraged to use the appropriate strategies to learn English, to put sufficient effort and they can be motivated to promote their interest in learning English, which seemed to differ between the achievers and underachievers.

In the quantitative part of the study, the ALOC scores of the students were investigated and the scores of the achievers and underachievers were compared. Both the achievers and underachievers were found to have a higher internal ALOC, which can be due to the reason that the students decided to study/improve English by their own will and most of them stated it was their own decision to study in the program and to improve their English. No students were found to have a higher external ALOC. Moreover, no statistically significant difference was found between the ALOC scores of the achievers and underachievers.

In the qualitative part of the study, the students' reasons to choose to study in the program and to study/improve English were questioned and most of them stated it was their own decision to do these. The students were also asked about their attributions to their success or failure. The achievers attributed their success to strategy use and effort, which made nearly 70% of the attributions internal, unstable and controllable. The achievers believed that they had the

responsibility for their success, which was unstable but controllable, so they believed that they were able to change it. These results concurred with those generated in many studies carried out before (Besimoğlu et al., 2011; Genç, 2016; Paker & Özkardeş-Döğüş, 2017; Yavuz & Höl, 2017; Yılmaz, 2012). On the other hand, the underachievers thought that the attributions to their failure were lack of effort, program-related reasons and the *Covid-19 pandemic*. Although the lack of effort was a common attribution in the previous studies, the program-related reasons might provide the school administration with some useful insights and give them a chance to reconsider the key elements of the program in question such as promoting teacher and student motivation, reconsidering the weekly schedule and adding new elements to the program and lessons to make students use English in a practical way. The last important attribution, the *Covid-19 pandemic*, was beyond the control of anyone and unfortunately have negatively influenced everyone and everything around the world. Thus, it is impossible to predict how the results would be if the pandemic did not break out.

The students were also asked about extra-curricular activities that they did to improve their English apart from the requirements of the program. Both the achievers and underachievers referred to the same activities except one different activity per group. They reported to work on their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, vocabulary knowledge, using technology, translation and playing games. It is possible to conclude that both groups knew what to do, but probably the underachievers did not sustain their effort due to the reasons about themselves, the *Covid-19 pandemic* or going over the absenteeism limit, as these were their most important attributions to their failure. This data seems to prove what is known: language learning is a process in which you should be engaged with the language for a long time to improve it.

The last question in the Google survey used for the qualitative part of the study sought to discover the effect of distance learning, which was an urgent decision made by the universities in

Turkey in March due to the *Covid-19 pandemic*. Most of the students expressed that it had a negative effect on them. Thus, a different strand of findings could have obtained especially for the attributions of failure and extra activities students did to improve their English if the *Covid-19 pandemic* had not broken out.

This study was the first to relate the ALOC scores of the achievers and underachievers, their attributions to the success and failure and their extra activities to learn English in a voluntary English preparation program in an EFL environment. There is an ongoing problem of high rate of failure in this program, so this study tried to provide some answers for this problem. Even if the students had an internal ALOC, it was not sufficient to guarantee the success, so the program administrators gained useful insights after the present study into what to do to sustain the effort and how to increase the strategy use. It also provided some hints on what to reevaluate in the program such as the content of lessons, teacher motivation and schedule. This insight will definitely help the program to be developed further in the future.

As Turkey is an EFL environment, there are many universities with preparation programs to help students improve English, which is fundamental in today's globalized world. They all have the achievers and underachievers every year. This study may also provide an insight for those programs to improve the success in their schools and help their students to use more strategy, to make more effort and to engage in more extra activities.

As for the limitations of the study, the study was conducted in only one preparation program, so there is a need to conduct further studies to compare the results to be able to generalize them. Furthermore, when the study was conducted in December, nearly 100 students had already dropped out of the program for different reasons. Therefore, it is not possible to predict how they would affect the results of the study. Also, the year the study was conducted, the *Covid-19 pandemic* broke out in March and the program had to switch to distance education. In

addition to the shock it caused and the lockdown period, most of the students explained that it affected them negatively. Some students were never able to participate in any of the online education. Thus, this might have influenced the results of the study and that effect was hard to predict.

To sum up, further research is needed to see the difference in results when the *Covid-19 pandemic* is over. Also, the ALOC scores and the motivation of the students can be compared to see how motivation makes them keep up with the good work, which seems to be the main difference between the achievers and underachievers.

Internal ALOC has been mostly associated with academic success and success in language learning. Moreover, the attributions to success and failure also give insights to the instructors working in ELT. If their importance is known and if they are cooperated into language curricula, it may help improving the success in language learning, especially in EFL environments like Turkey. The more the process is understood, the better students can be supported in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

AKADEMİK KONTROL ODAĞI ÖLÇEĞİ

Bu ölçek Uludağ Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümünde yüksek lisans yapmakta olan Öğretim Görevlisi Ayça Kılıç-Gönen tarafından yüksek lisans tezi bünyesinde danışmanı Doktor Öğretim Üyesi Pınar Salı liderliğinde yürüttüğü araştırma çerçevesinde uygulanmaktadır. Soruların doğru ya da yanlış cevapları olmamakla birlikte, verdiğiniz tüm cevaplar araştırma süresince ve sonrasında gizli tutulacaktır. Herhangi bir soru ya da sorununuz olması durumunda araştırmacıya aşağıdaki bilgilerden ulaşabilirsiniz.

Öğr. Gör. Ayça Kılıç Gönen

Aşağıda yetişkinlerin eğitim sürecine ilişkin akademik kontrol odaklarını betimlemeye yönelik ifadelere yer verilmiştir. Lütfen sorularınızı cevaplarken **hazırlık sınıfı eğitiminizi** düşününüz. Her sorunun karşısında bulunan; **(1) Tamamen aykırı (2) Oldukça aykırı (3) Kararsızım (4) Oldukça uygun ve (5) Tamamen uygun** anlamına gelmektedir. Lütfen her ifadeye mutlaka TEK yanıt veriniz ve kesinlikle BOŞ bırakmayınız.

I. Genel Bilgiler:

Sıra: ____ Cinsiyet: K / E Yaş: ____

II. Gorusunuzu en iyi yansitan secenegi isaretleyiniz.

		Tamamen Aykırı	**Oldukça Aykırı**	**Kararsızım**	**Oldukça Uygun**	**Tamamen Uygun**
1	Öğretmenlerimin benim hakkımdaki izlenimlerini hiçbir zaman değiştiremeyeceğimi düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Üniversiteye gelme nedenim diğerlerinin beklentileridir.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Bazı derslerde hiçbir zaman başarılı olmayacağımı düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Arkadaşlarım beni ders çalışmaktan kolayca vazgeçirebilir.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Bir sınavı kazanamazsam buna kötü şans neden olmuştur.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Derslerde başarılı olabilmek için şans çok önemlidir	1	2	3	4	5

7	Öğretmenimle iyi geçinirsem derslerde başarılı olabilirim.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Sınıfta başarılı olabilmek için arkadaşlarıma iyi davranmam gerekir.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Bir öğrencinin sınavdan yüksek not alabilmesi arkadaşlarının yardımıyla mümkündür.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Başarısızlığın tembelliğin bir sonucu olduğuna inanırım.	1	2	3	4	5
11	Sınavdan yüksek not alabilmem için o derse iyi çalışmam gerektiğini düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5
12	Sınavlardan alınan notların çabanın göstergesi olduğunu düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5
13	Yaşamdaki birçok başarısızlığın yeterli çaba harcanmadığı için meydana geldiğini düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5
14	Bir öğrenci istediğini elde edebilmesi için çalışmalıdır.	1	2	3	4	5
15	Yaşadığım başarısızlıkların kendi hatalarımdan kaynaklandığını düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 2

ACADEMIC LOCUS OF CONTROL SCALE BY TRICE (1985)

1. College grades most often reflect the effort you put into classes.

2. I came to college because it was expected of me.

3. I have largely determined my own career goals.

4. Some people have a knack for writing, while others will never write well no matter how hard they try.

5. I have taken a course because it was an easy good grade at least once.

6. Professors sometimes make an early impression of you and then no matter what you do, you cannot change that impression.

7. There are some subjects in which I could never do well.

8. Some students, such as student leaders and athletes, get free rides in college classes.

9. 1 sometimes feel that there is nothing I can do to improve my situation.

10. I never feel really hopeless--there is always something I can do to improve my situation.

11. I would never allow social activities to affect my studies.

12. There are many more important things for me than getting good grades.

13. Studying every day is important.

14. For some courses it is not important to go to class.

15. I consider myself highly motivated to achieve success in life.

16. I am a good writer.

17. Doing work on time is always important to me.

18. What I learn is more determined by college and course requirements than by what I want to learn.

19. I have been known to spend a lot of time making decisions which others do not take seriously.

20. I am easily distracted.

21. I can be easily talked out of studying.

22. I get depressed sometimes and then there is no way I can accomplish what I know I should be doing.

23. Things will probably go wrong for me some time in the near future.

24. I keep changing my mind about my career goals.

25. I feel I will someday make a real contribution to the world if I work hard at it.

26. There has been at least one instance in school where social activity impaired my academic performance.

27. I would like to graduate from college, but there are more important things in my life.

28. I plan well and I stick to my plans.

Appendix 3

Başarılı Öğrenciler için Google Anketi

1. İngilizce İsteğe Bağlı Hazırlık sınıfı eğitimi almaya nasıl karar verdiniz?

2. İngilizce öğrenmeye/ İngilizce'nizi geliştirmeye nasıl karar verdiniz?

3. Sizce, hazırlık sınıfında başarılı olmanızın nedenleri nelerdir?

4. İngilizce öğrenme sürecinize yardımcı olduğuna inandığınız fazladan etkinlikler yaptınız mı? Açıklar mısınız?

5. Uzaktan eğitim süreci İngilizce öğrenme ve İngilizce hazırlık eğitimi sureçlerinizi nasıl etkiledi?

Google Survey for the Achievers

1. How did you decide to study in a voluntary English preparation program?

2. How did you decide to learn/improve English?

3. What do you think the reasons are for your success?

4. Did you do any extra activities that you believed to help you in your English learning process? Can you explain?

5. How did the distance learning affect your learning English and your studies in English preparation program?

Appendix 4 – Answers of the Achiever Number 2

Soru 1	Kendi kararım
Soru 2	İngilizce öğrenmeye günümüz şartlarını göz önünde bulundurarak karar verdim. Seçtiğim bölümümde de bana faydası olabileceğini ve zaten ilgim olan İngilizce'yi üniversite kalitesinde de öğrenmek geleceğimde olumlu sonuçları olacağını düşündüm.
Soru 3	Öğretmenlerimin öğretmek konusundaki karar ve disiplinleri ile birlikte benim öğrenmek için hevesli olmamın başarılı sonuç almam konusunda etkisi olduğunu düşünüyorum.
Soru 4	Bazı film ve dizileri İngilizce orijinal diliyle altyazısız şekilde izlemeye çalıştım. Şarkıları dinleyip ezberledikten sonra kelimelerin Türkçe karşılığını öğrendim. Sınıfta öğretmenlerimizin önerdiği bazı uygulamaları kullandım.
Soru 5	Bu durum beni olumsuz etkiledi. Çünkü sınıfta aldıklarım , öğrendiklerim benim için çok daha kalıcıydı. Online derslere katılamadım çünkü evimde internet olarak sadece mobil veri kullanabiliyoruz. Evde sadece annem ve ben yaşadığımız için wifi kullanmıyoruz. Bu yüzden tamamlayamadığım hatta giremediğim sınavlarım bile oldu. Buna rağmen sınıfımı geçebildiğim için çok mutluyum.

Appendix 5

Başarısız Öğrenciler için Google Anketi

1. İngilizce İsteğe Bağlı Hazırlık sınıfı eğitimi almaya nasıl karar verdiniz?

2. İngilizce öğrenmeye/ İngilizce'nizi geliştirmeye nasıl karar verdiniz?

3. Sizce, hazırlık sınıfında başarısız olmanızın nedenleri nelerdir?

4. İngilizce öğrenme sürecinize yardımcı olduğuna inandığınız fazladan etkinlikler yaptınız mı? Açıklar mısınız?

5. Uzaktan eğitim süreci İngilizce öğrenme ve İngilizce hazırlık eğitimi sureçlerinizi nasıl etkiledi?

Google Survey for the Underachievers

1. How did you decide to study in a voluntary English preparation program?

2. How did you decide to learn/improve English?

3. What do you think the reasons are for your failure?

4. Did you do any extra activities that you believed to help you in your English learning process? Can you explain?

5. How did the distance learning affect your learning English and your studies in English preparation program?

Appendix 6 – Answers of the Underachiever Number 16

Soru 1	Kendi kararım.
Soru 2	İngilizce'nin önemli bir dünya dili olduğu bilincindeydim.Ayrıca okumak istediğim bölüm için çok önemliydi.
Soru 3	Dersler erken başlıyordu; bu sebeple geç kalıyor odaklanamıyordum.
Soru 4	Tabii ki yaptım. Boş vakitlerimde konu belirleyip essay yazıyordum. Hatalarımı ilgili kişilerin yardımıyla tespit edip düzeltir birdahaki sefer daha dikkatli davranırdım.
Soru 5	Kötü etkiledi. Odaklanma sorunlarım daha çok arttı.

Curriculum Vitae

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