



## ATTRIBUTIONS TO SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING: THE EFFECTS OF GENDER, AGE AND PERCEIVED SUCCESS

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### Abstract:

The main purpose of this study is to analyze Turkish tertiary level EFL learners' attributions to success and failure and the effects of gender, age, and perceived success on their attributions. The results indicated that EFL learners respectively attributed interest, ability, task difficulty, effort, luck and the influence of teacher and school as influential factors of their success whereas they respectively rated effort, interest, the effect of teacher and school, ability, task difficulty, and luck as influential factors of their failure. Furthermore, they were more inclined to agree that internal reasons are responsible for their success while blaming external reasons for their failure. In addition, females seemed to attribute external factors more than their male counterparts and unsuccessful learners attributed more importance to effort and internal dimension than successful students. Finally, the study revealed that age was not an important factor in EFL learners' attribution to success and failure.

**Key Words:** attribution to success and failure, gender, perceived success

### Introduction

Teaching language effectively has always been a major concern of language teachers and scholars in the field of language studies. Hundreds of studies have been conducted to contribute to the process of language learning. Learners' causes of success and failure are among them and psychological research about it goes as far as 1950s with the studies of Fritz Heider (1958). Although the starting point was Heider's studies which constituted the groundwork for all theories of attribution in the field of psychology,

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many scholars such as Williams and Burden (1997), Jarvis, (2005), Weiner (1974, 1980, 1986), Graham, (1991) have also contributed a lot to the theory up to now.

### **Attribution Theory**

Attribution theorists assume that *“individuals seek to understand why events have occurred”* (Schuster, Forsterlung, & Weiner, 1989, p. 192). In other words, attribution theory (Weiner, 1992) deals with the reasons that individuals attribute to their perceived successes and failures in situations where achievement is considered. As the pioneering scholar in the attribution studies Heider, (1958) argues that in order to do so, individuals imposes structure to social stimuli and to the environment, make inferences from those structures and behave in accordance with them. He concludes that an awareness of the causal structure of human behavior is necessary for prediction and control of outcomes. Therefore, an attribution refers to *“constructions imposed by perceivers to account for the relation between an action and an outcome”* (Weiner, 1986, p. 22). Four principal causes influencing attributions for perceived success and failure in life were determined as ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck (Weiner, 1980, 1986). In addition, three dimensions for attributions were determined as locus of control, stability, and controllability (Wiener, 1986). Therefore, attributers may perceive these causes to be either internal or external and the reasons either change over time or remain stable, and they can control them or not. The attribute dimensions of the above four main causes have been generally analyzed as follows: while ability is an internal, stable, and relatively uncontrollable factor, task difficulty is an external, stable, and uncontrollable one. Likewise, effort is an internal, unstable, and controllable factor while luck is an external, unstable, and relatively uncontrollable cause.

Later, psychologist Bernard Weiner developed his own version of attribution theory in 1970s based on Heider’s view of attribution and the theory of control and redesigned it in 1980s, as a more comprehensive and systematic one (William and Burden, 2000). Weiner developed the model and suggested that, on the whole, people refer to six main sets of attributions for their perceived successes and failures and subsequently added two more factors to the four previous ones as physical and mental condition and others which refer to some effect from the elements, such as help from family, feedbacks from other people.

And the six attributions can be classified into three dimensions through the different properties of the attributions. So, locus of causality, means that people consider the source of attributions as themselves (internal) or environmental (external) factors. Ability, effort and the physical and mental condition attribution elements

considered as the internal factors, while others as the external factors. Stability refers to the factors are fixed or not. Ability and task difficulty attributions are categorized as the stable factors and others as the unstable ones. Controllability refers to whether the factors can be controlled by the individuals or not. The effort attribution is related to the dimension of controllable and all of the others are related to the dimension of uncontrollable. Most of the time, people would tend to attribute their successes to the internal, stable and controllable factors, whereas they would tend to attribute their failures to the external, unstable and uncontrollable factors. This is thought to be as the correct method of people's "*attribution preference*" (William and Burden, 2000, p.105-106). This seems to be related to the hedonic bias which is also known as self-serving attributional bias in that individuals explain success in terms of internal causes (e.g. ability, effort) and failure as resulting from external, situational factors (e.g. task difficulty, luck) to protect their self-esteem (Weiner, 2000) and avoid depression (Sweeney, Anderson & Bailey, 1986). However, it is reported to be more common in Western cultures rather than Eastern cultures (Mezulis et al., 2004).

### **Attribution in Foreign Language Learning**

Attribution theory has particular importance in language learning because of the common failure students experience in learning a language (Dornyei, 2005) or failure in achieving the desired level of proficiency. It definitely provides some clues about the future behaviors of the learners by shedding light into the past behaviors of them. Thus, understanding the possible causes of events can give some insights into understanding learners' success as well as failure. With respect to foreign language learning, attribution theory explains how foreign language learners evaluate their success or failure and consequently, how their perceptions affect their performance (Weiner, 2000). Helping learners to be aware of their perceptions of attributions brings some advantages to language learning and teaching. It can be assumed that language learners who are aware of their attributions can understand the cognitive reasons behind their achievement easily as suggested by Williams and Burden (1997).

### **Attribution Studies in EFL Context**

In the field of foreign language learning, the significance of attribution theories has also been well understood and revealed by most of the language researchers both in Turkey and abroad such as Gardner, (1991); Oxford and Shearin, (1994); McQuillan, (2000); Graham, (2004); Hsieh, (2004); Williams, et al., (2004); Lim, (2007); Gobel and Mori,

(2007), Hassaskhah, and Vahabi (2010), Pishghadam and Motakef (2011), Mohammadi and Sharififar (2016), Saticilar, 2005, Taşkıran, (2010), Şahinkarakaş (2011), Özkardeş, (2011), Semiz, 2011, Tekir, (2012), Erten and Burden, (2014), and Erten, (2015). Among those studies, Gobel and Mori, (2007) determined that less successful learners attributed their failure to a lack of ability and effort while more successful learners attributed their success to teachers and the learning environment. In addition, results of Pishghadam and Motakef's study (2011) showed that university students from different majors attributed their successes and failures to different factors. Moreover, Hassaskhah, and Vahabi (2010) indicated that effort was the most cited reason for failure in language studies. Lastly, the results of Mohammadi and Sharififar's (2016) study indicated that learners attributed their success and failure to both internal and external factors but giving more priority to external factors. It was also revealed that there were significant relationships between learner's gender, proficiency level and attributions.

Studies conducted by Taşkıran (2010), Koçyiğit (2011), Semiz (2011), and Özkardeş (2011), were conducted with university students studying English as a foreign language and yielded invaluable and different results. For instance, Taşkıran's (2010) study revealed that the tertiary level students who perceived themselves as successful made significantly more internal, controllable and relatively stable attributions. Likewise, Koçyiğit (2011) indicated that attributions to failure are more external, externally more controllable but personally less controllable. According to the findings of Semiz's (2011) study, significant differences were found between successful and unsuccessful students in terms of their attributions; successful students intended to make more internal and personal attributions compared to unsuccessful students. In addition, Özkardeş (2011) found that unsuccessful learners attributed their failure to an internal, controllable cause '*lack of enough vocabulary*' and attributed their failure to external, stable, and uncontrollable factors.

As a result, all of the studies mentioned so far seem to verify that attribution theory is one of the most crucial research topics in the field of language learning and teaching and it is worth investigating it from different perspectives. Yet, very few studies have been carried out in the Turkish tertiary level EFL context. Considering that EFL teaching in universities is unfortunately far from the desired proficiency level in Turkey, it would be sensible to determine what learners attribute their success and failure to in school settings.

Thus, the study sought the answers for the following research questions:

## Research Questions

1. What reasons do the Turkish tertiary level EFL learners attribute to their success and failure in their EFL learning process?
2. What is the impact of gender, age, and perceived success on the attribution patterns of Turkish tertiary level EFL learners?

## Method

### Participants

First of all, participating in the study was completely based on voluntariness and the questionnaire was administered only to the volunteer students of the school. The participants (may also be referred to as 'learners') in this research comprised of 170 (58.4%) females and 121 (41.6%) males, totally 291 students of preparatory classes studying English for one year in the School of Foreign Languages. They are all freshmen aged from 18 to 30. According to the data gathered from the participants, 211 (72.5%) of them have reported that they find themselves successful in their English studies whereas 80 (27.5%) of them do not think that they are successful. Besides, 249 (85.6%) of the participants stated that they like learning English while 42 (14,4%) of them do not like studying English and they study it because they simply have to. Finally, 262 (90%) of the participants pointed out that they themselves want to learn English whereas 26 (8.9%) of them claimed that they study English because it is compulsory for their further education.

### Instruments

The participants were asked to anonymously fill out a questionnaire involving two parts which respectively investigated their background information and a scale concerning questions attributions to their success and failure. The questionnaire which aimed to investigate the participants' attributions to success and failure was originally developed by Höl (2016) and was reported to have a Cronbach alpha of 0.80. The questionnaire itself contains 38 items, scored on a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. The questionnaire involved 13 items involving attributions to success and 25 items involving the attributions to failure. The questionnaire evaluated the students' attributions in six factors as ability, effort, interest, task difficulty, luck, and teacher/school influence and two dimensions as internal and external. The Cronbach-alpha coefficient value for the overall reliability analysis of the Attribution Questionnaire for this study was found as 0.89 which shows

a satisfying level of reliability beyond the minimum desirable level of reliability as stated by Pallant (2005):

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through descriptive statistics (percentage, mean, median, and standard deviation), Independent Samples T tests and Pearson Correlation Analysis. The level of significance was 0.05 for the analyses, which were conducted using SPSS.

### Findings and Discussion

The findings of the research are presented in accordance with research questions by comparing the existing literature.

#### A. The reasons that the Turkish tertiary level EFL learners attribute to their success and failure in their EFL learning process

Based on the result of descriptive statistics, present study indicated that participants attributed various reasons to their success and failure about learning English as a foreign language. The reasons of success and failure attributed to learning English can be seen in Table 1 and Table 2 in descending order. Among six factors of the questionnaire, interest is the strongest reason followed by ability, task difficulty, effort, luck and the influence of teacher and school in success. The order of the attributions to both success and failure is different. This can be interpreted as an inconsistency between the students' responses and reactions to success and failure in their foreign language studies. That is, the choice of attributions clearly changes with regard to success or failure.

**Table 1:** Factors Attributed to Success

Factors	N	MEAN	SD
Interest	291	3.57	1.01
Ability	291	3.39	0.93
Task Difficulty	291	3.37	0.99
Effort	291	3.29	1.11
Teacher/ School	291	3.13	0.85
Luck	291	2.90	1.26

The learners seem to emphasize the significance of interest for success. The next frequently uttered factor for success is ability. It seems that students believe in the strength of a special ability for language learning and the individuals having this ability

can be successful. The place of effort which is almost on top of the list of the attributions to success is not so promising on behalf of the participants. As pointed out by Brophy, (1998) and Keblawi, (2009) attributing failure to low ability might cause the learners to lose their expectations for subsequent success and this situation will finally enable the learners to think that they cannot control over the outcome and lacks in motivation. In other words, this can lead to the tendency for helplessness and despair (Abramson, et al., 1978). Task difficulty which is the third mostly attributed factor for success is one of the external factors. Briefly, these three mostly attributed factors are clearly beyond the control of individuals. This result indicates that students' beliefs and ideas on their ability and interest are of great importance in their language studies. The next factor which is on the fourth rank is effort. This result reveals that students do not appreciate adequately the effects of sufficient endeavor in foreign language studies. Even though effort is among the factors which can be controlled by the learners, participants do not attribute it to success as much as the uncontrollable ones such as ability, interest and task difficulty. The least cited two factors are respectively the effects of teacher, school, and luck which are among the external factors that cannot be controlled easily. The effects of teacher or school or in other words, learning environment is not seen as an important factor of success by the participants. It is in contrast with some other results of the researchers mentioned in the literature such as Gobel and Mori, (2007) who suggested that successful students mostly attribute to teachers for their success. However, the psychological effect of luck on learners' performance as debilitating or facilitative should not be ignored. It might be thought that students perceiving themselves as lucky or unlucky might have changing mood during their studies.

**Table 2: Factors Attributed to Failure**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Effort</b>	291	3.36	0.81
<b>Interest</b>	291	3.34	0.75
<b>Teacher/ School</b>	291	3.24	0.72
<b>Ability</b>	291	3.23	0.69
<b>Task Difficulty</b>	291	3.21	0.72
<b>Luck</b>	291	3.05	1.07

When it comes to the attributions for failure, the study indicated that learners differed considerably in terms of their reasons of failure. As can be seen in Table 3, contrary to their attributions to success, majority of learners endorsed effort as their first reason of failure which is also in line with the most studies conducted in the field (Graham, 1994 & Weiner, 1992). The next factor which was mostly endorsed by the EFL learners is

interest, followed by the effect of teacher and school, ability, task difficulty and finally, luck. It seems that learners firstly attribute to a controllable factor such as effort for their failure. However, the second attributed reason is interest which is not controlled by the learners. The third is the effect of teacher and school which is an uncontrollable one. The participants do not seem to believe strongly that ability and task difficulty is a reason of failure in language studies. Previous literature suggests that when subjects think that causes of failure are due to lack of ability or task difficulty, their expectations for subsequent learning decreases, because subjects cannot control them (Weiner, 1986). Thus, people may not make the effort to turn things around. Because, if one attributes failure to lack of ability, may experience self-esteem which indirectly may decrease expectancy of success. Fortunately, the participants of the present study do not attribute to ability and task difficulty of failure in the first place and can be supposed to take precautions for their failure. Thus, it seems that they are not supposed to have this adverse effect excessively.

Another result shows that the least cited reasons for failure are respectively task difficulty and luck as revealed in Table 3. Task difficulty is related to the real success of the learners. It is evident that participants do not strongly believe that task difficulty is an important reason in their failure. As indicated in previous literature this may be interpreted as a fear of raising the expectations for the future. In other words, accepting the difficulty of the task as the reason of failure in one case might promise to perform better for the subsequent time (Woolfolk, 1998). Additionally it is evident that participants put the effort which is the only controllable factor in the first place and interest, the effect of teacher and school, ability, task difficulty and luck which are the uncontrolled ones in the second place. This finding suggests that students primarily regard controllable factors as responsible for their failure and regard the uncontrollable ones as collateral factors. Thus, it is noteworthy that students may have a tendency to cope with their failure to some extent.

Considering the dimensions of learners' attributions to success and failure, it has been clearly seen that students mostly attributed to internal reasons for their success whereas they mostly seem to endorse external reasons for their failure (Table 2). That is, participants of this study attributed the success to internal but failure to external factors. It is evident that the origin of success belongs to the individuals while the origin of the failure is an outside factor. It has been claimed by the previous researchers that learners attributing their failure to external factors report anger, surprise, and hostility while learners attributing their success to internal factors report feelings of pride, confidence, and satisfaction (Weiner, Russell, & Lerman (1979). Likewise, it can obviously be thought that participants of this research blame the factors that they cannot control and



express their hostility by attributing failure to external factors whereas having pride, confidence and satisfaction in attributing their success to internal factors.

**Table 2:** Dimensions Attributed to Success and Failure

DIMENSIONS	SUCCESS			FAILURE		
	N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD
INTERNAL	291	3.41	0.87	291	3.20	0.61
EXTERNAL	291	3.28	0.82	291	3.30	0.64

This finding, also, typically indicates the existence of a hedonic bias, in other words, self-serving attribution bias which suggests that success is often explained by internal causes, whereas failure is related to external causes. Although such researchers as Mezulis et.al., (2004), Gobel and Mori, (2007) indicated that hedonic bias is a dominant cultural phenomena in western cultures, others such as Chandler and Spies, (1981), Kashima and Triandis, (1986), and Parameswaran and Hom, (2000) found that the self-serving bias is universal, in that the bias seems to be present in many different cultures, regardless of its being collectivist or individualist. In addition, some studies conducted in Turkey by Can, (2005) and Taşkıran, (2011), and Özkardeş, (2011) indicated the existence of a hedonic bias in their studies. However, Weiner claims that attributing failure to internal controllable causes lead learners to be more productive for their future studies. But the effect of hedonic bias in controlling unsuccessful students' feelings of guilt and preventing helplessness and depression should not be underestimated. Otherwise, learners could give up trying for future studies under the pressure of failure.

**B. The impact of gender, age, and perceived success on the attribution patterns of Turkish tertiary level EFL learners**

In order to determine which factors and dimensions showed significant changes, the differences in reported items about attributions to success and failure were analyzed using independent samples t-test analysis (paired sample correlations). For these items which showed a significant difference, the mean scores of the responses to the questionnaire are reported in Table 3 and Table 4. The results showed that gender is not an important factor in determining students' reasons of success and failure. In other words, Turkish tertiary level EFL learners did not differ at all in terms of gender in their attributions to either success or failure with respect to the reasons involving ability, effort, interest, task difficulty, luck and factors about teachers and schools (Table 3). However, when the dimensions are taken into consideration, it has been found out that attribution of failure to external factors differed significantly at the 0.05 level indicating

gender as a significant variable. As can be seen in Table 4, females attributed external factors to their failure more than their male counterparts. Differently, internal dimension is not a significant factor in either the attribution to success or failure. Nevertheless, in the previous literature it is possible to see both contrasting and consistent studies with the results of the present study. For instance, Peacock (2009) reported significant differences between males and females in language learning context whereas; researchers such as Chedzoy and Burden, (2009) and Pintrich and Schunk (2002) found connections between attributions and gender in other fields of study. Sweeney, Moreland and Gruber (1982) also highlighted that females attributed their failures to external attributions, while males ascribed to internal attributions as in the case of the present study. Moreover, Williams et al (2004) explored attributions of both sexes, and put forward that girls attributed their failure to internal reasons while males more than females ascribed their success to internal causes. Unlikely, some studies revealed that gender does not seem to have any impact on students' attribution pattern (Hassaskhaha, and Vahabib, 2010; Semiz, 2011; Pishghadam and Motakef, 2012).

**Table 3:** EFL Learners' attributions to success in terms of gender and academic achievement

Factors/ Dimensions	Descriptives	Gender		Academic Achievement	
		Female	Male	Successful	Unsuccessful
<b>Effort</b>	T	0.96		-2.46	
	P	0.33		<b>0.01*</b>	
	M±SE	3.35±0.08	3.19±0.10	3.19±0.07	3.55±0.11
	N	170	121	211	80
<b>Interest</b>	T	0.821		-1.40	
	P	0.41		0.16	
	M±SE	3.61±0.08	3.51±0.08	3.51±1.07	3.70±0.10
	N	170	121	211	80
<b>Teacher/ School</b>	T	0.781		-1.35	
	P	0.43		0.17	
	M±SE	3.16±0.06	3.08±0.07	3.09±0.05	3.24±0.90
	N	170	121	211	80
<b>Ability</b>	T	0.96		-1.57	
	P	0.33		0.11	
	M±SE	3.44±0.07	3.33±0.08	3.34±0.65	3.53±0.09
	N	170	121	211	80
<b>Task Difficulty</b>	T	1.171		-1.32	
	P	0.24		0.18	
	M±SE	3.43±0.07	3.29±0.08	3.32±0.99	3.50±1.00
	N	170	121	211	80
	T	0.733		-1.16	

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<b>Luck</b>	P	0.46		0.10	
	M±SE	2.95±0.10	2.84±0.10	2.83±0.08	3.10±0.13
	N	170	121	211	80
<b>Internal</b>	T	1.159		-2.08	
	P	0.24		<b>0.03*</b>	
	M±SE	3.46±0.06	3.34±0.07	3.35±0.06	3.58±0.09
	N	170	121	211	80
<b>External</b>	T	1.314		-1.51	
	P	0.19		0.13	
	M±SE	3.34±0.06	3.21±0.06	3.24±0.05	3.40±0.09
	N	170	121	211	80

In regard to academic achievement and attributions to success and failure, various results have been seen. Firstly, it is clear that academic success is a significant variable in determining the learners' attributions to success in the reasons involving only effort and internal dimension. Interestingly, students reporting themselves as unsuccessful seem to attribute success to effort and internal reasons in attributing success. Secondly, when it comes to attributions to failure; task difficulty, luck, and external dimension are seen to be significant factors.

As can be seen in Table 4, students reporting themselves as unsuccessful language learners attribute their failure more to task difficulty, luck and external factors. This finding seems to be quite consistent with the other findings of the study. As mentioned above the students, participated in the study, still reflect the effect of the hedonic bias. Regarding the results, on one hand, it can be thought that students mostly believe that they are successful since they put effort in their studies and internal factors such as ability and effort contribute to their English language studies. On the other hand, they mostly believe that failure stems from the factors that cannot be controlled by the students themselves such as task difficulty, luck, and external reasons. Similarly, in the previous literature, lots of studies (Stevenson & Lee, 1990; Christenson, et.al, 1992; O'sullivan & Howe, 1996) reported that learners who are successful at language learning attribute their success to internal factors such as ability and effort while unsuccessful language learners attribute their failure to external factors such as luck and task difficulty. Additionally, a recent study into attributions of English language learners in Iran (Pishghadam & Zabihi, 2011) determined significant positive relationship between attribution of effort and foreign language achievement.

**Table 4:** EFL Learners' attributions to failure in terms of gender and academic achievement

Factors / Dimensions	Descriptives	Gender		Academic Achievement	
		Female	Male	Successful	Unsuccessful
<b>Effort</b>	T	1.086		-1.07	
	P	0.27		0.28	
	M±SE	3.40±0.06	3.29±0.07	3.32±0.06	3.44±0.66
	N	168	119	207	80
<b>Interest</b>	T	-0.88		-0.45	
	P	0.93		0.65	
	M±SE	3.33±0.05	3.34±0.06	3.33±0.05	3.37±0.76
	N	170	121	211	80
<b>Teacher/ School</b>	T	1.514		-1.35	
	P	0.13		0.17	
	M±SE	3.29±0.05	3.16±0.06	3.20±0.05	3.33±0.06
	N	170	121	211	80
<b>Ability</b>	T	0.409		-1.57	
	P	0.68		0.11	
	M±SE	3.24±0.04	3.21±0.06	3.20±0.04	3.29±0.07
	N	170	120	210	80
<b>Task Difficulty</b>	T	1.494		-1.75	
	P	0.13		<b>0.08*</b>	
	M±SE	3.27±0.05	3.14±0.07	3.17±0.05	3.33±0.07
	N	170	121	211	80
<b>Luck</b>	T	0.449		-1.77	
	P	0.65		<b>0.07*</b>	
	M±SE	3.08±0.07	3.02±0.10	2.99±0.07	3.24±0.11
	N	170	120	211	79
<b>Internal</b>	T	0.647		-0.96	
	P	0.51		0.33	
	M±SE	3.27±0.04	3.22±0.67	3.22±0.04	3.30±0.06
	N	168	119	207	80
<b>External</b>	T	1.931		-2.12	
	P	<b>0.05*</b>		<b>0.03*</b>	
	M±SE	3.31±0.04	3.16±0.06	3.20±0.04	3.38±0.06
	N	170	120	211	79

Furthermore, this finding does not seem to be promising for the students with regard to their future performance. As long as students believe that, the reasons of their failure are beyond their control they may not put much effort to change the situation. The results of a study conducted by Pishghadam and Zabihi (2011) indicated a significant positive relationship between attribution of effort and foreign language achievement. It also supports the idea that if language learners believe in the positive effect of effort and

their ability to control success and failure in their studies, they can be expected to strive to succeed. In the same way, Dörnyei (2001) also emphasized the effect of attribution in learners' success and failure.

Regarding the effects of age on six factors and two dimensions of attributions to success and failure, Spearman correlations were conducted. After the analysis, it was seen that the correlation between them was not strong or significant, suggesting that no relationship exists between age and six factors and two dimensions of attributions. The results are summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5:** The Spearman Correlation between age and attributions to success and failure

Factors/Dimensions	Success		Failure	
	r	p	r	p
Effort	0.01	0.84	-0.05	0.37
Interest	-0.18	0.76	-0.02	0.72
Teacher/School	0.10	0.07	-0.02	0.65
Ability	0.01	0.84	0.06	0.28
Task Difficulty	-0.03	0.51	0.03	0.50
Luck	-0.13	0.02	-0.03	0.59
Internal	0.00	0.95	0.00	0.91
External	0.00	0.87	-0.01	0.82

As a matter of fact, age in attribution studies attribution have had little attention in EFL context and research involving age as a variable is quite limited. In addition, the result related to the effect of age in the present study mainly contradicts with the results of some limited studies reported in the previous literature. Williams et.al. (2004) and Hassaskhah and Vahabi (2010) were the researchers who investigated the effect of age on attribution to success and failure and suggested that age also has a significant impact on learners' attribution.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

First of all, the study indicated that EFL learners attributed different factors to their success and failure. In other words, it was seen that EFL learners respectively attributed interest, ability, task difficulty, effort, luck and the influence of teacher and school as influential factors of their success whereas they respectively rated effort, interest, the effect of teacher and school, ability, task difficulty, and luck as influential factors of their failure. Furthermore, they were more inclined to agree that internal reasons are responsible for their success while blaming external reasons for their failure. The result evidently indicated the existence of hedonic bias in Turkish EFL context as another

striking conclusion of the study. Within the present study, gender was found to be as a significant factor just in students' attribution to failure but not success. Females seem to attribute external factors more than their male counterparts. Regarding the perceived success of the EFL learners, unsuccessful learners seem to attribute more importance to effort and internal dimension than successful students in terms of their success. Furthermore, in terms of failure, students perceiving themselves as unsuccessful were seen to attribute failure more to task difficulty, luck and external factors. Finally, the study revealed that age was not an important factor in EFL learners' attribution to success and failure.

Considering the fact that a better understanding of the nature and impact of attribution to success and failure may enhance students' motivation and encourage them to be aware of their capability in controlling their performance in foreign language studies, it is strongly recommended to inform students about their attribution to success and failure. Consequently, to improve academic performance and motivation of EFL students, their awareness levels of attribution could be raised by giving them attribution training in the schools of foreign languages. In addition, foreign language teachers as well as students could be thought to be enlightened about the vital importance of attribution in foreign language studies. As for another interesting conclusion of the study, namely, the existence of hedonic bias in the Turkish EFL context, it is suggested that further studies could be conducted in different cultural contexts to either confirm or reject that it is unique in western societies as reported in previous literature (Mezulis et.al., 2004; Gobel & Mori, 2007).

In conclusion, the findings of this study enhanced our understanding of the Turkish EFL learners' attribution to success and failure about foreign language learning. Yet, more research is clearly needed in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the complexity of learners' attribution to success and failure. It should be noted that, there were some limitations to this study. The population of this study is limited to some EFL learners in a state University in Turkey. So the results of the study cannot be generalized directly to all EFL learners all over Turkey. The results can only provide us with insights and a general opinion from this specific sample. In addition, different studies with more participants using different research methods such as quasi analysis and qualitative research methods may provide deeper insight and bring brighter results in various contexts and different educational institutions.

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