What Makes an Effective Language Learner? Translation and Interpreting Department Students' Changing Perceptions over a 3-year Period
Etkin bir Dil Öğrencisi Nasıl Olur? Mütercim ve Tercümanlık Bölümü Öğrencilerinin Üç Yıllık Dönemdeki Değişen Algıları

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate perceptions of the students enrolled in the Department of Translation and Interpreting in relation to what makes an effective foreign language learner and explore the changes in these perceptions, if any, over a 3-year period. The participants were enrolled in prep year, first-year, and second-year at a state university located in southern Turkey. Data were collected from 12 students in the first year, 37 students in the second year, and 26 students in the third year of the study. The Repertory Grid Technique and interviews were utilized as data collection tools, which were administered on yearly basis over three years with a view to exploring the changes in students' perceptions about what makes an effective foreign language learner during their education. Data were analyzed using Repertory Grid and content analysis methods. The results showed that students' perceptions went through changes that indicated the washback effects of the exams as well as of the education in an English-major department.

Keywords: Effective learners, foreign language learner, repertory grid, translation

Öz

Bu çalışma, Mütercim ve Tercümanlık Bölümüne kayıtlı öğrencilerin etkin yabancı dil öğrencileri konusundaki algılarını bölümdeki eğitimleri süresinde üç yıllık bir dönem boyunca incelemeyi ve varsa bu algılardaki değişimleri ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın katılımcıları Türkiye'nin güneyinde yer alan bir devlet üniversitesinde Mütercim ve Tercümanlık Bölümünde Hazırlık, 1. Sınıf ve 2. Sınıfa kayıtlı öğrencilerden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmanın verileri Repertuar Ağı Tekniği ve yüz yüze görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Katılımcılar, çalışmanın ilk yılında 12, ikinci yılında 37 ve üçüncü yılında 26 öğrenciden oluşmuştur. Çalışma verileri, öğrencilerin eğitimleri sırasındaki etkin yabancı dil öğrencileri konusundaki algılarını belirlemek ve varsa değişimleri ortaya çıkarabilmek amacı ile üç yıllık bir dönemde her yıl toplanmıştır. Veriler Repertuar Ağı Analizi ve içerik analizi yöntemleri kullanılarak nitel olarak analiz edilmiştir. Veri toplama araçlarından elde edilen bulgular, Mütercim ve Tercümanlık bölümüne kayıtlı öğrencilerin algılarının Eğitim süreçleri boyunca sınavların geri etkisi ve İngilizce uzmanlık alanı olan bir bölümde verilen eğitimin etkisi ile değişikliğe uğradığını göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etkin öğrenciler, yabancı dil öğrencisi, repertuar ağı, çeviri

Introduction

How languages are taught and learned more effectively has been investigated by researchers worldwide for years. While earlier research focused on effective teaching methods and syllabus, the focus of research has been on the variability in learners in recent decades (Gardiner et al., 2021). Although almost everyone acquires their mother tongue with a fair level of success, how learning another language is achieved with varying degrees of success has been subject to much research through the exploration of the characteristics of good language learners. A number of studies in the literature (e.g. Ellis, 1994; Nadif & Benattabou, 2021; Naiman et al., 1978; Stern, 1975; Sykes, 2015) reported that although they were exposed to the same teaching method and learning environment, some learners became more successful at learning a second or foreign language, and some researchers focused on describing the characteristics of these learners. Hence, research has begun to focus on learning and learners rather than merely on teachers and teaching. Individual differences demonstrate variety in terms of routes of learning as well as learning outcomes (Grenfell & Macaro, 2007). According to Dörnyei (2014), students learn differently, and what works well for one learner might not be equally effective for another learner.

Researchers have been interested in the ways good language learners learn languages (Atmowardoyo et al., 2020; Cekaite, 2017; Griffiths, 2015; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Rubin, 1975; Vann & Abraham, 1990) so that the strategies could be instructed to poorer learners. While back in the 1970s Rubin (1975) defined the characteristics of successful learners as being a willing and accurate guesser, having a strong drive to communicate, learning from communication, being willing to make mistakes, taking advantage of every opportunity to practice, monitoring their own and others' speech, and focusing on meaning; more recent research, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) characterized good language learners as being flexible and willing to vary their learning strategies. As stated by Nadif and Benattabou (2021), good language learners take charge of their learning, are creative and innovative, and do their best to practice language inside and outside the classroom. Some other studies describe good language learners as those who are mentally active, monitor language comprehension and production, practice communicating in the language, make use of prior linguistic and general knowledge, use various memorization techniques, and ask questions for clarification (Chamot, 2005). In addition to these general features, good language learners' characteristics are often linked to the use of language learning strategies (Cohen, 2014; Mahalingam & Yunus, 2017; Oxford, 1992). For instance, Chamot and Kupper (1989: p. 17) reported that effective language learners used language learning strategies "more often, more appropriately, with greater variety" and the ways that they used these strategies helped them complete language learning tasks successfully. According to Griffiths (2010), although students demonstrate differences, they utilize strategies that suit their own individual characteristics, situations, and goals. Besides, those who succeed are motivated and take charge of their own learning through an autonomous learning process in which they recognize and assess their own needs and apply their own learning strategies leading to effective learning (Ahmeda & Hasanb, 2020).

Both on their own and in classroom settings, individuals are exposed to various language learning activities. As there is no one-fit-all activity, different learners could be interested in different types of activities, leading them to select and focus on the activities that are perceived more effective for themselves. Horwitz (1988) states that students tend to spend most of their time on activities that reflect their beliefs about language learning. For instance, learners who think that memorizing grammar and vocabulary makes effective learners, spend more time on these activities. However, these views go through changes over time and according to the various learning settings and experiences. Several studies in the literature investigated the characteristics of good language learners and provided valuable insights into the behaviors associated with successful language learning (Brown, 2000; Ellis, 1994, Peregoy & Boyle, 2000). These studies investigated the foreign language learning processes in terms of various aspects such as the strategies foreign language learners used (Nazri et

al., 2016), characteristics of a good language learner and a poor one through observations (Gunning, 2006), characteristics of a good language learner (Hedge, 2000), and beliefs about second language learning over a three-year period (Peacock, 2001).

Effective teachers and effective learners have been investigated by researchers for years. An analysis of the studies in Turkey shows that the concept of an effective teacher was investigated by Çakmak (2001), Küçükahmet (2002), Bulut (2003), and Kozikoğlu (2017). The findings in Bulut's study highlighted the importance of personality characteristics as well as the use of educational materials and the creation of a challenging, enjoyable, and supportive classroom atmosphere. While Arıkan (2010) investigated the ideal and actual characteristics of an effective English language teacher from the perspectives of prospective and in-service teachers of English, Korkmaz and Yavuz (2011) explored competencies required to be an effective English teacher from the perspective of 4th year English Language Teaching student teachers. Kalay (2017) investigated the Turkish university EFL students' and instructors' opinions of what makes a good EFL teacher and aimed to examine how these perceptions were related to each other. In the phenomenological study conducted with 36 prospective teachers, Kozikoğlu (2017) investigated cognitive constructs about ideal teacher qualifications using the Repertory Grid Technique. Good or effective language learners have also been subject to much research (Abdullayeva, 2021; Griffiths, 2008; Mahalingam & Yunus, 2017; Nazri et al., 2016; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Steffen, 2018; Wong & Nunan, 2011). Studies on language learners in Turkey also explored various aspects of good language learning such as the relationship between autonomy perception and classroom behaviors of English language learners (Altunay & Bayat, 2009); gifted learners' and their teachers' perceptions about what makes an effective language learner (Yıldırım & İşpınar Akçayoğlu, 2019); poor and good learners' language beliefs and their influence on their language learning strategy use (Kayaoglu, 2013), etc. However, there is a scarcity of qualitative research on the changing perceptions of students in relation to effective foreign language learners throughout their education in an English-major department. Foreign language learner characteristics bringing success and whether perceptions of these characteristics go through changes over years are considered to be a topic worth exploring. There is a gap in the literature regarding the studies that make an in-depth analysis of students' changing perceptions about what makes an effective language learner over years during their education. Therefore, this study aims to investigate perceptions of the students enrolled in the Department of Translation and Interpreting in relation to what makes an effective foreign language learner and explore the changes in these perceptions, if any, over a 3-year period.

1. Method

This descriptive, longitudinal study utilized qualitative data collection tools. Data were collected in three academic years, with the participation of two groups of Translation and Interpreting Department students in their prep year, first year, and second year of education in the department.

1.1. Data collection tools

Data collected in the present study were obtained through two data collection tools that included the Repertory Grid Technique and interviews.

Repertory grid technique (RepGrid): The Repertory Grid technique, devised by Kelly (1955), is based upon George Kelly's Personal Construct Theory. The Personal Construct Theory primarily focuses on individuals and the ways these individuals construe their experiences in life. The theory suggests that people develop personal constructs according to their experiences and observations. These constructs, which are essentially mental representations, are used to predict and anticipate events. Each person has unique personal constructs and construes the meaning of events differently; these constructs are subject to revision (Jankowicz, 2001).

The Repertory Grid Technique allows the elicitation of individuals' constructs without researcher interference or bias (Boyle, 2005; Whyte & Bytheway, 1996). This study utilized the technique in order to identify the participants' views about an effective foreign language learner- a learner of English as a foreign language in this context. A challenge in qualitative research is to elicit tacit knowledge that cannot be externalized by the traditional investigation instruments such as interviews and discussions (Bjorklund, 2008). The Repertory Grid Technique enables to elicit perceptions and personal constructs. Some fields where the Repertory Grid Technique has been used include clinical psychology, social work, human-computer information, information systems and software technologies, and education (Rozenszajn et al., 2021). The technique was analyzed in terms of its use in the education field, particularly for eliciting learner perceptions in language education research (Gardiner et al., 2021). The Repertory Grid technique is reported to eliminate the effects of researchers' assumptions on the responses provided by the learners and to enable learners to speak for themselves, instead of against any pre-set agenda determined by the researcher.

Kelly (1955) states that the personal construct theory is interested in the personal construct system, which could be highly elaborate, and this makes the measurement of its validity difficult. However, since the respondents are asked to tell what they think about their own world, face validity is reported to be high. A more reflective and sensitive instrument, the Repertory Grid is reported to be an effective way of driving personal meanings and eliciting more valid data compared to questionnaire and interview methods. The method is also considered a reliable way to elicit actual perceptions in many aspects of education (Gardiner et al., 2021). Interviews: The data obtained from the Repertory Grid forms were supported with the data obtained from the interviews administered to 11 randomly chosen participants. The participants were interviewed about the changes in their perceptions of what makes an effective foreign language learner throughout their education in the department. The participants were not reinterviewed; they were interviewed once to elicit their overall ideas regarding their changing perceptions.

1.2. Data collection procedure

The data collection cycle included 12 Repertory Grid forms from the Prep-year students in the 2015-2016 academic year, 19 Repertory Grid forms from the 1st year students and 18 Repertory Grid forms from 18 students in the 2016-2017 academic year, and 13 Repertory Grid forms from the 1st year students and 13 Repertory Grid forms from the 2nd year students in the 2017-2018 academic year. Finally, interviews were conducted with 11 randomly chosen students enrolled in the 1st and 2nd year. The number of students in each cycle changed because every year new students were involved in the groups (n = 12), or some students left the city to continue their education at other universities (n = 4).

The data from the first group were collected in three cycles (in the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 when they were enrolled in prep year, first year and second year respectively), and the data from the second group were collected in two cycles (in 2017 and 2018 academic years when they were enrolled in the prep year and first year respectively).

While the data were collected through the Repertory Grid Technique, the participants were told to think of foreign language learners they know and choose three effective (E1, E2, E3), three ineffective (I1, I2, I3) and three typical (T1, T2, T3) learners in their mind, which were referred as "elements". Then, the researcher randomly chose three elements (for example, I3, T1 and T2 or E3, T2, I2) and asked the participants to choose a feature that is shared by two of these elements but not by one of them. The feature they found common was written on the similarity pole (for example: speaks fluently) and the difference was written in the contrast pole (for example: does not speak fluently). This process of choosing the constructs randomly and eliciting the features for the similarities and contrast poles continued until the participants could produce no more constructs. Generally, the number of constructs elicited in this study ranged between 8 and 15 for each

participant. Once all the constructs were elicited, the participants were asked to grade the feature they mentioned in the similarity pole according to each element (E1, E2, E3; T1, T2, T3; I1, I2, I3). For instance, if the feature mentioned is "speaks fluently", the participants were asked to decide how much this feature was relevant for the elements (1=Always true, 2=Most of the time true, 3=Sometimes true, 4=Rarely true, 5=Always true) in terms of the factors that make an effective foreign language learner. Completing the Repertory Grid forms took about 40 minutes.

1.3. Participants

This study was conducted in the Department of Translation and Interpreting at a university located in the south of Turkey. The participating students, aged from 19 to 24, were composed of two groups who were enrolled in the preparatory, first, and second year of their education in the Department of Translation and Interpreting.

1.4. Data analysis

The Repertory Grid Technique is qualitative, and the data obtained through the Repertory Grid forms were analyzed in the REP GRID IV program in order to explore the relationships between the constructs and elements. However, the technique also enables researchers to perform analysis by counting the number of times particular elements or constructs are mentioned to examine the data for common trends elicited from the participants (Hunter, 1997; Moynihan, 1996). The data obtained from the Repertory Grid forms in this study were subjected to such analysis. Stewart, Stewart and Fonda (1981) suggest researchers select categories into which constructs fall and then assign the constructs to categories. As the data obtained from the Repertory Grid forms provided huge amounts of data in terms of the number of constructs, the study aimed to assign the constructs into categories. The views of two researchers who are experts on qualitative data analysis methods and actively worked as language instructors were received and the data were grouped in three categories that included language components, personal factors, and study habits/skills. The data analysis process included grouping the cognitive constructs under categories and determining frequencies. As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), reliability was ensured by receiving expert opinions of additional coders who were experienced in qualitative data analysis methods. The coders conducted verbal discussions until they reached an agreement on the construct categories. For internal validity, the integrity and consistency of the findings were reviewed by the researcher constantly and were supported with the findings from the interviews using the participants' utterances, which provided explanation, validation, and triangulation with repertory grid data (Thota, 2011). External validity was ensured by giving detailed information about data collection and analysis. The frequency of the expressions in the constructs was displayed in a table that provided an overall presentation of the findings over three years. Triangulation, the use of multiple methods and data sources in qualitative research, enables a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1990). For triangulation purposes, the data collected from the Repertory Grid forms were supported by the interviews conducted with 11 participants. The data obtained from the interviews were presented in quotes using the participants' original utterances.

2. Results

Table 1 presents students' constructs about effective foreign language learners over a 3-year period. The items in the table represent students' constructs about what characteristics make effective foreign language learners. Students' responses in this category are presented under the "Language Components", "Personal Factors", and "Study Habits/Skills" subtitles.

Table 1.

Participating Students' Constructs in relation to Effective Language Learners over a 3-year period

	Language components	Personal Factors	Study Habits/Skills
Prep-year Students (n=30)	Speaking (f=39)	Ambition and Persistence (f=26)	Taking Notes (f=10)
	Vocabulary (f=20)	Willingness to learn (f=17)	Watching movies without subtitles (f=8)
	Grammar (f=18)	Good Educational Background (f=5)	Studying regularly (f=5)
	Pronunciation (f=18)	Self Confidence (f=5)	Reading for pleasure (f=4)
	Listening (f=16)	Setting Goals (f=4)	Setting Goals (f=2)
	Writing (f=14)	Having good memory (f=3)	Attendance/Participation (f=1)
	Reading (f=13)	Asking Questions (f=3)	Using Dictionary (f=1)
		Good Communication Skills (f=2)	Doing Homework (f=1)
		Taking Risks (f=2)	Listening to music (f=1)

	Language components	Personal Factors	Study Habits/Skills
First-year Students (n=32)	Speaking (f=26)	Willingness to learn (f=21)	Watching movies without subtitles (f=10)
	Pronunciation (f=19)	Ambition and Persistence (f=20)	Taking Notes (f=8)
	Vocabulary (f=17)	Learning easily (f=9)	Using English in daily life (f=4)
	Grammar (f=15)	Good Educational Background (f=8)	Listening well (f=4)
	Reading (f=14)	Engagement (f=7)	Doing Lang. Exercises (f=3)
	Writing (f=8)	Talent (f=5)	Searching (f=3)
	Listening (f=4)	Self Confidence (f=5)	Listening to Songs (f=2)
	Syntax (f=2)	Creativity (f=3)	Studying regularly (f=2)
	Punctuation (f=1)	Being Focused (f=3)	Good Study Skills (f=2)
		Self-awareness (f=3)	Knowing Information Technologies (f=1)
		Responsibility (f=2)	Knowing Learning Strategies (f=1)
		Interest (f=2)	Using Dictionary (f=1)
		Being Sociable (f=2)	Participating in lessons (f=1)

	Language components	Personal Factors	Study Habits/Skills		
Second-year Students (n=26)	Grammar (f=16)		Listening to Songs (f=6)		
	Speaking (f=10)	Willingness to learn (f=9)	Watching movies without subtitles (f=5)		
	Reading (f=9)	Self Confidence (f=4)	Participating in lessons (f=4)		
	Vocabulary (f=8)	Ambition and Persistence (f=3)	Using English in daily life (f=3)		
	Pronunciation (f=7)	Good translation skills (f=3)	Using Dictionary (f=3)		
	Writing (f=5)	Good memory (f=2)	Using apps (f=3)		
	Listening (f=4)	Good comprehension (f=2)	Research Skills (f=2)		
		Self-awareness (f=2)	Doing assignments (f=1)		
		Learning easily (f=1)	Attending language events (f=1)		

Language components: When the participants were enrolled in the prep year, Speaking (f=39), Vocabulary (f=20), and Grammar (f=18) were considered to be the most important language components to be possessed by effective foreign language learners. In the first year, Speaking (f=26), Pronunciation (f=19), and Vocabulary (f=17) were the top three components. However, in the second year, priority was found to have changed with higher importance given to Grammar (f=16), Speaking (f=10), and Reading (f=9). While pronunciation was a new top construct in the first year, grammar and reading were the top two constructs in the second year. Although speaking maintained its place in the top three constructs, over the years, the importance given to speaking, pronunciation, and vocabulary was found to have shifted to grammar and reading comprehension. An excerpt from the interviews is as follows:

Excerpt 1:

"I was not a student from a language department. I've learned the language by watching movies and listening to music. For me, it was mostly about pronunciation because in Turkey pronunciation is an issue that is not given much importance. However, I have seen that knowing the language as much as you can is more important than merely focusing on pronunciation" P4

Personal factors: Construct analysis of the participants in the Personal Factors category showed that for prep year as well as the first year students (f=20 and f=21 respectively), ambition and persistence (f=26) and willingness to learn(f=17) were the top two constructs to be possessed by effective foreign language learners. Willingness to learn (f=9) and self-confidence (f=4) were the most frequently mentioned constructs in the second year. An excerpt from the interviews is as follows:

Excerpt2:

"An effective foreign language learner should be a hardworking person… He should always try to learn new things and search for something to develop himself. We should search about not only the language that we learn but also our mother language". P3

Study habits/skills: The study habits/skills category in the prep year included the constructs of taking notes (f=10), watching movies without subtitles (f=8), and studying regularly (f=5) in the prep year. The constructs elicited in the first year also included watching movies without subtitles (f=10), taking notes (f=8), and using English in daily life (f=4) as the top constructs. As for the second year, taking notes, which was mentioned as one of the top two items in the prep year and the first year was not indicated in the second year, and in addition to listening to songs (f=6) and watching movies without subtitles (f=5), participating in the lesson (f=4) was mentioned as a newly added top construct. The role of exposure in the process of learning a foreign language was mentioned during the interviews as follows:

Excerpt 3:
"…I think that an effective foreign language learner is someone who is aware of the role of efforts and who can use his/her all senses in this learning process. An effective language learner should put what he/she has learned into practice. This can be done by producing sentences or even watching TV shows to see some daily life examples". P11

The findings indicating one's willingness to learn and ambition and persistence were also mirrored in the interview findings; the participants were found to see an effective foreign language learner as someone who always tries to learn new things and understands the necessity of learning about the language in terms of social and cultural aspects as well. Excerpts from the interviews are as follows:

Excerpt 4:
"My idea of an effective language learner shifted from someone who is interested in language to someone who continuously learns and improves oneself in language learning, someone who always pursues to know and learn new things, and someone who does not stop being curious and interested." P5

Excerpt 5:
"I was thinking that I knew English well. I've learned that only knowing the language is not enough. One should also consider the cultural and social aspects of languages". P7

Rank order of the constructs
Once their constructs were identified, the participants were asked to rank the constructs they identified according to the top three constructs based on what they thought constituted an effective foreign language learner. The top three constructs mentioned over a period of three years are presented in Table 2.

Table 1.
Participating Students' Constructs in relation to Effective Language Learners over a 3-year period

Prep Year	1st year	2nd year
Willingness to learn (f=5)	Ambition/Persistence (f=4)	Willingness to learn (f=5)
Ambition/Persistence (f=3)	Willingness to learn (f=3)	Expressing themselves effectively in English (f=4)
Answering Multiple-choice questions (f=2)	Active Participation (f=3)	Good Translation Skills (f=2)

It is important to note that willingness to learn (f=5, f=4, and f=5) was the top characteristic mentioned in the prep year and first year. In the prep year, answering multiple-choice questions (f=2) was listed among the top three characteristics of an effective foreign language learner. In the second year, while willingness to learn (f=5) remained as the top characteristic, expressing oneself effectively in English (f=4) and having good translation skills (f=2) were found to be the two newly added top constructs. Interview results also support the finding in relation to the importance given to willingness to learn. Two excerpts from the interviews are as follows:

Excerpt 6:

"I used to think that memorizing the patterns in languages are the cornerstones of learning, but after this education, I started to think that there exist so many variables and hardships to learn a language entirely. Pragmatics is of such a significance that although I've endeavored both to learn and speak English for at least 4 or 5 years, I do not feel like I'm qualified enough" P9

Interview findings showed that the participants reportedly realized that language is a systematic unit that has effects on social and cultural life, and it is beyond ordered words. These explorations helped students to see the relationships among thinking, culture, social life, and language. Some excerpts are as follows:

Excerpt 7:

"Language is not only being able to communicate but also being a new person. Culture and social life have so much importance. I can't say that the department changed my mind, but it helped me about making my thoughts clear in terms of the relationships between many concepts". P3

On the other hand, with all the information gained during the education process, one participant also mentioned that the development was a matter of personal effort.

Excerpt 8:

"…No matter which method the teacher uses, it is in students' hands to improve. An effective foreign language learner should put what he/she has learned into practice…" P6

Another student mentioned the importance of perseverance in the foreign language learning process. When difficulties are faced, learners should approach them with patience and ambition to succeed. An excerpt is as follows:

Excerpt 9:

"An effective foreign language learner should be persistent when he/she faces a difficulty during the process, as those difficulties will be nothing but a help to him/her in the future". P8

The data obtained from the constructs elicited through the repertory forms indicated that the importance given to speaking and vocabulary shifted to reading and comprehension over the years. However, the role of the personality factor remained the same with the consistent emphasis on the willingness to learn. As to study habits, watching English movies without subtitles was found to have been utilized throughout students' education. However, participating in the lessons and taking notes were the newly added constructs in the following years. The interviews conducted with the students supported the data obtained from the Repertory

Grid forms. Over the years, the students were found to see the foreign language with its social and cultural aspects; realize that knowing a language requires more than being able to speak that language; and believe that personal efforts are highly important for success.

3. Discussion

This study sets out to investigate the perceptions of the students enrolled in the Department of Translation and Interpreting in relation to what makes an effective foreign language learner and explore the changes in these perceptions, if any, over a 3-year period. Data collected through the Repertory Grid Technique and interviews sought changes in those perceptions. Findings from the Repertory Grid forms and the interviews were found to provide parallel findings and the results indicated that participating students' perceptions went through changes and reflected the washback effects of the exams and the education provided in the department. The top three constructs about effective language learners mentioned by the students remained the same for the importance given to speaking skill in three years. However, there was a shift from speaking to grammar and reading from prep year through the second year. This shift is considered to be caused by the theoretical courses and translation practices in the department as the translation process should involve the correct and consistent use of terminology, grammar, lexis, style, etc. (European Committee for Standardization, 2006). Moreover, a significant correlation was reported in the literature between students' translation ability and their reading comprehension (Rahemi et al., 2013; Malekan & Hajimohammadi, 2017).

The constructs elicited in the prep year showed that the participants highlighted the importance of knowledge of vocabulary and answering multiple-choice questions. This finding is considered to result from the fact that the students took the University Entrance Examination for which they heavily studied vocabulary and reading exercises designed as multiple-choice questions. This wash-back effect of the traditional examination system (Le, 2000) was indicated by the participants' constructs in the prep year but was not mentioned in the following years of their education. The students' constructs seem to have been affected by the learning requirements and environments in the department. On the other hand, students' emphasis on speaking and pronunciation in the prep year and first year might be explained by the lack of focus on speaking and pronunciation education during the university preparation process.

Study skills or habits indicated by students did not demonstrate much difference over the years. According to the participants, watching movies without subtitles was among the top three factors that paved the way to becoming effective foreign language learners. Since over the three years, reading for pleasure, using English in daily life and listening to songs were also mentioned, it seems that the participants benefited from authentic audio-visual materials to improve their language skills. Audio-visual materials have been reported to have potential language input for intermediate or advanced levels language learners who want to improve their language proficiency (Bahrani & Tam, 2012). In addition, some studies in the literature (Bozorgian, 2012; Feyten, 1991) indicate a significant relationship between listening ability and foreign language proficiency; between listening ability and foreign language listening comprehension skills as well as between listening ability and foreign language oral proficiency skills. Similarly, students' exposure to the authentic environment of the target language has long been reported to improve language learning (Dwyer, 1978). For instance, subtitles of different languages are also reported to help comprehension and language learning (Kusumarasdyati, 2005). In a similar vein, since learners try to understand the content by accessing spoken language that they are not very familiar with, vocabulary acquisition occurs spontaneously (Sadiku, 2017). Students' emphasis on watching movies without subtitles reflects their efforts to have full command of the language through authentic materials. Advantages of the use of English movies such as increasing motivation, improving oral and communication skills, and developing cultural awareness, have well been documented in the literature (Li & Wang, 2015; Qiu, 2017). Besides, Atmowardoyo et al. (2020) found that millennial good language

learners mostly utilized content such as songs, movies, English Learning tutorials, news, research, biographies of characters, and speeches (TED).

The participating students ranked willingness to learn and ambition and persistence as the most important factors that make effective foreign language learners. Gardner and Lalonde (1984) emphasize the importance of the intensity of motivation, the willingness to learn the language, and the attitude towards learning languages. While in the first years answering multiple-choice questions reflected the effect of the exams, second year students highlighted the importance of expressing themselves effectively in English and having good translation skills. These responses seem to be related to the educational experiences in the department. As students worked on the departmental courses, they began to be more engaged in the translation practices. As reported by Reynolds (2013: p. 75), individuals construct meaning from experiences and refine meanings across time. Students' performance in translation tasks was found to affect their views about effective foreign language learners as well. However, success in any learning environment seems to be associated with willingness to learn according to the students. The literature has long reported that in many instances, motivation and attitude were the best overall predictors of success in learning another language (Naiman et al., 1978). Those who could keep their positive attitudes towards learning and are motivated to learn new things are considered to be effective language learners.

In time, participants' views about language also went through changes. The participants stated that they were enrolled in an English-major department because they were interested in English, but they reportedly realized that language was much beyond the competence of grammar and four skills. The participants were found to have become aware of the role of language in culture, thinking, and social life as well as its systematic nature that is beyond the existence of ordered words. Language is "the heart within the body of culture"; namely, they are both dependent on each other (Bassnett, 1980: p. 13-14). "No language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its center, the structure of natural language" (Bassnett, 1991: p. 14). Interview results also showed that the participants began to question and discover the relationships between culture and language, language and thinking, and language and social life more deeply. While previously learning vocabulary and answering reading comprehension and vocabulary questions were considered important, speaking and pronunciation began to be considered important as well. However, in the second year, more complicated relationships of culture, thinking, and language were also given importance. Translation education requires and enables awareness concerning these issues, which again reflects the effects of education given in the department.

Interview results also revealed how the participants' views about effective foreign language learners changed over the years. Results highlighted students' emphasis on improving their knowledge throughout life. Although the learning context demonstrates and explains learners' views within the scope of this research, with factors including the exploration of the target language more systematically and monitoring learners' performance more diligently, it is important to note that the process could be more complex than it seems (Norton & Toohey, 2001). The washback effect, which is defined as either positive or negative influence of testing on learning and teaching, leads to selective study habits in the students (Ahmad & Rao, 2012). When students prepare for the university exam, productive skills seem to be ignored even for the English-major departments where students are required much beyond what is tested in these exams. As stated by Özmen (2011), it is important to design a test that can collect evidence of the communicative competencies of the testees in four skills. As indicated by Sarah (2009), in such cases classes are devoted to lectures, recitations, and homework in line with the exams. Specific to the data obtained in this study, it can be concluded that when courses in the department require and test skills required for students' future profession, students' views go through changes throughout their education.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the translation education process seems to have effects on the improvements in students' perceptions about the importance of all language components as well as its associations with social and cultural life. The results also showed that the participating students were aware of the continuous personal efforts and developments for their careers. The data obtained in this study showed that the courses received could have numerous unexplored effects on students' personal and academic development for their future profession. Future studies may focus more on these specific changes throughout students' education in the department.

5. Implications

This study revealed that students highlighted the importance of success in speaking skill throughout their education. Translators are expected to be competent in all language components; it is thus recommended to provide translation department students with courses and activities to improve their speaking skills as well. In addition, study skills elicited from students seemed to be limited to the ones discovered by students haphazardly. Metacognitive strategies to be instructed to students in a systematic way could pave the way to effective life-long learning experiences. Given that there have been changes in the ways students learn and that learning is not limited to classrooms and teachers anymore, using the media as a way of language learning could be explored from various aspects. Finally, further studies could explore the changes in students' perceptions in the 3rd and 4th years or after they graduate as well. Exploration of the constructs of students from different English-major departments as well as non-English- major ones could provide more comprehensive insights regarding this phenomenon.

6. Limitations

The present study was conducted only with students enrolled in the Translation and Interpreting Department at a university. In addition, mainly qualitative data collection and analysis methods were utilized and the data were collected during the first semester of each academic year.

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Appendix: Sample rep grid form

Emergent Constructs (Similarities	E1: Effective1	E2: Effective2	E3: Effective3	T1: Typical1	T2: Typical2	T3: Typical3	I1:Ineffective1	I2:Ineffective2	I3:Ineffective3	Self	Ideal	Implicit Constructs (Differences)
Likes learning other languages	1	2	2	3	3	3	5	5	5	1	1	Is not interested in learning other languages
Has good pronunciation	1	2	2	3	3	3	5	5	5	2	1	Has poor pronunciation
Watches English movies without subtitles	3	3	3	2	3	1	5	5	5	3	2	Does not watch movies in English
Likes using dictionary	3	3	3	1	3	1	5	5	5	3	1	Does not like using dictionary
Can guess the meanings of words	1	2	3	1	2	1	5	5	5	2	1	Has poor vocabulary knowledge
Has good educational background	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	1	1	Does not have good educational background
Actively participates in the lessons	1	1	1	2	1	2	5	5	5	1	1	Is not active during lessons

Publication Ethics

The author declares that all ethical principles and rules were followed in data collection, analysis and reporting processes.

Additional Statement/Contributing Authors

This article was written by one author.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.