FEN LİSESİ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENMEYE KARŞI TUTUMLARI

Erol POYRAZ
Doktora Öğrencisi, Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi
ORCID: 0000-0001-6617-0692

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, fen lisesi öğrencilerinin İngilizce'ye yönelik tutumlarını tespit etmek amacıyla 2017-2018 akademik yılında yapılmıştır. Çalışma Muğla ilinde bulunan 75. Yıl Fen Lisesinde 9. sınıf öğrencileri ile sınırlıdır. Fen lisesi öğrencilerinin İngilizce ve İngilizce derslerine karşı tutumlarını belirlemek amacıyla iki anket (5 Likert ölçekli format) ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme soruları kullanılmıştır. Anketler ve mülakat soruları, 2017-2018 eğitim-öğretim yılının güz döneminde 75. Yıl Fen Lisesinde rastgele seçilen 9. sınıfta (toplam 57 katılımcı) uygulanmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları, öğrencilerin araştırmada İngilizce dilinin önemini vurgulamasına rağmen, bu önemin yalnızca sosyal medya ve bilgisayar ya da konsol oyunlarına ulaşma ve anlama ile sınırlı kaldığını göstermektedir. Diğer bir konu, kariyerleriyle İngilizce dili arasındaki ilişkinin farkında olmaları ile ilgilidir, bu da İngilizcenin kariyerleri üzerindeki etkisinin öğrenciler tarafından ne öneminin anlaşıldığını ne de eğitmenleri veya öğretmenleri tarafından açıklandığını ortaya koydu.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fen lisesi, İngilizce dersi, tutum, dil becerileri

SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

ABSTRACT

This study has been conducted during the academic year 2017-2018 in order to find out science high school language learners' attitudes towards English language. The study is limited with the 9th graders in 75.Yıl Science High School located in Muğla province in Turkey. Two questionnaires (5-Likert scale format) and semi-constructed interview questions have been used with the aim of determining science high school language learners' attitude towards English language and English lessons. The questionnaires and interview questions have been administered in two randomly chosen 9th grade classrooms (totally 57 participants) in 75. Yıl Science High School during the fall semester of the academic year 2017-2018. The results of the study show that although the students have emphasized the importance of English language in the research, this importance has been restricted only with reaching and understanding social media and pc or console games. Another issue was about their awareness of the relationship between their careers and English language, which revealed that the impact of English language on their careers is neither comprehended by the students nor explained to them by their instructors or teachers.

Keywords: Science high school, English lessons, attitude, language skills.

INTRODUCTION

Attitude is a broad term which involves many key concepts. It has become as the dominant element while acquiring a new language. Attitudes towards language learning are defined in Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2010, 314) as:

> *The attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language. Language attitudes may have an effect on second language or foreign language learning. The measurement of language attitudes provides information which is useful in language teaching and language planning.*

Gardner (1985) described the term of attitude as evaluative reflection to some referent or attitude material according to a person's belief or thoughts about the referent. (cited in Yüksel, 2013). Attitudes may change over time, as the changes appear in socioeconomic situations of people. There is a common belief in language policy that attitudes are able to change. If the change in attitude toward a language is expected to be examined, it may be started to evaluate from "portrayal" of how language attitudes have changed over years. Thoughts, problems and even fashion can reflect the factors that affect the changes attitudes. Another detail about altering way of attitude is that developments on mass communication, industrialized world and migrations can become reasons for attitudes (Barker, 1992, 97-98).

While negative attitudes towards language learning have great potential to diminish learners' motivation and damage the process of language learning, positive attitudes can enhance and flourish the language learning process. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate learners' attitudes towards language learning (Oxford, 2001). Teachers and instructors should consider finding out the components that enable learners to turn their negative attitudes to positive ones. In addition, the real emphasize should be on the needs of learners and teachers who are not supposed to be an authoritarian figure, on the contrary, they should fulfill all requirements to support learners' positive attitudes (Rivers, 1997).

When attitude is considered as a predictor of success in foreign language, there are four categories related to second language acquisition: Affective variables, cognitive variables, pedagogical variable and environmental language-relevant variables. Although the primary two categories, "affective variables and cognitive variables" are mainly examined by language authorities and researchers, it seems meaningful to observe the other two, "pedagogical variable and environmental language-relevant variables", as a result of having an enormous impact on individuals' levels of proficiency. The first category consists of affective variables. According to characteristics of individuals, their perceptions and impressions are altered emotionally towards foreign language. Therefore, their impressions and point of view determine how to react a foreign language. It can be illustrated in numerous ways. To illustrate; anxiety, sociability, empathy, attitudinal and motivational behaviors

attribute to some types of language learning styles and strategies. Secondly, cognitive variables as the second category include relevant variables. Every learner owns verbal and intellectual skills and combines them with the foreign language learning situation so that it makes competing with the language materials easier. Cognitive variables can be exemplified with language aptitude, intelligence and some kind of language learning styles. Pedagogical variable refers to the third category and at the same time shows the importance of context of language learning. With the aid of materials and classroom setting, there is a connection and relation among individual students' reactions. The interaction of this equipment with learners enables learners to acquire the foreign language properly. As the Final category, environmental language-relevant variables constitute the fact that learning environment plays an essential role from socio-cultural milieu to community shared beliefs. Possibilities may occur to experience language outside the classroom (Gardiner, Parry, & Stansfield, 1990: 179).

Gender differences have notable influence in foreign language learning. Numerous studies have shown that females are more interested than males in FLL and according to a famous psychologist, women express themselves through language better compared with men (Oxford, 1993: 65-94). Recently, Zoghi, Kazemi and Kalani (2013) have published a study on "the Effect of Gender on Language Learning". Although male and female students develop themselves equally in courses, girls' outperformance has higher marks than boys in EFL. The participants of the study are the students (between 12-14 years old). The findings indicate that in terms of gender, females' total success was better in all regions in their EFL achievement test. Besides, from these results, obviously, it can be concluded that instructors should be informed beforehand so as not to encounter these difficulties in FLL courses.

Obviously, so as to comprehend differences among learners, these above-mentioned categories should be taken into consideration. In every classroom, both sociocultural environment and context reflect and correlate with individual difference variables. Though attitude is the main concern for foreign language learning process, variations among individuals and aptitude of language have significant roles. Additionally, while arguing the variations and measures of personality, attitude in foreign language acquisition, common and idiosyncratic differences are crucial to distinguish.

In their great work "Students Attitudes towards Learning English Grammar", Akay and Toroman (2015) stated that in the process of foreign language learning, there are several problems regarding students' attitudes towards foreign language learning. The main reasons are believed that there is no equal distribution on four skills especially for teaching grammar. According to results, different students from different faculties ranging from Humanities, Economics, Tourism, Communication to Business Administration show different attitudes towards grammar. Akay and Toroman (2015) examined that different faculties' students expect in a different way, namely, they have different expectations or reasons for learning a new language. While faculties of Humanities and Economics demand well-structured (fluent and accurate) foreign language from students in formal issues, Tourism, Communication and Business and Administration departments are eager to benefit from four skills. Therefore, if curricula are designed according to the needs of faculty students, the

consequences of these problems can be easily fixed. Gardner et al. (1997) carried out a study with 102 (82 girls and 20 boys) university students studying French as a foreign language demonstrated the attitudes towards foreign languages, motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, ability and learning strategies and conducted a model test that examines the relationships among 34 different individuals under different variables. At the end of the study, the attitudes towards the language were the motivations which included three components: attitudes towards learning French, desire to learn French and motivational intensity; motivation is both self-confidence and language learning strategies; Motivation, language ability and language learning strategies are all the predecessors of language success. Another study carried out by Üzüm (2007) highlighted learners' attitudes towards English language and English speaking communities in five themes; "native language loyalty, instrumental orientation, cultural interest, intercultural contact and attitudes". The findings showed that learners really comprehend the importance and advantages of knowing English language; therefore, they might have favorable attitudes towards English spoken countries without any consideration of gender (p. 113-126).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance and necessity of knowing a foreign language have been known by Turkish society for several decades like many nations around the world. Especially with the increase in international relations in social, political and economic areas and development of technology, the importance of knowing a foreign language has been acknowledged by the majority and an increase in tendency to learn a foreign language has become absolutely apparent. As a result of the growing global use of English and the recognition of the importance of knowing a foreign language, English language learning has become crucial factor in education in Turkey. In the current study, science high school students are the participants because the importance of English language indicates itself as an inseparable component in science high school education. Namely, science high schools prepare students for specific professions, such as medicine, engineering, pharmacy and nursing, which requires continuous search of literature in related fields. Unless one can keep up with the new developments in his/her field, the validity of his/her knowledge about the profession becomes a matter of discuss. Therefore science high schools should pay extra attention to English language. The importance of English should be taught to the pupils.

When we examined the literature in the context of science high schools and English language, it was observed that there are a few studies considering the importance of English language in science high schools. Therefore, it would not be inappropriate to say that the situation of English language in science high schools and the pupils' attitudes towards English should be investigated in detail.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions of the study were:

•To what extent do the science high school pupils show a positive attitude towards English lessons?

•To what extent do the science high school pupils show different attitudes to different language skills?

•To what extent do the science high school pupils learn English language for the purpose of academic literacy?

•To what extent do the science high school pupils in Turkey show a positive attitude towards the activities used in English lessons?

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study aims to investigate science high school learners' attitudes towards English lessons and find out whether they show a positive or negative attitude towards English and English lessons in 75. Yıl Science High School. 9th graders have been participants of the current research. For the purposes of this study, two questionnaires and semi-constructed interview questions have been used 75. Yıl science high schools located Muğla province in Turkey. Accordingly, Questionnaire I includes 25 items about pupils' attitude towards English outside the classroom, and Questionnaire II includes 30 items related with pupils' attitude towards English inside the classroom. After that administration of the items, KMO and Bartlett tests have been done through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to find out the validity and reliability of the statements which have resulted as suitable for factor analysis. Next, factor analysis has been performed to determine the construct validity of questionnaire 1 and 2 and then T-Test was used to test the relationship between questionnaires and gender.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The participants of the study were 51 pupils who study at 75. Yıl science high school located in Muğla/Menteşe in Turkey. Demographic characteristic of participants were given in table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

		Frequency	Number	%
The Pupils' Gender	Female	36	36	63.2
	Male	21	21	36.8

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

In order to elicit answers to the research questions, an interview and two questionnaires, which were developed by Atlı (2008), were used. One of the questionnaires was developed for the pupils' attitudes towards English language inside classroom, other one was for the pupils' attitudes outside classroom. Atlı (2008) used the questionnaires for piloting with 551 4th graders from 14 different schools located in 7 different provinces (Samsun, Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Malatya, Gaziantep, Adana) of Turkey. The questionnaires contains 55 items

which are rated on the likert scale (5-point likert type scale) (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). Before the questionnaire, the participants' gender was asked .The questionnaires was neither named nor used an abbreviation, they were just called questionnaire 1 and 2. The original questionnaires were for young learners but for the current study, they were adapted and applied for teenagers. On the other hand, the interview questions were asked to 6 students (4 males, 2 females), who were volunteers, in the study to investigate the issue deeply. The interview has 7 semi-structured questions and these are:

• Would you like to improve your English lesson hours?

• What is your general attitude on English lesson?

• If you have chance, would you like to take another lesson instead of English lesson?

• Will there be a place of English language in your career in the future?

• What are your thoughts, when one says Science High School and English language?

• What is the role of the English language in your daily life?

• Do you speak English in your English Lesson? How do you find yourself in speaking English?

In order to determine the construct validity of the questionnaire 1 and 2, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient and Bartlett Sphericity tests were used. KMO, which is higher than 0,60, showed that the data was suitable for factor analysis. The validity tests scores of the questionnaire 1 and the questionnaire 2 can be seen in table 2.

Table 2. The Results of Validity Test of the Questionnaire 1 and 2

KMO and Bartlett's Test of the Questionnaire 1

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.630
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1429.674
	df	300
	Sig.	.000

KMO and Bartlett's Test of the Questionnaire 2

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.602
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1481.266
	df	435
	Sig.	.000

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The participants were informed about the purpose of the study before the questionnaires and interviews were implemented and participation of the study was voluntary. They were also acknowledged that all the data will be used only for the study purposes and the results would be confidential. The study was conducted during 2017-2018 academic year.

Factor analysis was performed after determining the construct validity of Questionnaire 1 and 2 and in order to elicit the answers of research questions in the current study. As a result of factor analysis, both questionnaires have 10 sub-dimensions. The sub-dimensions that Questionnaire 1 (attitude towards English outside the classroom) have are reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, awareness of importance of English language, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, academic side of English language, English language activities. On the other hand, Questionnaire 2 (attitude towards English inside the classroom) have sub-dimensions which are reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, linguistic competence, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, school materials, English language activities. Then, descriptive analyses (mean and standard deviation) of the dimensions of Questionnaire 1 and 2 were performed in the direction of the participants' answers.

FINDINGS

In this section, the core findings of the current study were gathered from the results of the data collection tools. Both qualitative and quantitative data were given in a logical sequence and proper interpretations of the data were done according to the answers of the participants. Firstly, a frequency analysis was applied to the results of the questionnaires. Then, the interview results were interpreted according to the answers of the participants.

Table 3. The Descriptive Statistics for Questionnaire 1

Sub-Dimension	Questionnaire 1 Items	Mean of scores	Degree of freedom
Reading	I want to read books in English.	3.87	.927
Writing	I pay attention to the spelling of English words.	4.17	.868
	I want to correspond with foreign people who can speak English.	3.98	1.125
Speaking	I want to speak English.	4.26	.832
	I have difficulty in speaking English outside the classroom.	3.17	1.182
Listening	I want to understand spoken English.	4.47	.538
	I pay attention to the pronunciation of words in English.	4.22	.802

Vocabulary	I am curious about the meaning of words in English.	4.28	.818
	I am curious about the meanings of English words that I encounter in my daily life.	4.19	.934
	I enjoy memorizing words in English.	4.29	.778
Linguistic Awareness	Learning English is very difficult.	2.64	.932
	Learning English is necessary.	4.57	.532
	Learning English is a waste of time.	1.56	.655
Intrinsic Motivation	I want to visit countries where English is spoken as a native language.	4.80	.515
	I want to meet my peers who can speak English.	4.56	.756
	I want to improve my English.	4.52	.657
	I should have started learning English in pre-school age.	4.31	.848
	I walk away when people start speaking English.	2.10	.794
Extrinsic Motivation	My family wants me to learn English.	4.94	.294
	I learn English to find a good job.	4.80	.440
	I learn English to go abroad.	4.45	.825
Academic Awareness	I learn English to catch up with screen and print media.	3.03	1.117
Outside Activities	I want to sing in English.	4.59	.593
	I want to learn English through songs.	4.47	.908
	I learn English to understand computer games.	3.57	1.499

As is seen in table 3, there are 10 sub-dimensions (reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, linguistic awareness, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, academic awareness, outside activities) in Questionnaire 1 which indicates science high school students' attitudes towards English outside the classroom. If we start with reading dimension, we observe that the pupils considerably agree on reading books written in English outside the school. They indicated a positive attitude to writing activities by paying attention to spelling of English words and having a desire to communicate with foreigners by writing. In speaking sub-dimension, although, the pupils have difficulty in speaking, they are highly eager to speak English outside the school. The pupils have great ambition to comprehend English and they are careful at pronunciation of English words as listening sub-dimension. In vocabulary, it was seen that the students like memorizing new English words and they are very curious about English words which are encountered in daily life. As linguistic awareness, the descriptive analysis indicated that the students think that learning English is not difficult and it is absolutely not a waste of time. Furthermore, they stated that learning English is utterly a necessity. The students have high intrinsic motivation and even they considerably agree on that they should have learned English in pre-school

age. For extrinsic motivation, the students' families really support English language learning and the pupils believe that English have profound effect on their desires as going abroad and finding a better professions. When it comes to academic awareness sub-dimension, it was surprising to find out that the pupils have not much idea about the importance of catching up with screen and print media for their careers. As a last sub-dimension, outside activities are considered as crucial and they highly agree on these outside activities.

Table 4 . The Descriptive Statistics for Questionnaire 2

Sub-Dimension	Items	Means of scores	Degree of freedom
Reading	I don't understand the written instructions given at the beginning of the activities.	2.21	.674
Writing	I don't care about the spelling of English words.	1.92	.562
	I have difficulty in completing sentences.	2.24	.851
	I like unjumbling letters to write words.	3.89	.816
	I have difficulty in expressing my thoughts in written English.	2.49	1.002
	I pay attention to the punctuation marks when writing in English.	4.22	.567
	I have difficulty in writing words in English.	2.42	.730
	I like unjumbling words to make sentences.	3.98	.481
Speaking	I have difficulty in speaking English inside the classroom.	3.00	.823
Listening	I have difficulty in understanding listening exercises from the tape recorder.	2.66	.740
	I have difficulty in listening to words in English.	2.49	.888
Pronunciat-ion	I don't care about the pronunciation of English words.	2.08	.950
	I have difficulty with the pronunciation of English words.	2.42	.864
Linguistic Competence	It is easy for me to learn English.	3.45	.656
	English lessons are very difficult	2.26	.744
	English lessons are really boring.	1.52	.629
	I get bored in English lessons.	2.01	.694
Intrinsic Motivation	I revise what I have learned in English classes.	3.73	.695
	I want to answer the questions asked in English lessons.	4.31	.571

Extrinsic **Motivation**	I learn English because it is in the curriculum of the school.	4.40	.863
	The teacher always corrects my mistakes/errors in English.	3.66	.988
	The teacher should give the instruction in English during English lessons.	3.03	1.018
	The teacher should give the instructions in Turkish during English lessons.	2.94	1.076
	I can't relate English lessons to my life.	2.05	.811
School materials	I find the activities in the coursebook entertaining.	4.15	.701
	I am interested in the topics in the coursebook.	4.33	.763
	I enjoy using computers during English classes	4.68	.505
	I'd enjoy it if my voice is recorded during English classes.	3.05	.933
School activities	We work in pairs in English classes.	4.59	.529
	English classes are full of fun.	4.63	.555

As a result of factor analysis, Questionnaire 2, which investigates science high school students' attitudes towards English inside the classroom, has 11 sub-dimensions (reading, writing, speaking, listening, pronunciation, grammar, linguistic competence, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, school materials and school activities). In reading, the pupils stated that they have no difficulty in comprehending the instruction at the beginning of the activities. When the items about writing is investigated, it was observed that the students are careful at punctuation and spelling and they have no hard times while writing English words and their thoughts in English. They like unjumbling words and completing sentences. It was concluded that the students have difficulty in speaking in the classroom, when speaking is considered. For listening, the students have no trouble at listening in classroom. They can understand listening activities. Furthermore, the pupils greatly pay attention to the pronunciation of English words. On the other hand, while there are some undecided pupils, most of them agree on that English is not a difficult to learn but they precisely highlighted that learning English is not boring. In intrinsic motivation, while there are some conflicts, the students indicated that revisions after classroom are done by them. As extrinsic motivation, it was observed that the students want English teachers to use English while giving instructions in lesson. Also, they emphasized that their mistakes are often clarified by their teachers. Except from one item which is "getting their sounds by a recorder", the students claimed that school materials are really effective and the pupils are satisfied their usage. Likewise, it was revealed that they are very pleased with school activities.

After the questionnaires were analyzed by descriptive statistics, in the direction of data obtained from questionnaires, the semi-structured interview questions were analyzed in detail. When the students' general attitudes towards English language were asked, although there were a few students who thought the contrary,

majority of the students stated that English is not a difficult lesson and English language is very important lesson in education especially nowadays. They also claimed that in the current curriculum, English lessons are not enough for indicating the importance of it. Therefore they emphasized the need of increasing the English lessons times. Furthermore, it was indicated that none of them want to change the English lesson with another lesson even if they have chance because they stated that English is fun and easy to learn. When it comes to relationship between their careers and English language, it was not surprising to find out that while the majority of them stated that English will not effect on their careers but, of course, the importance of it is an indisputable fact, the minority of the students expressed that they consider English language as a primal source of their career. That majority has a thought that after they graduate from universities, the knowledge, which they obtain until that time, will be enough and last forever as it was before. When their ideas about the relationship between science high school and English language were asked, it was revealed that they think that since we live in a global world and English is the common language in this global world, everyone should learn English in every stages of education process. Moreover, about the role of English language in the students' daily life, it was found out that according to the boys, the role of English is huge because they can understand English written stories and communicate with other foreign players in pc games or console games. On the other hand, girls stated that in order to follow and understand social media, the role of English language is important in their daily life. When the final question, which was about speaking, was asked, they claimed that in English lessons, they do not talk at all. However, they also highlighted the need for speaking activities.

DISCUSSION

According to the overall findings, the participants had positive attitude towards English lessons, namely, a high mean had been found in favor of the importance of English lessons by the participants, which indicated that the finding indicating the participants' positive attitudes toward English lessons matches with other studies such as the study conducted from Kormos and Csizer (2008) and another study from Kormos, Kiddle and Csizer (2011). As Jenkins (1998) stated English in today's world not only presents itself as a common communication tool for the different communities but also enables individuals to identify themselves within the international community of English speakers. As in the study conducted by Iwaniec (2014), the participants reported that although they were enthusiastic to speak English, because of the limited English usage outside the classroom and also the fear of making mistakes while speaking, the participants had difficulty to find opportunities which could provide an environment where the participants can practice and improve their speaking abilities. Academic literacy was another revealed issue based on the findings, namely, the participants were not aware of the importance of academic literacy in the current study. As Braine (1989) stated, in order to achieve academic literacy for students, teachers play quite important role because by integrating authentic academic writing tasks, students can comprehend the importance of academic literacy and they can enhance the quality of writing ability in the target language. Therefore, teachers have the vital responsibility to students in terms of acquiring the academic literacy in the target language.

CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate science high school learners' attitudes towards English lessons and finding out whether they show a positive or negative attitude towards English and English lessons. Although the overall attitude of science high school students towards English language is positive, there are some essential details required to be analyzed in depth. First one was that however, the students have emphasized the importance of English language in the study, this importance has been restricted only reaching and understanding social media and pc or console games. This importance does not indicate an academic importance. Second one was about their awareness of the relationship between their careers and English language, the impact of English language on their careers is neither comprehended by the students nor explained to them by their instructors or teachers. Apart from speaking, the students have no problems with other language skills (listening, writing, grammar, vocabulary) and their attitude towards them was easy and fun. In speaking skill, the students have stated that they are anxious and fearful because of making mistakes, however, they have indicated a desire to speak in and outside the school. Namely, the students need to be overcome their speaking problems with an outside help. Academic literacy is not concern of the students. The importance of academic literacy should be emphasized by their teachers and instructors. Furthermore, the students stated that they are very pleased with the activities in English lessons and they showed positive attitude towards activities and school materials.

In a nutshell, while the overall attitude of science high school students towards English language is positive, they are not aware of the real influence of English to their careers and their professions. Furthermore, speaking activities should be used and increased by teachers and instructors in the school. If the insufficient parts of English teaching process are enhanced and developed, it is obvious that the science high school students are ready to improve themselves. They are already motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically.

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