

Attitudes of Students Towards the English Language in High Schools

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ABSTRACT The paper examined the attitudes of high school students towards the English language, the differences in the attitudes regarding their gender, educational status of their parents, monthly revenue of the students' family, and the accommodation unit of the primary education school from which they graduated. A Likert-type scale was used to collect data. The instrument was validated and there liability coefficient was found to be 0.94. Independent t-test, one-way ANOVA, and the Tukey HSD test were used in the analysis of data. Purposive random sampling was used to select 250 students from 7 high schools. The findings revealed that foreign language intensive high schools are better at the English language than other high schools. There is a meaningful difference between the attitude of working group to English language and gender, educational status of parents, and monthly revenue of students' family, however, there is no meaningful difference in the accommodation unit from which they graduated.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a learning process of helping new generations to gain the necessary information and horizon, and to develop their personality while preparing themselves to be a part of community life (Oguzkan 1974). It is important to learn foreign language to be a part of community life in the globalizing world. After World War II, English became *lingua franca* throughout the world. It has become a necessity for nations to learn the world language of "English" in addition to their own language (Acat and Demiral 2002). There is no doubt that English is the international scientific language and the world language today, as well as the language of mass media, such as on computers and televisions (Eskicumali and Turedi 2010; Graddal 2000).

Teaching English as a foreign language became popular in Turkey with the participation of Turkey in NATO in 1952; new schools called

"colleges", whose education language was English, were founded in big cities. Anatolian High Schools were equal to colleges by means of education language (Tosun 2006). From 1952 to today, the quality of English education has changed regarding the kind and levels of the schools. As Acat and Demiral (2002) mentioned, the mission and vision of the school affect students' sense and attitudes towards the English language as much as the personality traits, motivation, and concerns of students.

Regarding the results of the researches of Bloom et al. in the 1950s, the learning capacity of an individual was collected under three headings: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Cognitive entry skills include general cognitive entry skills that are essential in every learning environment, like reading comprehension and the power of using language and prelearnings that enable or make learning new behaviours easier in a unit (Senemoglu 2005). Affective entry skills that have the capacity of explaining 25 percent of variability in achievement include concern and attitude towards a learning unit and academic self-concept (Senemoglu 2005). Affective entry skills are a student's positive or negative emotional approach to a lesson or a topic (Yesilyaprak 2006). Affective learning includes behaviour tendencies such as concern, attitude, manner, and

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emotion to an object or an event (Iskender 2007). Psychomotor entry skills comprehend behavior-requiring coordination of intelligence and muscle. Psychomotor skills can be observed directly (Senemoglu 2005).

According to Bloom (1979), it is necessary to level affective entry skills and cognitive entry skills for occurrence of mastery learning. Affective learnings include behaviour tendencies such as concern, attitude, manner, and emotion to an object or an event (Iskender 2007).

According to Bloom (1979), affective characteristics about a lesson is a perceptual event based on the principal of a student's grouping of learning units.

Attitudes are defined as an "acquired internal state that influences the choice of personal action" (Gagné and Driscoll 1988). For example, a person's attitude toward the environment influences whether or not they choose to recycle. A student's attitude toward information will influence the resources he or she chooses to use. Students must understand why it is important to select reliable, authoritative resources (Morgan 2009).

There are sixteen kinds of high schools defined by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Turkey; even this number can be increased when considering specific kinds of vocational and technical high schools (Kadioglu 2014). Science High School, Anatolian Teacher Training High School, Social Sciences High School, Anatolian High School, Fine Arts High School, Sports High School, Anatolian Prayer-Leader and Preacher High School, Technical and Industrial Vocational High School, Police College, Military High School, Medical Vocational High School, Trade Vocational High School, Anatolian Hotel Management and Tourism Vocational High School, and Private High Schools are some examples of the high schools in Turkey. State and Anatolian high schools are funded by the government, whereas private schools are financed by students' families. Students at Anatolian and private high schools improve their skills in at least one foreign language, usually English as a second language and German as a third. Private schools differ from government high schools in terms of academic and social opportunities, depending on the financial status of the school. Generally, private school students have more social activities (like arts and sports) than other school types (Erdogan 2002).

One of the most salient features of the Turkish education system is that students are required to take nationwide exams when they transit from one education level to another, and they can be admitted to desired schools if they attain a minimum required score for that particular school. For example, in order to attend Anatolian high schools, students must score high on a nationwide examination called the Level Determination Examination. This examination includes four topics: social sciences, mathematics, natural science, and Turkish literature. Similarly, students wanting to pursue higher education must take two nationwide examinations, the University Entrance Examinations (namely YGS and LYS), when they graduate from high school. In addition to their YGS and LYS scores, students' high school grade point averages (GPA) are also taken into account for entry into university. The number of students entering the desired universities is very low; consequently, the competition is very high among students. Students believe that if they can attend a respected high school (like the Anatolian high schools), they will be better prepared for the YGS and LYS (Kadioglu 2014).

Today, people come across with English language in every part of their life, making it a necessity to learn. Curriculums of many developing or developed countries who feel learning a foreign language is important include foreign language courses. One or more foreign languages take part in the curriculum of many schools in Turkey and foreign language courses are compulsory from primary school to university. It is impossible to say that the results of the effort and time spent to teach English is enough because students cannot learn English sufficiently even if they take foreign language courses from primary school to university. Herein, the affective domain of the students makes it important for students to take part in the learning process. The students need to have a positive attitude to take part in the learning process. This paper intends to define how the attitudes of high school students towards the English language change with regard to certain variables, and to offers solutions with the intent of developing a positive attitude. This paper expects to analyze the attitude of students towards the English language to reveal the relation of attitude and different variables, and to make contributions and submit solutions to the field of English language teaching by evaluating the results.

Objectives

This paper probes into the attitudes of high school students towards the English language. The scale of responses from 350 high school students is analyzed. The research questions are:

1. How is the distribution of attitude scores of the students studying in different high schools towards the English language?
2. Is there any difference in the attitudes of the students to the English language regarding:
 - a) gender,
 - b) educational status of their parents,
 - c) monthly revenue of the student's family,
 - d) accommodation unit of the primary education school from which they graduated?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive, Likert-type research technique was adopted to collect the opinions of students studying in different types of high schools concerning the current situation of their attitudes towards the English language.

Working Group

Participants were selected through random sampling techniques. The Aksaray Provincial Directorate for National Education was asked for permission to conduct the study on as many different types of high schools as possible. They gave permission for 7 different types of high schools: Science High School, Anatolian Teacher Training High School, Social Sciences High School, Anatolian High School, Fine Arts and Sports High School, Anatolian Prayer-Leader and Preacher High School, and Technical and Industrial Vocational High School. The working group of the paper consists of 350 students (198 female, 152 male).

Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

The 5-option Likert-type affective domain attitude scale, consisting of 56 items (38 positive, 18 negative) and developed by Gomleksiz (2003), to evaluate the attitudes of university students was used in this paper as the data collection instrument. The scale was adapted to high school students by researchers. The items in the scale consist of "I totally agree", "I agree", "I partially

agree", "I do not agree", and "I totally disagree" options. Positive items were scored 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, starting from "I totally agree" to "I totally disagree". Negative items were scored 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, starting from "I totally disagree" to "I totally agree". After taking expert opinions to enable the content validity of the test, the test was edited. A pilot scheme was done with 600 students to evaluate the reliability and construct validity of the test. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was 0.94.

The scale was applied to the participants in their own classrooms during English courses. Basic information about the purpose of the scale was given to the participants. The scales were distributed to the students. They were informed that they did not need to give any credentials or personal information as it would be a collective evaluation. However, they needed to fill out some demographic information, such as their gender, educational status of their parents, monthly revenue of their family, and the accommodation unit of the primary education school from which they graduated. It took approximately 15 minutes to complete the scale.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the students was analyzed in the software package programme IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) Statistics 22. Independent t-test, one-way ANOVA, and the Tukey HSD test were used in the evaluation of data. The one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) can be used for the case of a quantitative outcome with a categorical explanatory variable that has two or more levels of treatment (Seltman 2014). The Tukey test was applied as variances were homogenous and the data number was low. It is worth noting that the situation for choosing between one-way ANOVA and an independent samples t-test is when the explanatory variable has exactly two levels (Seltman 2014).

FINDINGS

How is the Distribution of Attitude Towards the English Language Scores of the Students Studying in Different High Schools?

The results were evaluated with One-way ANOVA (Table 1). There is a meaningful difference between high schools in the students' atti-

Table 1: One-way Anova variare results of attitude scores of the students studying in different high schools towards English language

ANOVA	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	P*
Between groups	946110.556	6	157685.098	304.098	.000
Within groups	177396.568	343	517.191		
Total	1123507.154	349			

*p<0.005

tude to the English language. The results are as they were expected before the research. The highest attitude score towards the English language belongs to foreign language intensive high schools, the lowest one belongs to technical high schools.

The attitude scores towards the English language:

1. Anatolian Teacher Training High School
2. Anatolian High School
3. Science High School
4. Social Sciences High School
5. Anatolian Prayer-Leader and Preacher High School
6. Fine Arts and Sports High School
7. Technical and Industrial Vocational High School

The Attitude Difference to English Language Regarding Gender

The relationship between male and female groups regarding gender is presented in Table 2. The mean is higher in the female group regarding the gender statistics.

Table 2: Group statistics regarding gender

<i>Group statistics</i>				
Gender	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Male	152	146.76	62.380	5.060
Female	198	164.18	50.872	3.615

It is necessary to analyze the Independent Samples Test table in order to find out whether or not the difference is incidental (Table 3).

As the results indicate in Table 3, there is a meaningful difference between the two genders. It shows that affective attitude of students towards the English language changes regarding gender. According to the results, female students

Table 3: Independence t-test results of attitude scores of the students studying in different high schools towards English language regarding students' gender

<i>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</i>		
	F	p
Equal variances assumed	2.129	.000
Equal variances not assumed		

have a more positive attitude towards English lessons than male students. Gender is an important perspective under second language learning investigations and females show more interest, positive behavior, and better performance compared to males (Shoaib and Dornyei 2005; Abidin et al. 2012).

The Attitude Difference Towards the English Language Regarding Educational Status of Parents

The attitude difference towards the English language regarding educational status of mothers is shown in Table 4.

When the results are analyzed with one-way ANOVA, there is meaningful difference between the educational status of the mother and the student's attitude towards the English language, as the p value is lower than 0.05. When this relationship is analyzed by the Tukey HSD test, as the educational status of mothers increases the attitude towards the English language also increases accordingly, as seen in Table 4. There is meaningful difference up to a bachelor's degree; however, there is no meaningful difference between bachelor's degree and postgraduate studies. This means students with mothers who have a bachelor's degree or postgraduate degree have a higher attitude towards the English language than students with mothers who have a primary school education or secondary school education.

Table 4: Tukey HSD test results of attitude difference to English language regarding educational status of mothers

<i>Multiple comparisons</i>						
<i>Dependent variable: Total score</i>						
<i>Tukey HSD</i>						
<i>(I) Educational status of mother</i>	<i>(J) Educational status of mother</i>	<i>Mean Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>Sig.**</i>	<i>95% confidence interval</i>	
					<i>Lower bound</i>	<i>Upper bound</i>
<i>Primary School</i>	<i>Secondary School</i>	-20.930*	6.588	.009	-37.94	-3.92
	<i>Bachelor</i>	-48.141*	9.075	.000	-71.57	-24.71
	<i>Postgraduate</i>	-84.200*	19.291	.000	-134.00	-34.40
<i>Secondary School</i>	<i>Primary School</i>	20.930*	6.588	.009	3.92	37.94
	<i>Bachelor</i>	-27.211*	9.870	.031	-52.69	-1.73
	<i>Postgraduate</i>	-63.270*	19.678	.008	-114.07	-12.47
<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Primary School</i>	48.141*	9.075	.000	24.71	71.57
	<i>Secondary School</i>	27.211*	9.870	.031	1.73	52.69
	<i>Postgraduate</i>	-36.060	20.644	.301	-89.35	17.23
<i>Postgraduate</i>	<i>Primary School</i>	63.270*	19.678	.008	12.47	114.07
	<i>Secondary School</i>	63.270*	19.678	.008	12.47	114.07
	<i>Bachelor</i>	36.060	20.644	.301	-17.23	89.35

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.
 ** sig. <0.05

The attitude difference towards the English language regarding the educational status of fathers is shown in Table 5.

When the results are analyzed with one-way ANOVA, there is a meaningful difference between

the educational status of the father and attitude towards the English language, as the p value is lower than 0.05. When this relationship is analyzed by the Tukey HSD test, as the educational status of fathers increases the attitude toward-

Table 5: Tukey HSD test results of attitude difference to English language regarding educational status of fathers

<i>Multiple comparisons</i>						
<i>Dependent variable: Total score</i>						
<i>Tukey HSD</i>						
<i>(I) Educational status of mother</i>	<i>(J) Educational status of mother</i>	<i>Mean Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>Sig.**</i>	<i>95% confidence interval</i>	
					<i>Lower bound</i>	<i>Upper bound</i>
<i>Primary School</i>	<i>Secondary School</i>	-19.448*	6.701	.020	-36.75	-2.15
	<i>Bachelor</i>	-46.577*	7.845	.000	-66.83	-26.32
	<i>Postgraduate</i>	-71.159*	12.858	.000	-104.35	-37.97
<i>Secondary School</i>	<i>Primary School</i>	19.448*	6.701	.020	2.15	36.75
	<i>Bachelor</i>	-27.129*	7.581	.002	-46.70	-7.56
	<i>Postgraduate</i>	-57.711*	12.698	.000	-84.49	-18.93
<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Primary School</i>	46.577*	7.845	.000	26.32	66.83
	<i>Secondary School</i>	27.129*	7.581	.002	7.56	46.70
	<i>Postgraduate</i>	-24.582*	13.337	.255	-59.01	9.85
<i>Postgraduate</i>	<i>Primary School</i>	71.159*	12.858	.000	37.97	104.35
	<i>Secondary School</i>	51.711*	12.698	.000	18.93	84.49
	<i>Bachelor</i>	24.582*	13.337	.255	-9.85	59.01

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.
 ** sig. <0.05

the English language increases accordingly, as seen in Table 5. There is a meaningful difference up to a bachelor's degree; however, there is no meaningful difference between a bachelor's degree and a postgraduate degree. That means students with fathers who have a bachelor's degree or postgraduate degree have higher attitudes towards the English language compared to students with fathers who have a primary school education or secondary school education.

The Attitude Difference Towards the English Language Regarding the Monthly Revenue of Students' Family

The attitude difference toward the English language regarding the monthly revenue of students' family is presented in Table 6.

When the results are analyzed with one-way ANOVA, there is meaningful difference between the monthly revenue of the student's family and their attitude towards the English language, as the p value is lower than 0.05. When this relationship is analyzed by the Tukey HSD test, there is meaningful difference between those who have

up to 1000 TL monthly revenue and more than 1000 TL monthly revenue; but there is no meaningful difference between those who have much more monthly revenue, as seen in Table 6. In terms of the relationship between family revenue and students' attitude towards the English language, the middle revenue group (1000 TL – 2500 TL) and the highest revenue group (2500 TL and more) have positive attitudes towards the English language. However, the lowest revenue group (up to 1000 TL) has less positive attitudes towards the English language.

The Attitude Difference Towards the English Language Regarding Accommodation Units of Primary Education School from which the Students have Graduated

The attitude difference towards the English language regarding the accommodation unit of the primary education school from which the students graduated is presented in Table 7.

As the results indicate in Table 7, there is no meaningful difference between the accommodation unit of the primary education school from

Table 6: Tukey HSD test results of attitude difference to English language regarding monthly revenue of students' family

<i>Multiple comparisons</i>						
<i>Dependent variable: Total score</i>						
<i>Tukey HSD</i>						
		<i>Mean</i>			<i>95% confidence interval</i>	
<i>(I) Monthly revenue</i>	<i>(J) Monthly revenue</i>	<i>Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>Sig.**</i>	<i>Lower bound</i>	<i>Upper bound</i>
Up to 1000TL	1000=2500 TL	-47.10764*	6.87271	.000	-63.2847	-30.9305
	2500 TL and more	-55.65005*	7.63308	.000	-73.6169	-37.6832
1000-2500 TL	Up to 100 TL	47.10764*	6.87271	.000	30.9305	63.2847
	2500 TL and more	-8.54242	7.76141	.514	-26.8113	9.7265
2500 TL and more	Up to 1000 TL	55.65005*	7.63308	.000	37.6832	73.6169
	1000 to 25 TL	8.54242	7.76141	.514	-9.7265	26.8113

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

** sig. <0.05

Table 7: One-way Anova variance results of attitude difference to English language regarding accommodation units of primary education school the have graduated form

<i>ANOVA</i>	<i>Sume of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p*</i>
Between groups	15074.206	2	7537.103	2.360	.096
Within groups	1108432.949	347	3194.331		
Total	1123507.154	349			

which they graduated and attitude towards the English language, as the p value is higher than 0.05. This does not affect the attitude of students towards the English language, whether they attended a primary education school in a village, a county, or a province.

DISCUSSION

This paper includes questions to determine the attitudes of high school students towards the English language and if there is any difference in the attitudes of the students towards the English language regarding their gender, the educational status of their parents, the monthly revenue of students' family, and the accommodation unit of the primary education school from which they graduated.

Attitude is variable and can be changed by the many external and internal personality factors of a person (Rukh 2014). There are many factors affecting students' attitudes towards the English language. Mordi (1991), who studied the factors, put them in the following order: conditions at home, student features, teaching and learning variances, and school factors. Conversely, there is concentration on areas such as relationship between attitude and age (Ramsden 1998; Osborne et al. 2003), attitude and gender (Becker 1989; Breakwell and Breardsell 1992; Francis and Greer 1999; Jones et al. 2000; O'Brien and Porter 1994; Schibeci 1984; Schibeci and Riley 1986; Simpson and Oliver 1985; Weinburg 1995), and attitude and success (Dhindsa and Chung 2003; Osborne et al. 2003) in researches studying personal traits. Accordingly, this paper corroborates assertions that there is a direct relation between attitude and gender, attitude and family, attitude and the school they attend. This means there is a direct relationship between attitude and success towards learning English as a foreign language.

The first question is "How is the distribution of attitude scores of the students in different high schools towards the English language?" There is a meaningful difference between high schools and the students' attitude towards the English language, which means the students' attitude changes according to the high school they attend. As English is becoming more and more a global language, it is becoming more and more associated with academic achievements for the students in any field (Rukh 2014). Anatolian Teacher Training High School, Anatolian High

School, Science High School, and Social Sciences High School students have a positive attitude towards the English language. English language courses in these schools are more intensive than in Anatolian Prayer-Leader and Preacher High School, Fine Arts and Sports High School, and Technical and Industrial Vocational High School.

The second question concerns "The Attitude Difference Towards the English Language Regarding Gender". The results show that the attitudes of female students towards the English language are higher than those of male students. The results are similar with those in a study by Shoaib and Dornyei (2005) and Abidin et al. (2012). They advocate that gender is an important perspective under second language learning investigations and conclude that females show more interest, positive behavior, and performance compared to males. The differences between the male and female respondents' attitudes may be due to, on the one hand, the diversity of English teaching strategies and classroom activities employed by English language teachers to teach female and male students, and, on the other hand, the design and content of English curriculum may not meet the interests and needs of the male students. Thus, they do not show a positive reaction towards learning English (Abidin et al. 2012).

The third question concerns "The Attitude Difference Towards the English Language Regarding the Educational Status of Parents". It was concluded that as the educational status of parents increases, the students' attitude towards the English language increases accordingly. Also, the attitudes of students with parents who have a bachelor's degree or postgraduate degree are higher towards the English language than students with parents who have a primary school or secondary school education.

The fourth question concerns "The Attitude Difference Towards the English Language Regarding Monthly Revenue of Students' Family". The attitudes of the middle revenue group (1000 TL – 2500 TL) and the highest revenue group (2500 TL and more) towards the English language are higher than the lowest revenue group (up to 1000 TL). While investigating Turkish students' attitudes towards English language, Karahan (2007) concluded that social factors and economic needs greatly affect the attitudes of students for learning the English language.

The fifth question concerns “The Attitude Difference Towards the English Language Regarding the Accommodation Unit of the Primary Education School From Which the Students Graduated”. The accommodation unit (a village, a county, or a province) does not affect the students’ attitude towards the English language.

Students need to become aware of the necessity and importance of learning the English language in a globalizing world, no matter what situation they are in. They must develop a positive attitude towards the English language. In order to develop this attitude, some precautions should be taken. This is because there is a directly proportionate relationship between attitudes towards lesson and success in the lesson (Baykul 1990; Dhindsa and Chung 2003; Koballa 1988; Osborne et al. 2003). If the lessons are more enjoyable and attention-grabbing, the attitudes of students are more positive and they are more successful.

CONCLUSION

The paper indicates that students of foreign language intensive high schools have higher attitudes than other high schools. Females have a higher positive attitude towards the English language. Students with parents who have a bachelor’s degree or postgraduate degree have a higher attitude towards the English language than students with parents who have primary school or secondary school education. This means the educational status of parents affects the attitude of students towards the English language. Students have a higher attitude towards the English language if their parents’ revenue is high or in the middle. The accommodation unit of the primary education school from which the students graduated does not affect the attitude of students towards the English language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The high schools in this paper are public schools; this study should be done on private schools, too, in order to see the differences in results between public schools and private schools. The sample of this paper is restricted to only seven high schools in the Aksaray province of Turkey. It should be done throughout Turkey and include more types of high schools. Some precautions should be taken to develop a positive attitude towards the English language.

The reasons for these differences need to be researched in detail, and more papers about the reasons for these differences should take part in the related literature. The researches can be done by individual interviews with the students, which would be easier and more detailed.

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