

## Measurement of Attitudes Regarding Foreign Language Skills and Its Relation with Success

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to determine the attitudes of secondary level students regarding the skills in English as a Foreign Language and to compare the level of relationship between the academic success at English and the attitudes measured. Attitudes and success levels of the students of secondary education regarding their language skills were found to be high. A significant relationship at a linear low level was observed between the academic success of the students and their attitudes towards English language skills. In this study, the attitudes of high school students measured according to their gender concerning their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, showed difference in favor of female students. Again, high school students' attitudes towards writing, speaking and listening skills except for the attitudes towards reading skills do differentiate according to the type of school in which they receive education.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Turkey, regulations with item five of the Ministry of National Education Regulation on Foreign Language Education dated on May 31, 2006 and numbered 26184, the purpose of foreign language education is to help the individuals gain listening, reading, speaking and writing skills, communicate with the language they've learned and develop positive attitude towards foreign language education[1]. Therefore, even though educational activities regarding these four skills are organized in the language education, the digital data related to the students' success at both mother language and target language in the national (secondary school transfer exams) and international exams (PISA, PIRLS...etc.) is not at expected or desired levels. When the reasons of this failure are examined, it can be observed that, attitudes are the variables which affect success [2]-[5]. According to Starks and Paltridge [6], learning a language is closely related to the attitudes towards that language. In that case, what is the psychological definition of the attitude that plays an active role in success? Attitude is described as the tendency of making a positive or negative reaction against a certain object, situation, concept or other people [7]. Therefore, it is a remarkable deduction that attitudes are learned positive and negative affective behaviors and that, they can be shaped through education. Affective behaviors can also be measured in accordance with the features they describe, just like cognitive behaviors. Affective feature, which is the subject of the research is attitude. The subject of the attitude measured is students' skills in English as a foreign language, who continue their education in the secondary school. And skill is described as the use of memorized and remembered knowledge as application-oriented [8]. Definitions of the English language skills that are tried to be measured are summarized as follows [9]: These are for listening skill; positive and negative behaviors related to the students distinguishing the conversation from other noises in the environment, understanding what is spoken and showing the proper behavior.

For speaking skill; positive and negative behaviors related to pronouncing the linguistic items correctly, mastering the emphasis, intonation and language rhythm, listening and understanding what is heard, and knowing the ways of conversation and reconciliation. For reading skill; positive and negative behaviors related to using the grammar, associating the content of the material read to its own basic knowledge, and understanding the author's opinion. For writing skill; positive and negative behaviors related to writing by grammar rules, being enthusiastic about writing, and expressing ideas while writing.

In the literature, it was observed that four skills and attitudes related to this in adequate measure. Therefore, the first aim of this research is to analyze the psychometric features of the scale developed in order to determine the attitudes of students concerning their English language skills, who continue their education in the secondary school.

### 1.1. Foreign Language Learning Skills and Turkey

Today, the obligation of learning a foreign language is the outcome of both vocational career concern and because we use the technology of our era. Even in a study they carried out on three groups of students that had different languages and cultures, Larsson and Olsson [10] found out that whatever the mother language and the culture students belong to was learning English meant a high value for them, increased the sense of acceptance among people socially and played an important role in their lives. However, students' level of learning English or their willingness to learn a foreign language, teaching methods, teachers' abilities of using learning-teaching techniques and the effectiveness of in-class activities have been taken into consideration in many researches due to different reasons. Even if different courses are in question, two of the most important variables that affect the learning performances or academic success of the students are known to be anxiety and attitude levels [11],[12], Bain, McCallum, Bell, Cochran and Sawyer, 2010; [13], [14]. In their study, Stark and Paltridge (1996) expressed that there was a very strong bond between foreign language learning process and the attitude. Verma [15] indicated that these two variables "motivation and attitude" play a key role in learning a second language.

It has been observed that secondary education students in Turkey do not have a high success at English tests. It is possible to reach this judgment, depending on the success averages related to the English tests included in Undergraduate Placement Exams carried out by Measurement, Selection and Placement Center [16] each year. Three-year average statistics of the final year students of secondary education regarding the English tests included in the Undergraduate Placement Exams (UPE) between the years 2011-2013, are given in Table 1.

Table 1. UPE the Average for English Test

Exam Year	Mean	Read in the Last Year Number of Candidates
2013	28.08	26662
2012	33.13	22887
2011	30.69	18984

Source: Measurement, Selection and Placement Center, in Turkey

When the average results in the table were evaluated, it was found out that the students continuing their education in the secondary school had the average of less than 40 correct answers out of 80 questions asked in the English test, in other words, the majority of students couldn't even answer half of the test questions, correctly. The test structure is intended for examining the students' reading comprehension and their knowledge of grammar rules. Therefore, it is obvious that the students are inclined to the reading skill. One reason for not being able to show the success expected from reading skills might be the negativity in student's attitudes towards English. In fact, in literature, the existence of a linear relationship between the success and the attitude is not hypothetical anymore. However, because a clear majority of the students, who answered the English test in UPE, had received a foreign language education, it makes us think that the reasons of this failure might be carried towards different aspects instead of the attitudes. The greatest factor is the negative effect of exam anxiety. The increase of anxiety level, negatively affects the attitude and success. Such that in a study they carried out on 10th class students, Hussain, Shahid and Zaman [13] found out a negative significant relationship between the anxiety of learning a foreign language and the attitude.

In learning activities of students, motivation, attitude and anxiety variables might be considered a significant input, and the success measured, might be considered as a significant output. The second aim of this research are to determine the general tendency of student's attitudes towards the skills in English as a foreign language to compare the level of relationship between the academic success at English lessons and the attitudes measured; and to compare the student's attitudes related to English Language Skills according to the variances such as gender, school type, education areas and going to an English course.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

### 2.1. Phase I: Development Process Scale

#### 2.1.1. Item Writing

While writing the items, firstly various scales in the literature were analyzed (see [17]-[22]). Total 64 items were prepared, which would exemplify the signs/items considered to be in compliance with operational definitions related to the skills in English as a Foreign Language, and also the cognitive, affective and psychomotor components of the attitude. For each skill, the distribution of the number of items related to positive and negative judgment and behavior components are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of the Number of Items

Skills	Behavior	Judgment		Total
		Negative	Positive	
Listening	Cognitive	2	3	5
	Affective	3	0	3
	Motor	1	3	4
	Total	6	6	12
Speaking	Cognitive	5	1	6
	Affective	3	3	6
	Motor	2	5	7
	Total	10	9	19
Reading	Cognitive	4	2	6
	Affective	2	2	4
	Motor	2	5	7
	Total	8	9	17
Writing	Cognitive	1	3	4
	Affective	4	1	5
	Motor	3	4	7
	Total	8	8	16

There are 12 items related to the listening skill in English as a Foreign Language; 19 items related to the speaking skill, 17 items related to the reading skill and 16 items related to the writing skill. 32 of these items are composed of positive and negative judgments. After attitude expressions constituting the test form were evaluated according to attitude expression writing principles (see. [7]), five point likert type was scaled and made ready for the pilot application.

#### 2.1.2. Pretesting application

Total 311 students, continuing their secondary education in private and state schools, participated in the pilot application. According to the answers given by students item analysis, validity and reliability studies were carried out.

#### 2.1.3. Item Analysis

Positive expressions were graded as 1 point for 2 'I completely disagree', 2 for 'I disagree', 3 for 'I'm undecided', 4 for 'I agree' and 5 points for 'I completely agree'. Negative expressions were graded as 5 points for 'I completely disagree', 4 points for 'I disagree', 3 points for 'I'm undecided', 2 points for 'I agree' and 1 point for 'I completely agree'. Unanswered items were considered as missing value. In item analyses; lower-upper group method, factor loading values depended on exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and item-total correlations were evaluated.

##### 2.1.3.1. Item Validity Study By Lower-Upper Group Method

In order to determine the item validity of scale items, the difference between the lower-upper group method and the average points of the items, was tested by 't test'. It was observed that there were three items (item 10 was reading skill, item 7 and 40 were speaking skill) whose critical 't' value was not significant at the significance level of 0.01. In other words, no significant difference was found between the lower and upper group averages of the items 7, 10 and 40 ( $p > 0.01$ ). These items were removed from the scale and the study on remaining items was continued by conducting exploratory factor analysis.

##### 2.1.3.2. Validity Study with Exploratory Factor Analysis

Attitude items prepared regarding the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills were restricted with a single factor and exploratory factor analysis results for four skills were evaluated separately. In scale

development process, it was indicated that the factor loading was supposed to be minimum 0.32 [23],[24]. However, in this study, items below 0.50 factor load were removed from the tentative scale.

It was observed that, factor loading of the attitude expressions related to the reading skills composed of 16 items varied between 0,321 and 0,698 and that, seven items (items 1,4,9,41,58,60 and 62) lower than the factor loading of 0.50 were removed and the factor loading of remaining 9 items varied between 0,511 and 0,752. It was observed that there were four factors higher than 1 eigenvalue and that, the eigenvalue related to factor 1 was 4.838 and the eigenvalue related to factor 2 was 1.458; and also, a single dominant factor was observed in eigenvalues diagram. In the factor analysis carried out by principal components method restricted with a single factor, the explained variance of the structure desired to be measured regarding the reading skills was found as 42%. In patterns with a single factor, it can be considered as sufficient if explained variance is 30% or higher [23]. KMO statistics was found as 0.858. KMO statistics being higher than the value of 0.50 indicates that the number of sample is sufficient for the data [25]). As a result of Bartlett sphericity tests, it was observed that the data were in accord with the factor analysis (chi-square 744.060 df=36 p=0.000).

It was observed that, factor loading of the attitude expressions related to the reading skills composed of 16 items, varied between 0,252 and 0,626 and that, seven items (items 2,14,21,24,28,49 and 57) lower than the factor loading of 0.50 were removed and the factor loading of remaining 9 items varied between 0,548 and 0,677. It was observed that there were two factors higher than 1 eigenvalue and that, the eigenvalue related to factor 1 was 3.304 and the eigenvalue related to factor 2 was 1.033. Also, a single dominant factor was observed in eigenvalues diagram. In the factor analysis carried out by principal components method restricted with a single factor, the explained variance of the structure desired to be measured regarding the writing skills was found as 37%. KMO statistics was found as 0.854. The results of Bartlett sphericity tests came out consistent (chi-square 503.547 df=36 p=0.000).

It was observed that, factor loading of the attitude expressions related to the speaking skills composed of 17 items, varied between 0.378 and 0.740 and that, eight items (items 3,6,19,29,31,33,50 and 59) lower than the factor loading of 0.50 were removed and the factor loading of remaining 9 items varied between 0,571 and 0,725. It was observed that there were two factors higher than 1 eigenvalue and that, the eigenvalue related to factor 1 was 3.601 and the eigenvalue related to factor 2 was 1.047. Also, a single dominant factor was observed in eigenvalues diagram. In the factor analysis carried out by principal components method restricted with a single factor, the explained variance of the structure desired to be measured regarding the speaking skills was found as 40%. KMO statistics was found as 0.864. The results of Bartlett sphericity tests came out consistent (chi-square 633.422 df=36 p=0.000).

It was observed that, factor loading of the attitude expressions related to the listening skills composed of 12 items, varied between 0.419 and 0.682 and that, four items (items 11,47,51 and 55) lower than the factor loading of 0.50 were removed and the factor loading of remaining 8 items varied between 0.562 and 0.705. It was observed that there was a single factor higher than 1 eigenvalue (eigenvalue 3.389) and the explained variance of the structure desired to be measured regarding the listening skills was found as 42%. KMO statistics was found as 0.854. The results of Bartlett sphericity tests came out consistent (chi-square 572.009 df=28 p=0.000). In the following process, confirmatory factor analysis was carried out for the remaining 35 items.

### 2.1.3.3. Validity Study with Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In order to test the scale theoretically which was developed as one-dimensional, including four sub-factors, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out. Confirmatory factor analysis is used in order to verify the factorial structure defined by the researcher [26]. After the items that did not have the factor load measured according to the exploratory factor analysis were removed from the scale; CFA was carried out for the remaining 35 items. In the event that the multivariate assumption of normality is not met, estimations are made by weighted least squares method [27],[28]. As the multivariate assumption of normality was not met in this study, weighted least squares method was used when making estimations. However, as it was not possible to calculate the parameter values on the data using this method. The analysis was continued by the estimation method of Maximum Likelihood. 't' values showing the significance of the relationship between each item and the implicit variable were found as significant for all the items (p<0.05). Yet, as it had been observed that 22 out of 35 items were composed of positive and 13 were composed of negative judgments, two positive items for each which had the lowest lambda value among the dimensions of reading, writing and speaking were removed. CFA was carried out for the second time on the scale of total 29 items, which was composed of 16 positive and 13 negative judgments. Path diagram related to the standardized lambda values corresponding to the item factor loading values of the scale composed of 29 items are shown in Appendix 1. It was observed that, standardized factor loading values varied between 0,27 and 0.60 in the

reading factor, between 0.17 and 0.59 in the writing factor, between 0.47 and 0.69 in the speaking factor and between 0.33 and 0.69 in the listening factor.

As a result of the analysis, chi-square statistics of the similarity rate was calculated as  $X^2(371)=1210.79$ ,  $P<0.01$ ; root mean square approximation error was calculated as (RMSEA)= 0.085; standardized root mean square residual was calculated as (S-RMR)= 0.077; comparative fit index was calculated as (CFI)= 0.90; goodness-of-fit index was calculated as (GFI)= 0.76; normed fit index was calculated as (NFI)= 0.86; non-normed fit index was calculated as (NNFI)= 0.89; incremental fit index was calculated as (IFI)=0.90; relative fit index was calculated as (RFI)= 0.85; and the rate of chi-square value on the degree of freedom was calculated as ( $X^2/ df$ ) 3.26. It was observed that fit indices (except for GFI coefficient) were accorded at the limit values (see for standards [23],[26],[29]). In other words, four-factor structure of the scale composed of 29 items was found applicable according to the data of confirmatory factor analysis.

#### **2.1.4. Validity Study with Exploratory Factor Analysis for Final Scale Items**

The selected scale composed of 29 items was restricted with a single factor for the second time for the sub-dimensions of reading writing, speaking and listening reading, then the exploratory factor analysis was carried out. Variance and factor loading values of the scale items determined to be final were analyzed. It was observed that the explained variance 42% and factor loading values of the dimension of reading had varied between the values 0.502 and 0.771; the explained variance 39% and factor loading values of the dimension of writing had varied between the values 0.549 and 0.684; the explained variance 41% and factor loading values of the dimension of speaking had varied between the values 0.545 and 0.775; and the explained variance 42% and factor loading values of the dimension of listening had varied between the values 0.562 and 0.705. Factor loading value of each item is also indicated in Appendix 2.

#### **2.1.5. Classification and Ranking Validity**

For classification and ranking validity, the index of Erkuş[30] called as the Double-Consistency Index was calculated. Validity coefficient of classification and ranking calculated for 29 items selected according to the data of pilot application was found as 0.85.

#### **2.1.6. Reliability Studies**

Following the validity studies, Cronbach Alpha validity coefficient of 29 items in the sense of internal consistency, which were selected from tentative attitude expressions, was calculated as 0.929. Split-half consistency coefficient was calculated as 0.927. The consistency between the scale points acquired from split-half forms was calculated as 0.864. As the reliability coefficient was higher than the value of 0.70. It was considered as acceptable. Because it is not possible to test the reliability coefficient in the absence hypothesis, lower limit of the acceptable reliability coefficient is considered as 0.70[30],[31]. It was also observed that item-total correlations of 29 items had varied between 0.421 and 0.695.

Internal consistency of the sub-factor related to the reading skill is 0.767 and its item-total correlations vary between 0.370 and 0.618. Internal consistency of the sub-factor related to the writing skill is 0.744 and its item-total correlations vary between 0.405 and 0.516. Internal consistency of the sub-factor related to the speaking skill is 0.767 and its item-total correlations vary between 0.424 and 0.593. Internal consistency of the sub-factor related to the listening skill is 0.810 and its item-total correlations vary between 0.442 and 0.578. At the same time, CFA result is indicated in Appendix 3, along with the lambda values of each factor and also with the item-total correlations. The whole item-total correlations called as item validity coefficient, are expected to be higher than the value of 0.30 [32]. Therefore, it was observed that item-total correlations of the tentative attitude expression were also at the applicable standards.

#### **2.1.7. Evaluation of the Scale Points**

The final form was composed of 29 items (See Appendix 4). 16 of the items were composed of positive and 13 were composed of negative judgments. Total points of the final scale; vary between 29 and 145 points. However, when total item points are proportioned to the number of items in order to simplify the interpretation of the total point of scale; total points of the scale will vary between 1 and 5 points. 5 points refer to the highest attitude point and 1 point refers to the lowest attitude point. At the same time, if the total scale point is between 1.00 and 1.80 the measured attitude is considered as very low; if it is between 1.81 and 2.60 the measured attitude is considered as low; if it is between 2.61 and 3.40 the measured attitude is considered as medium; if it is between 3.41 and 4.20 the measured attitude is considered as high and if it is between 4.21 and 5.00 the measured attitude level is considered as very high. Attitude scale points of the students related to the dimensions of reading, writing, speaking and listening are calculated separately.

## 2.2. Phase II: Implementation of the improved scale

### 2.2.1. Study Group of the Research

Study group of the research was constituted by high school students continuing secondary education. In the research, the sampling method employed non-probability sampling methods. The convenience sampling was followed. Convenience sampling method is a sampling that is carried out through the individuals who are easy to access, available or who want to participate in the research [33]. The research data were collected by means of the answers of total 443 high school students, given to the attitude scale regarding English Language Skills. The results related to the demographic features of participant students continuing the secondary education, are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of the Demographic Features of Secondary Education Students

		n	%
Gender	Female	222	50.1
	Male	221	49.9
	9th class	155	35.1
Class	10th class	176	39.8
	11th class	105	23.8
	12th class	6	1.4
Type of school	Private	263	59.4
	State	180	40.6
Field	Numerical	210	58.3
	Verbal	25	6.9
	Equally-weighted	93	25.8
Have you ever go to English course?	Foreign Language	32	8.9
	Yes	148	34.5
	No	281	65.5

50% of the students participating in the research, was male and the remaining 50% was female students. Fourthly percent of the students were 10th class students. While 59% of these students were receiving education in private schools, 58% of these students were receiving education in the numeric field. It was observed that 66% of the students had not gone to an English course before.

### 2.2.2. Data Collection Tool

The data in the research were collected by means of an attitude scale related to the skills in English as a foreign language composed of 29 items whose five point likert type scale had been measured, and by means of a survey related to the demographic features. Related scale was developed by the researcher. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency of the scale was calculated as 0.918. Internal consistency of the scale items related to the reading skills was calculated as 0.74; Internal consistency of the scale items related to the writing skills was calculated as 0.72; Internal consistency of the scale items related to the speaking skills was calculated as 0.74 and internal consistency of the scale items related to the listening skills was calculated as 0.78. When the results of exploratory factor analysis were evaluated by the principal components analysis method restricted with a single factor; explained variance of the reading skills was calculated as 40%; explained variance of the writing skills as 38%; explained variance of the speaking skills as 39% and explained variance of the listening skills, was calculated as 40%. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistics related to the efficiency of the sample size was determined as 0.767, 0.794, 0.799 and 0.835, respectively.

By confirmatory factor analysis, four sub-dimensional structure of the scale was tested on the application data. The multivariate assumption of normality was not met in this study, and weighted least squares (WLS) method was used when making parameter estimations [27]. However, as it was not possible to make parameter estimations by WLS method, the analysis was continued with the Maximum Likelihood method. 't' values indicating the significance of the relationship between the items and the latent variable.

It was found out that all the values on the path diagram were significant. In other words, the relationship between the item and the measured latent feature was considered as significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). When fit indices of the model were evaluated, chi-square statistics of the similarity rate was calculated as  $X^2(371) = 1236.85$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; root mean square approximation error was calculated as (RMSEA) = 0.073; standardized root mean square residual was calculated as (S-RMR) = 0.065; comparative fit index was calculated as (CFI) = 0.97; goodness-of-fit index was calculated as (GFI) = 0.80; normed fit index was calculated as (NFI) = 0.92 and relative fit index was calculated as (RFI) = 0.90. It was also observed that, four-factor structure of the attitude scale concerning the English language skills was acceptable according to the standard values (see. [26]). Item-total correlations, and factor loads of the application according to the exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Item-Total Correlations and Factor Loads

Factors	Item No	Item-Total correlations	EFA Factor Loading	CFA Factor Loading
Reading	m13	0.43	0.6	0.50
	m20	0.4	0.56	0.59
	m26	0.6	0.77	0.54
	m27	0.53	0.72	0.63
	m39	0.37	0.51	0.45
	m46	0.46	0.64	0.58
	m56	0.43	0.58	0.51
	m16	0.39	0.55	0.50
Writing	m18	0.42	0.59	0.58
	m32	0.44	0.63	0.55
	m43	0.44	0.62	0.52
	m45	0.39	0.57	0.58
	m52	0.5	0.69	0.50
	m61	0.45	0.64	0.66
	m23	0.5	0.68	0.59
	m25	0.42	0.59	0.60
Speaking	m35	0.4	0.57	0.50
	m37	0.57	0.74	0.69
	m48	0.43	0.6	0.68
	m53	0.41	0.58	0.57
	m63	0.42	0.59	0.46
	m5	0.41	0.55	0.61
	m8	0.5	0.65	0.52
	m15	0.55	0.7	0.55
Listening	m17	0.52	0.67	0.60
	m22	0.42	0.55	0.49
	m30	0.52	0.65	0.51
	m34	0.51	0.65	0.60
	m38	0.46	0.6	0.59

It was observed that item-total correlations in the table had varied between 0.37 and 0.60. Factor loads calculated according to EFA had varied between 0.51 and 0.77 and factor loads according to CFA had varied between 0.45 and 0.69. No value that was not applicable in the scale items in terms of both item-total correlation values and factor loading values was observed.

### 2.2.3. Data Analysis

After the grading of the items that required a reverse coding were translated; attitude scores of the students regarding the reading, writing, speaking and listening dimensions were calculated. In the calculation of attitude scores, item scores were aggregated, then the total point was divided into the number of items, and scale scores varying from 1 to 5, were acquired. It was examined by Kolmogorov Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests whether the scale points displayed a normal distribution or not; and the results were shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Normal Distribution Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Reading	0.061	443	0.000	0.987	443	0.001
Writing	0.056	443	0.002	0.987	443	0.001
Speaking	0.084	443	0.000	0.954	443	0.000
Listening	0.071	443	0.000	0.973	443	0.000

According to the normal distribution test result, attitude scale points related to reading, writing, speaking and listening do not comply with the normal distribution ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, non-parametric tests were used in the comparisons made in accordance with the independent variables. Significance level in the research was considered as 0.05.

### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3.1. Is there a significant difference among the students' attitudes measured regarding English Language skills by the gender of the students continuing secondary education?

It was examined by Mann Whitney U test whether there was a significant difference or not, among the students' attitudes measured regarding English Language skills by the gender of the students continuing secondary education, and the results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Comparison of the Attitudes Towards English Language Skills by Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	U	p	$\eta^2$
Reading	Female	222	3.49	0.83	18592.50	0.000*	0.41
	Male	221	3.16	0.77			
Writing	Female	222	3.53	0.76	21652.50	0.032*	0.23
	Male	221	3.36	0.75			
Speaking	Female	222	3.91	0.74	18271.00	0.000*	0.41
	Male	221	3.59	0.81			
Listening	Female	222	3.85	0.71	18845.00	0.000*	0.40
	Male	221	3.55	0.78			

\* $p < 0.05$

Attitudes of the female students measured regarding the reading ( $\bar{X}=3.98$ ), writing ( $\bar{X}=3.98$ ), speaking ( $\bar{X}=3.98$ ) and listening ( $\bar{X}=3.98$ ) skills were considered higher when compared to the male students. Statistically, the difference between the average attitude of female and male students towards reading, writing, speaking and listening skills was also found significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). For reading, speaking and listening skills the magnitude of the difference between two groups was found medium. But, for writing skills, effect size was found low.

#### 3.2. Is there a significant difference among the students' attitudes measured regarding English Language skills in the case of students going to an English course, who also continue secondary education?

It was examined by Mann Whitney U test whether there was a significant difference or not, among the students' attitudes measured regarding English Language skills in the case of the students going to an English course, who also continue secondary education, and the results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Comparison of the Attitudes Towards English Language Skills According to the Variable of Going to an English Course

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	U	p	$\eta^2$
Reading	Yes	148	3.45	0.83	18042	0.024*	0.23
	No	281	3.26	0.81			
Writing	Yes	148	3.48	0.75	20196,5	0.624	0.07
	No	281	3.43	0.77			
Speaking	Yes	148	3.79	0.75	20603,5	0.876	0.06
	No	281	3.74	0.83			
Listening	Yes	148	3.73	0.76	20155,5	0.600	0.05
	No	281	3.69	0.76			

\* $p < 0.05$

Students' attitudes, who were going to an English course, measured regarding the reading ( $\bar{X}=3.45$ ), writing ( $\bar{X}=3.48$ ), speaking ( $\bar{X}=3.79$ ) and listening ( $\bar{X}=3.73$ ) skills were considered relatively high when compared to the students who did not participate in any course. Statistically, the difference between the average attitude of the students going or not going to a course towards reading skills was found significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). But, the difference between the average attitude of the students going or not going to a course towards reading, writing, speaking and listening skills could not be found significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). For reading, writing, speaking and listening skills the magnitude of the difference between two groups was found low.



### 3.3. Is there a significant difference among the students' attitudes measured regarding English Language Skills, according to the type of the school in which the students continuing secondary school, receive their education?

It was examined by Mann Whitney U test whether there was a significant difference or not, among the students' attitudes measured regarding English Language skills according to the type of the school in which the students continuing secondary school, receive their education, and the results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Comparison of the Attitudes towards English Language Skills According to the Variable of School Type

	Type of school	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	U	p	$\eta^2$
Reading	Private	263	3.31	0.77	23018.0	0.622	0.05
	State	180	3.35	0.89			
Writing	Private	263	3.54	0.72	19062.5	0.000*	0.32
	State	180	3.30	0.79			
Speaking	Private	263	3.87	0.70	19107.0	0.001*	0.36
	State	180	3.58	0.90			
Listening	Private	263	3.79	0.70	19597.5	0.002*	0.30
	State	180	3.56	0.82			

\* $p < 0.05$

Attitudes of the students, who were going to a state school, measured regarding the reading ( $\bar{X} = 3.35$ ); also attitudes of the students, who were going to a private school, measured regarding the reading writing ( $\bar{X} = 3.54$ ), speaking ( $\bar{X} = 3.87$ ) and listening ( $\bar{X} = 3.79$ ) skills were considered higher. Statistically, the difference between the average attitude of the students towards writing, speaking and listening skills according to the type of school they were going to was found significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). But, the difference between the average attitude of the students towards reading skills according to the type of school they were going to, could not be found significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). For reading skills the magnitude of the difference between two groups was found low. But, for writing, listening and speaking skills the magnitude of the difference between two groups was found medium.

### 3.4. Is there a significant difference among the attitudes of students' attitudes measured regarding English Language Skills, according to the field in which the students continuing secondary education, receive their education?

It was examined by Kruskal Walls test whether there was a significant difference or not, among the students' attitudes measured regarding English Language skills according to field in which the students continuing secondary education, receive their, and the results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Comparison of the Attitudes Towards English Language Skills According to the Field Variable

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Chi-square value	p	$\eta^2$
Reading	Numeric field	210	3.35	0.79	7.455	0.059	0.02
	Verbal field	25	2.97	0.92			
	Equally-weighted field	93	3.27	0.81			
	Foreign language	32	3.54	0.72			
Writing	Numeric field	210	3.50	0.72	2.319	0.509	0.01
	Verbal field	25	3.26	1.03			
	Equally-weighted field	93	3.41	0.69			
	Foreign language	32	3.38	0.54			
Speaking	Numeric field	210	3.83	0.76	6.323	0.097	0.02
	Verbal field	25	3.49	1.09			
	Equally-weighted field	93	3.63	0.77			
	Foreign language	32	3.79	0.66			
Listening	Numeric field	210	3.80	0.71	9.866	0.020	0.03
	Verbal field	25	3.42	0.95			
	Equally-weighted field	93	3.57	0.76			
	Foreign language	32	3.74	0.62			

\* $p < 0.05$

Attitudes of the students, whose field was foreign language, measured regarding the reading ( $\bar{X}=3.54$ ); also attitudes of the students, whose field was numeric field, measured regarding the writing ( $\bar{X}=3.50$ ), speaking ( $\bar{X}=3.83$ ) and listening ( $\bar{X}=3.80$ ) skills were considered higher. Statistically, the difference between the average attitude of the students towards reading, writing, speaking and listening skills according to their field was found significant ( $p<0.05$ ). This difference was between the attitudes of students towards listening skills who were receiving education in the numeric field, and the attitudes of students towards listening skills who were receiving education in the verbal and equally-weighted field. However, the difference among the average attitude measured regarding the reading, writing and speaking skills according to the type of the school the students were receiving their education, could not be found significant ( $p>0.05$ ). For reading, writing, listening and speaking skills the magnitude of the difference between three groups was found low.

### 3.5. Is there a significant relationship between the attitudes of the students of Secondary Education towards English Language Skills and their End-of-term success at English course?

The averages related to the attitude and success levels of the students of secondary education concerning their English Language skills are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. The Averages of Attitude and Success Related to English Language Skills

	Mean	Std.deviation	Level
Reading	3.32	0.82	Moderate
Writing	3.44	0.76	High
Speaking	3.75	0.80	High
Listening	3.70	0.76	High
Success	80.42	18.51	Very Good

Among the English language skills of secondary education students, the attitudes towards speaking skills were found to be the highest ( $\bar{X}=3.75$ ). The level of attitude at the intermediate level was obtained from reading skills. According to the general tendency, students' positive attitudes towards English Language skills are in question. At the same time, it was observed that the students' success at the English lesson was much better than the report card grades they had declared in the previous semester. It was analyzed by Spearman Brown Correlation coefficient whether there was a relationship between the attitudes of the students of secondary education towards English Language skills and their End-of-term success at the English lesson, and the results are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. The Relationship between Success and Attitude Scores

	Success	p	Explained variance ( $r^2$ )
Reading	0.259	0.000*	0.07
Writing	0.325	0.000*	0.11
Speaking	0.374	0.000*	0.14
Listening	0.363	0.000*	0.13

\* $p<0.05$

A positive directional and an intermediate level significant relationship at the value of 0.259 was found between the end-of-terms success points of English and the attitudes towards English reading skills; the value of 0.325 was found among the attitudes towards the writing skill; the value of 0.374 was found among the attitudes towards the speaking skills and the value of 0.363 was found among the attitudes towards the listening skill ( $p<0.05$ ). In other words, as long as students' success scores related to English increases, their levels of attitude towards reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, also increase; or as the students' success scores related to English decreases, their levels of attitude towards reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, also decrease.

When explained variance values are analyzed, it can be seen that 7% of the academic success variable of English is composed of the attitudes towards reading skill, 11% is composed of the attitudes towards writing skill, 14% is composed of the attitudes towards speaking skill and 13% is composed of the attitudes towards listening skill.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The attitudes of the students' of secondary education towards the language skills and their success levels at the lessons were found to be high. However, it was also observed that the level of relationship was low. The presence of a linear relationship between the academic success and English language skills of the students, also supports the literature which is related to the subject.

Students' attitudes towards the speaking skill do affect their academic success mostly. Likewise, the attitude related to speaking is the skill that has the highest average. Therefore, the activities with would not only increase the attitudes towards speaking skills but also the success, should be frequently held in our schools. Students should be presented with a practice environment where they can speak the foreign language they've learned. In his study, Aktaş [34] underlined that four basic language skills (writing, speaking, reading and listening).

It was observed that the language skill that had the second lowest attitude level average was the writing skill. In his study, Çakır[35] revealed that students had difficulty in English writing skill, and they needed help while writing. Çakır[9] expressed that among the reasons why the students developed a negative attitude particularly towards writing and speaking skills, there was the absence of activities intended for developing these skills in the class, the non-use of visual and audio materials, and the feedback not given to the students on time. It has been considered that if the teachers use different teaching methods in a class environment on the subject of writing skill, it would help the students develop their writing skills and contribute to the positive attitudes towards the writing skill. Kuş and Bakır[36] proclaimed that brain-based learning method did increase students' attention towards the writing skill in the language classes. In his study, [4] indicated that in a group where project-based language education was given, students' success and attitudes were developed in the positive way.

Again in his study where he mentioned what he was thinking about the writing skills of students, Çakır[35] found out that the students got bored while writing and they also needed help. It is considered that the presence of this situation, negatively effects the attitudes related to the writing skills of students. In this study, the attitudes of secondary school students measured regarding their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, showed difference in favor of female students. In their study, Hussain, Shahid and Zaman [13] found out a significant difference between the attitudes of 10th class female and male students measured related to learning a foreign language. In their study in 2005, İnal, Evin and Saracaloğlu [11] indicated that there was a significant relationship between the foreign language attitude and academic success of the final year high school students, and the foreign language attitude of female students was much positive than the male students. In his study, Abidin, Muhammadi and Alzwari [37] found out that the attitudes measured towards learning English by gender factor had differentiated.

Attitudes of the high school students towards reading skills who are also continuing secondary education do differentiate in the case of going to an English course. However, attitudes towards writing, speaking and listening skills do not differentiate in the case of going to an English course. This case reinforces the estimation that the language education in private courses is grammar weighting and it is intended for developing the students' reading skills just as it is in the state schools. High school students' attitudes towards writing, speaking and listening skills do differentiate according to the type of the school in which they receive education. This difference has been considered as in favor of the writing, speaking and listening skills of the students receiving education in private schools. The reasons for this, is the presence of foreign teachers in private schools, the rich course materials, and the application of a language intensive education program. However, students' attitudes towards the reading skill differentiate according to the type of the school in which they receive education. One of the reasons why the school type has no effect on reading is considered to be resulted from the application of the same MEB curriculum, where the reading skill of English lesson is weighted, in the private and state schools.

It was observed that high school students' attitudes towards the listening skill did differentiate according to the field where they receive education, and that, this differentiation was in favor of the students in the numeric field. In his study, Abidin, Muhammadi and Alzwari [38] expressed that according to the field where they receive education, the attitude of Libyan students towards learning English did differentiate.

Consequently, the discussions on the issues of the effectiveness of learning a foreign language in early ages or the way how this affects the attitudes, and of the contribution of socio-cultural variables on learning a foreign language do still continue. However, age variable has a significant effect on using the language rapidly and the pronunciation more properly [38]. Therefore, we are advised to give up the notion of teaching foreign language to our kids at young ages, and to make an effort to increase their attitudes.

The necessity and importance of learning a Foreign Language, is approved by the students, teachers and parents. In 2008, in an interview made with students, it was emphasized that a good teacher would increase the motivation of students in their learning process; and having a learning purpose affected students' attitudes towards continuing the lesson and learning a language. Therefore, within the framework of the

national education policies, it is required to take many regulations (revisions) into consideration on the issues such as updating foreign language education programs, improving the physical conditions of class in accordance with the teaching methods and techniques, and on the understanding when raising teachers. Students face with learning a foreign language by means of a teacher in a school environment. Therefore, as Verma [15] indicated teacher's attitude, role and student's attitudes towards the teacher are effective when learning a language.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this study, the attitudes of high school students measured according to their gender concerning their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, showed difference in favor of female students. Again, high school students' attitudes towards writing, speaking and listening skills except for the attitudes towards reading skills do differentiate according to the type of school in which they receive education.

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