

---

# SOCIAL ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS TOWARDS TEACHING ENGLISH AT HIGH SCHOOLS IN GAZIANTEP, TURKEY

Birsen Bağçeci  
Gaziantep Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, Gaziantep, Turkey

---

## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of the students toward teaching English. This research was conducted at 26 high schools in Gaziantep, Turkey. A questionnaire consisting of two parts for the students was used as the data collecting instruments for the research. In the first part of the questionnaire, there are questions related with personal traits of students. In the second part, there is a Likert type attitude scale. 414 students' questionnaires were taken into evaluation. The significance of differences between means was analysed using "t" test, Anova (one-way analysis of variance), Scheffé test and the data related to the opinions of the students were analysed by utilising frequency distribution on percentages. The validity was assured by means of factor analysis procedure and the reliability was assured using Cronbach Alpha measure. All these statistical procedures were carried out using SPSS software (10.0 versions) in windows for IBM platform. The findings of the study indicated that Teaching English is not in accordance with the requirements and demands of the students.*

## Introduction

As a consequence of globalization process, there has been a must to act together with the whole world and act according to the trends on earth. Rapid improvements in technology, nowadays, widespread use of mass media and astonishing improvements in communication give rise to more and more international relations and cause very rapid social changes to appear on the agenda. It is claimed that the results obtained in science and technology and discoveries in recent years are three times as much as those obtained by man during the nineteenth century. As a consequence of such rapid improvements, there has been a knowledge explosion and scientists have started to create new knowledge technologies in order to get at knowledge.

Man's efforts for protecting his existence, making use of knowledge, reaching happiness and strengthening friendships have made first, individual then inter-group and finally international relations obligatory. International

relations getting more and more everyday make it impossible for the nations to communicate in their native language and make it a must for them to learn other nations' languages in order to survive as a member of an international community. Today, about 350 million people travel with tourism purpose every year. When this fact is taken into consideration, searching ways to make foreign language learning more effective has gained importance for both individuals and nations. In recent years, especially English is becoming more and more important and is likely to be an international language.

Today, the age of knowledge has replaced the age of industry and shortened time and distance. This industry production has eased the production of services related with knowledge. In the past, knowledge used to be limited to published words. Whereas knowledge has spread all over the world thanks to computer and internet in a period of less than twenty years. People can learn English thanks

---

to communication via computer. And this has caused English to be dominant on the internet, informally, as a spoken language.

Nowadays, importance of learning a foreign language is accepted by everyone. An increasing demand can be seen about it in the community. But it is impossible to claim that foreign language teaching has reached the desired goal yet. In this respect, foreign language teaching is on Turkey's agenda as a subject which is in the search of new ways and on which discussions are made.

### 1.1. Purpose of search

In school curriculums, foreign language has an important place in terms of weekly schedules. Helping students acquire a foreign language according to the goals of this subject is very important. That foreign language teaching is beyond the provision of expected benefits either because of education system or because of the mistakes resulting from the system and that a foreign language cannot be taught permanently to our students are Turkey's facts. In this respect, our students' minds are occupied in vain and their time is wasted.

The reasons for this search are as follows:

Foreign language occupies an important place in secondary education programs in Turkey.

Too much interest of parents and students to English, in particular Foreign language teaching goals are far from the community's changing requirements.

The necessity for revising these

The necessity for rearranging foreign language teaching by taking the community's demands and requirements into consideration

These reasons make it necessary to determine the students' attitudes to English teaching programs and foreign language teaching policy in secondary educational institutions in Turkey.

A foreign language has been taught in primary and secondary educational institutions for ages. According to curriculums, even a high school graduate who has got low marks

in foreign language is supposed to be able to use and comprehend the foreign language he has learned at a good level. But the result gained is known to everyone.

Foreign language's, particularly English's gaining importance in recent years has drawn researchers' attention and students' opinions and attitudes are wondered. If opinions and attitudes are determined, some modifications can be made about teaching English in particular. For this reason, the general purpose of this search is to determine students' attitudes to teaching English in secondary educational institutions and to make some suggestions about this issue.

Therefore, whether students' attitudes to teaching English are effected by the following variables has been questioned.

- a-Their sex
- b-Schools they have attended so far
- c-Their classes
- d-Educational level of their father
- e-Educational level of their mother
- f-Their mother's job
- g-Their father's job
- h-Income level of their family

### 1.2. Hypotheses

None of the eight variables above has any effect on students' attitudes to teaching English.

### 1.3. Participants and sampling

As participants, students attending general, private, super, Anatolian and Science high school during 1999-2000 year have been chosen. There are 17 326 students attending 26 general high schools. As Vocational and Technical high schools have a different curriculum, they haven't been included in the sampling.

Some general high schools have prep class, some don't. Anatolian, Private and Super high schools have prep class 4240 students attend these schools. Science High Schools don't have prep class. 13 414 students attend general high schools and Science High Schools.

TABLE

**The Summary of Findings Related with the Students**

ε	Sex	Type of the school	Grade	Educational status of father	Educational status of mother	Occupation of father	Occupation of mother	Income
The importance of English	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	+
The beginning and duration of teaching English	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Necessity of English	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Sensitivity to English	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Anxiety of society towards teaching English	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
The method and content in English Class	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
Method	t-test	F-test	F-test	F-test	F-test	F-test	F-test	F-test

#### 1.4. Gathering and analysing of data

When evaluating the attitude scales, positive attitudes have been graded from 5 to 1, and negative attitudes have been graded from 1 to 5. Reliability of the questionnaires has been calculated by means of Cronbach Alfa formula. According to this formula, alfa value for students has been found as 0.8337. Questionnaires have proved to be applicable for this search. They have been applied by the researcher in person. In order for the data to be used in the analysis and interpretation process, with the help of SPSS (10.0) as a statistical technique, one-way variance analysis (F-test), t-test, Scheffe' test and percentage calculations have been used and findings have been analysed.

#### 1.5. Findings

##### 1.5.1. Independent variables related with students

According to search findings:

1. 55.3 % of the students were female, 44.7 % of the students were male.
2. Attendance: 41.8 % general high schools, 14.3 % Anatolian high schools, 12.3 % private high schools, 22.7 % Super high schools and 8.9 % Science high schools.
3. Grade 1-34.5 %, Grade 2-34.5 %, Grade 3-30.9
4. Their parents' educational level: Mostly primary school graduates: Mothers-47.1 %,

Fathers-39.4 %. Secondary school graduates: Mothers-8 %, Fathers-13.8 %, University graduates: Mothers-11.1%, Fathers-22.2 %.

5. Their parents' job: Fathers: Mostly officers, the lowest percentage: craftsmen and businessmen. Mothers: Housewives-80.9 %.

Their family's monthly income: 101-200 million TL-28.3 %, 201-400 million TL-26.1 %, 400 million TL and over-28 %.

##### 1.5.2. Findings connected with students' attitudes

1. Their sex. Female students have shown more positive attitudes than male students.. There are significant differences between male and female students in the following sub-scales: 'Importance'- 'Beginning and duration'-'Necessity'-'Sensitivity'-'Anxiety'-'Method and Content'. Students' sex can be said to affect their attitudes.
2. Their schools and
3. Their classes don't change their attitudes.
4. Their father's educational level doesn't change their attitudes.
5. Their mother's educational level changes their attitudes in three sub-scales, 'Importance', 'Anxiety' and 'Method and Content' but it doesn't in the other sub-scales.
6. Their father's job doesn't change their attitudes.
7. Their mother's job doesn't effect their attitudes.
8. Their family's income level doesn't effect

---

their attitudes. There are significant differences in 'Importance', 'Anxiety' and 'Method and Content' sub-scales.

### **1.6. Results connected with students' attitudes to teaching english**

1. The first hypothesis has been accepted and supported.
2. The second hypothesis has been supported.
3. The third hypothesis has been supported.
4. The fourth hypothesis has been supported to a large extent.
5. The fifth hypothesis has been partly supported.
6. The sixth hypothesis has been supported.
7. The seventh hypothesis has been supported.
8. The eighth hypothesis has been partly supported.

### **1.7. Suggestions**

By making use of findings connected with attitudes, the following suggestions have been made.

1. In order for students to have positive attitudes to teaching English, some new arrangements must be made about curriculums in secondary educational institutions, teacher formation, teaching methods and evaluation.
2. Teaching of English must be audio-visual.
3. Since attitude and quality of teacher is very important in teaching English or foreign languages everything necessary must be done in order to train teachers as well as possible. They must be sent abroad, to the country where the language he is supposed to teach is spoken as a native language.
4. Subjects to be taught in a foreign language must be chosen from daily life, and terms used in daily life must be taught.
5. In order to reach the foreseen goals in teaching English, students' parents must be made aware and trained.

6. Families must encourage their children to learn English or another language.
7. In order to teach English as well as possible in state schools, Ministers of Education must do everything necessary, they must choose and apply necessary policies, without taking their own opinions into consideration.
8. In teaching a foreign language, tools and equipment of advanced technology must be used.
9. In teaching English, as well as grammar and vocabulary, speaking fluently and correctly is also important. For this reason, coursebooks and supplementary materials must be chosen accordingly.
10. In parallel with changes and innovations in training and teaching of a foreign language as a whole, alterations in methods, measuring and evaluating processes are also necessary.

It has been discovered that students in general high schools have considerably less interest in English. The more English lessons they have in a week, the more interested they will be.

### **REFERENCES**

1. **Celkan H.Y.** (1989) Educational Sociology, Erzurum: Atatürk University Press.
2. **Demircan Ö.** (1988) Foreign Language from Past to Present in Turkey, İstanbul: Remzi Press Ltd. p.45
3. **Demirel Ö.** (1993) Foreign Language Teaching, Rules, Techniques, Methods, (3. Press), Ankara: Usem Press.
4. **Gardner R.C.** (1982) Language Attitudes and Language Learning, In E.B. Ryan, H. Giles (Attitudes toward language variation: Social and applied contexts, s. 132-147). London, United Kingdom: Edward Arnold.
5. **Hasman M.A.** (2000) "The Role of English in the 21st Century" English Teaching Forum. Volume 38(1), 3-5.
6. **Ravid R.D.** (1987) "The Correlation of Parents' and Students Attitudes with Hebrew Language Achievement." Foreign Language Annals, October 421-425.