Kuramsal Eğitimbilim Dergisi, 11(4), 809-821, Ekim 2018
Journal of Theoretical Educational Science, 11(4), 809-821, October 2018
[Online]: http://www.keg.aku.edu.tr
DOI number: http://dx.doi.org/10.30831/akukeg.394769

The Relationship among Attitude, Anxiety and English Speaking Performance*

Tutum, Kaygı ve İngilizce Konuşma Başarısı Arasındaki İlişki

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Received: 14 February 2018 **Research Article** **Accepted:** 13 May 2018

ABSTRACT: It was aimed to designate the relationship among attitude towards English, foreign language anxiety and English speaking skills of university preparatory class students in this study. The study group consisted of 518 students who were enrolled at Ege University School of Foreign Languages Preparatory Class. "Attitudes towards English Questionnaire" and "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)" were used as instruments. Students' English speaking scores in the first term of 2014-2015 academic year were taken into account to determine their English speaking level. In the analysis of the data, SPSS 21.00 statistical package program was used. According to the findings, there was a weak and significant correlation among foreign language anxiety, attitude towards English and English speaking skills of the students. There was a negative, weak correlation between the subscales of FLCAS and English speaking skills. While the test anxiety had the biggest negative effect on English speaking skills, communication apprehension had the least adverse effect on it. There was a negative, medium correlation between attitudes towards English and foreign language anxiety of the students. It was observed that proficiency level did not have a statistically important difference on the students' attitude towards English and foreign language anxiety.

Keywords: attitude towards English, foreign language anxiety, English speaking performance.

ÖZ: Bu araştırmada üniversite hazırlık sınıfı öğrencilerinin İngilizceye yönelik tutum, yabancı dil kaygısı ve İngilizce konuşma becerileri arasındaki ilişkinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Çalışma grubu Ege Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu Hazırlık Sınıfında öğrenim gören 518 öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. Veri toplama aracı olarak "İngilizceye Yönelik Tutum Ölçeği" ve "Yabancı Dil Sınıf Kaygısı Ölçeği"nden yararlanılmıştır. Öğrencilerin İngilizce konuşma seviyelerini belirlemek amacıyla 2014-2015 eğitim-öğretim yılı güz dönemi sonunda İngilizce konuşma sınavından aldıkları notlar esas alınmıştır. Veriler SPSS 21.00 istatistik programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma bulgularına göre öğrencilerin İngilizceye yönelik tutum ve yabancı dil kaygıları ile İngilizce konuşma becerileri arasında anlamlı zayıf bir ilişki olduğu görülmüştür. Yabancı Dil Sınıf Kaygısı ölçeğinin alt boyutları ile İngilizce konuşma becerisi arasında negatif zayıf bir ilişki bulunmuştur. İngilizce konuşma becerisi üzerindeki en büyük negatif etkiyi test kaygısı oluştururken, en küçük negatif etkiyi iletişim kaygısı oluşturmaktadır. Öğrencilerin İngilizceye yönelik tutumları ile yabancı dil kaygıları arasında ise negatif yönde orta düzeyde bir ilişki olduğu görülmüştür. Öğrencilerin dil seviyelerinin İngilizceye yönelik tutumları ile yabancı dil kaygıları üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisinin olmadığı bulunmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: İngilizceye yönelik tutum, yabancı dil kaygısı, İngilizce konuşma başarısı.

* This article was produced from İbrahim Karagöl's Master Thesis which was supervised by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alper BAŞBAY.

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Citation Information
Karagöl, İ., & Başbay, A. (2018). The relationship among attitude, anxiety and English speaking performance. *Kuramsal Eğitimbilim Dergisi [Journal of Theoretical Educational Science], 11*(4), 809-821.

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Introduction

Language has been the most important tool of interaction among people throughout the ages. The age we live in, where information is produced quickly, increases the importance of language each passing day (Büyükyavuz & Aydoslu, 2005). Language, located in the heart of human life, is one of the significant ways for people to express hatred, love for each other. It is sometimes an artistic satisfaction, and sometimes is a simple source of pleasure for people. We always use language when planning our lives, remembering our past, sharing our ideas and experiences, introducing ourselves to people who speak the same language. Some people can do this in multiple languages. Knowing another language can mean having a good job, a change to get a good education, broadening cultural horizons of people and affect people's careers and their future (Cook, 2008). In a world where people speak more than one language, language learning is becoming vital to millions of people.

Despite the known importance of language and all the work carried out in teaching foreign language in Turkey, desired language learning can not be carried out (Aydemir, 2007). Difficulties experienced in language teaching in the past still continue to exist today. Despite the English lessons taken from the early ages, English level of university students shows that we are not good at learning English (Büyükyavuz & Aydoslu, 2005). Although language learning starts at an early age in Turkey, it is seen that the desired progress has not been achieved in terms of speaking skills. A generation who barely understands spoken English and can not express himself in that language grows up. The research studies (Demirpolat, 2015; Zok, 2010) show that English proficiency of students in Turkey is worse than those in other countries. According to a research study that compares countries based on their level of English, Turkey ranked last among 24 European countries, 43rd in 67 countries, and lagged behind many countries (Education First, 2014). It is quite thought-provoking considering the English proficiency of Turkey which is the world's 16th largest economy (Koru & Akesson, 2011).

In this technology age, not staying behind the times and following the innovations have made it in some way necessary to know English which is the common language. Therefore, people need to be able to speak English at a level where they can understand others and express themselves. But it is a known fact that we are not very successful in foreign language learning in the present case which is supported by the data (Demirpolat, 2015; Koru & Akesson, 2011; West, Güven, Parry & Ergenekon, 2015). Students have difficulty in speaking English and expressing themselves. Those who want to speak English have worries for making mistakes while speaking, so they are reluctant to speak. It is seen that foreign language speaking skills are less developed (Kondal, 2009) than the other language skills which are reading, writing and listening skills. This situation gets attention of many researchers and studies on foreign language speaking skillswere carried out (Basic, 2011; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012; Philips, 1992; Woodrow, 2006). In this respect, revealing what the positive and negative factors affecting English speaking skills are and taking necessary measures to improve it seem important.

Many studies show that there are some factors affecting speaking skills such as individual differences (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991), social environment, interaction rate, language transfer in language learning (Aksoy, 2012). These factors affect

language learning which is a challenging process in Turkey (Çimen, 2011), because people do not take everything they hear into memory. What they perceive is filtered through their emotional states, attitudes and needs (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982). These feelings affect language learning even if the learner is not aware of this situation. Factors such as attitude, motivation, stress, anxiety, self-esteem, self-efficacy, extroversion, introversion can create huge differences in language learning. Out of these factors, attitude (Bui & Intaraprasert, 2013; Huang, 2018; Marzban & Sadighi, 2013) and anxiety (Philips, 1992; Xianping, 2003; Wijirahayu & Dorand, 2018) are seen to be significant predictors of speaking skills and achievement, and these variables have an important place in increasing the speaking skill and achievement.

Attitude, which has an important place in speaking skills, is defined as evaluation of an object or idea (Bohner & Wanke, 2002: 5; cited by McKenzie, 2010: 19). It is believed that while positive attitudes towards language and culture may increase success, negative attitudes may prevent learning. Gardner (1985) noted that there is an important relationship between achievement and attitude towards foreign language. There are many studies relating to attitudes toward language learning (İnal, Evin & Saracaloğlu, 2009; Pineda, 2011) and speaking skills (Bui & Intaraprasert, 2013; Marzban & Sadighi, 2013). For instance, Bui & Intaraprasert (2013) examined the relationship among communication strategy use, exposure to oral communication and attitudes toward speaking English, and stated that the students with negative attitudes towards speaking English have lower verbal competences. It seems that while positive attitudes have a significant effect on speaking skills, negative attitudes reduce student motivation and interest (Brown, 2007).

Foreign language anxiety is also an important factor which has a significant place in foreign language learning. It is defined as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feeling, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process." (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 128). There are some studies that show anxiety has a negative effect on speaking skills (Philips, 1992; Xianping, 2003) and foreign language success (Aida, 1994; Aksoy, 2012; Batumlu, 2006; Chen, 2007). Xianping (2003) examined the level of language anxiety of university students and the effects of it on oral performance and reached the conclusion that there is a negative relationship between language anxiety and oral performance; procrastination, fear of evaluation and over concern of making mistakes are the three most significant characteristics which students experience during speaking English. Studies (Philips, 1992; Xianping, 2003) show that there is a negative correlation between speaking skills and foreign language anxiety. Students having high level of foreign language anxiety state that they are afraid of making mistakes, never feel quite sure of themselves, and start to panic while speaking in front of others (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986) and the students with high positive attitudes towards English tend to be more successful in learning English (Pineda, 2011). Therefore, individual differences such as attitude and anxiety should not be ignored in language learning and taken into account in shaping the educational process.

Many studies about attitudes toward English and anxiety have been found during the literature review. While there are many studies investigating the relationship between these variables and English achievement in the literature, studies related to English speaking skills is limited in Turkey. In line with this, this research seems

important in terms of contributing to the literature. Therefore, in this research, it is aimed to designate the relationship among attitude, anxiety and English speaking skills by answering the following questions:

1. What is the correlation between attitude levels towards English and speaking skill levels of university preparatory class students?

2. What is the correlation between foreign language anxiety levels and the levels of speaking skills of university preparatory class students?

3. What is the correlation between attitude levels towards English and foreign language anxiety levels of university preparatory class students?

4. Does the attitude levels towards English differ according to proficiency level?

5. Does foreign language anxiety levels differ according to proficiency level?

Method

In this research study which examines the relationship among attitude levels, anxiety levels and speaking skills of university preparatory class students, relational screening model was used to describe and measure the degree of relationship between two or more variables (Creswell, 2012).

Sample of Study

The study group consisted of students in pre-elementary, elementary and pre-intermediate level students Preparatory Classes in School of Foreign Languages at Ege University. Distribution of the students according to their proficiency levels is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of the Students in the Study

	The number of students in the study group		The number of students completing the scales		The number of students in the study	
Proficiency Level	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Pre-elementary	879	42.5	127	24.1	119	23.0
Elementary	1061	51.3	378	71.6	376	72.6
Pre-intermediate	127	6.1	23	4.3	23	4.4
Total	2067	100	528	100	518	100

According to Table 1, the study group consisted of students in pre-elementary, elementary and pre-intermediate levels. There were a total of 2067 students studying in those levels. The sample of the study involved 528 volunteering students for the study. The study was conducted with the data collected over 518 students after the removal of five inaccurate data entries and five incomplete forms.

Instruments

As instruments, "Attitudes towards English Questionnaire" and "English Class Anxiety Questionnaire" were used.

"Attitudes towards English Questionnaire" was developed by Aiken in 1979 to measure attitudes towards mathematics and science. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Özgür (2003) to measure attitudes towards English. Likert type scale with five levels consists of 24 items and has one dimension. Cronbach alpha value which represents the reliability of the measurements obtained from the scale was found as .87 in this study. Responses that are given to items are rated as "1= strongly agree" to "5= strongly disagree".

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) to measure the level of foreign language anxiety was adapted into Turkish by Aydın (1999). Likert type scale with five levels consists of 33 items. Responses that are given to items are rated as "1= never" to "5= always". The scale has three subscales, which are test anxiety (15 items), communication apprehension (11 items) and fear of negative evaluation (7 items). Cronbach alpha values of subscales were found respectively as .84, .88, .77 and the overall reliability of the scale was determined as .94 in this study.

To make the analysis, the mean of the first and second English speaking exam scores of the students in the first term of 2014-2015 academic year were taken into account.

Analysis

In the analysis of the data, SPSS 21.00 statistical package program was used. The correlation among attitude levels, anxiety levels and speaking skills of the students was tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient. Normality and linearity assumptions were checked. There was a linear relationship among the variables and the variables were continuous and normally distributed. Hence, the assumptions of normality and linearity were met in this study. One-way Anova test was used to examine whether there was a significant difference between attitudes towards English and foreign language anxiety of the students according to their proficiency level since the dependent variable was normally distributed and the variances on the dependent variable were equally distributed across groups.

Results

To designate the correlation between attitude levels and English speaking skills of the students, Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

The Correlation Between Attitude Levels and English Speaking Skills

			Attitude
English Speaking Skills	Pearson	Correlation	.219*
	Sig.		.000
	N		518

As it is seen in the Table 2, there was a significant correlation between attitude levels and English speaking skills of the students (p<.05). There was a positive, weak correlation between the variables. Therefore, it can be said that students having more positive attitudes towards English tended to be more successful in terms of English speaking skills.

To designate a possible correlation between anxiety levels and English speaking skills of the participants, Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

The Correlation Between Anxiety Levels and English Speaking Skills

			Anxiety
English Speaking Skills	Pearson	Correlation	-.216*
	Sig.		.000
	N		518

As it is seen in the Table 3, there was a significant correlation between attitude levels and English speaking skills of these university preparatory class students (p<.05). There was a negative, weak relationship between the variables. Therefore, it can be said that students having higher anxiety towards English tended to be less successful in terms of English speaking skills.

To designate a possible correlation between subscales of FLCAS and English speaking skills of the students, Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

The Correlation Between Subscales of FLCAS and English Speaking Skills

		Test Anxiety	Communication Apprehension	Fear of Negative Evaluation
English	Pearson Correlation	-.236*	-.166	-.209
Speaking	Sig.	.000	.000	.000
Skills	N	518	518	518

As it is seen in the Table 4, there was a significant correlation between the subscales of FLCAS, which are communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, and English speaking skills of the participants (p<.05). There was a negative, weak correlation between the subscales of FLCAS and the levels of English speaking skills. This indicates that as the level of communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation increased, the levels of English speaking skills decreased. While the test anxiety had the biggest negative effect on English speaking skills, communication apprehension had the least adverse effect on it.

To designate the correlation between attitude levels and anxiety levels of the students, Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used. The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

The Correlation Between Attitude Levels and Anxiety Levels

			Attitude
Anxiety	Pearson	Correlation	-.520*
	Sig.		.000
	N		518

As it is seen in the Table 5, there was a significant correlation between attitude and anxiety levels of university preparatory class students (p<.05). There was a negative, medium relationship between the variables. Therefore, it can be said that students having more positive attitudes towards English can have less anxiety towards English and vice versa.

To examine whether there was a significant difference among students' attitude levels towards English according to their proficiency levels, one-way Anova test used. The findings are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

One-Way Anova Results of Students' Attitudes towards English according to Their Proficiency Levels

	Proficiency Level	*n*	$\bar{x}$	*sd*	*F*	*p*	Significant Difference
Attitude	Pre-elementary	119	87.55	13.66	2.041	.131*	---
	Elementary	376	85.47	14.16			
	Pre-intermediate	23	89.69	13.40			
	Total	518	86.21	14.04			

As a consequence of a one-way Anova test which was conducted with the aim of examining whether students' attitude towards English significantly differed according to their proficiency levels, it was found that the difference between groups was not statistically significant (F: 2.041, p>.05).

To examine whether there was a significant difference among students' foreign language anxiety levels according to their proficiency levels, again a one-way Anova test was used. The findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

One-Way Anova Results of Students' Foreign Language Anxiety Levels according to Their Proficiency Levels

	Proficiency Level	*n*	$\bar{x}$	*sd*	*F*	*p*	Significant Difference
Anxiety	Pre-elementary	119	77.57	22.30	1.291	.276	---
	Elementary	376	80.75	22.64			
	Pre-intermediate	23	75.82	20.11			
	Total	518	79.79	22.47			

As a consequence of this one-way anova test which was conducted with the aim of examining whether students' foreign language anxiety levels significantly differed according to their proficiency levels and it was concluded that the difference between groups was not statistically significant (F: 1.291, p>.05).

Discussion and Conclusion

It was aimed to designate the relationship among attitude levels, anxiety levels and levels of English speaking skills in this study. It was found that there was a significant, weak correlation between attitudes towards English and English speaking skills of the students. Literature supports the findings of the study. Studies examining the relationship between foreign language success and attitude (House & Prion, 1998; İnal, Evin & Saracaloğlu, 2009; Saracoğlu & Varol, 2007; Serin, Serin & Ceylan, 2010) indicate that there is a significant, positive relationship between these two variables. Besides, there are studies indicating that there is a significant, positive relationship

between attitudes and speaking skills (Bui & Intaraprasert, 2013; Marzban & Sadighi, 2013). However, Fırat (2009) and Keskin (2003) found that there is not a significant relationship between attitude levels and English achievement in their research conducted with elementary school students. Contradiction between Fırat (2009) and Keskin's (2003) studies and the current study may have occurred due to different samples.

According to another finding of the study, there is a negative, weak relationship between English speaking skills and foreign language anxiety levels of the students. Similarly, Tugan (2015) concluded that there is a negative, weak relationship between achievement and foreign language anxiety. Studies indicate that there is a significant, negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and English success (Aida, 1994; Aksoy, 2012; Chen, 2007; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Tugan, 2015) and foreign language anxiety and English speaking skills (Basic, 2011; Huang, 2018; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012; Philips, 1992; Woodrow, 2006; Xianping, 2003). Therefore, it can be argued that these studies support each other. In this study, it was found that there is a negative, medium relationship between attitude levels and anxiety levels of the students. Baş (2015) similarly reached the conclusion that there is a significant, negative relationship between foreign language anxiety and attitudes towards English of high school students. According to another result of our study, it was also revealed that there is not a significant difference between attitudes towards English and foreign language anxiety levels of the students according to their proficiency levels. However, contrary to our study, in Karabey's (2011) study, it was argued that pre-intermediate level students felt more anxious than elementary level students. Contradiction between Karabey's (2011) study and the current study may have occurred from the different characteristics of the participants such as their majors, ages and previous learning experiences.

Studies on language learning indicate that attitudes towards foreing languge play an important role in acquiring the languge (İnal, Evin & Saracaloğlu, 2009; Pineda, 2011; Wijirahayu & Dorand, 2018) and various factors influence the attitudes towards foreing language learning (Spolsky, 1969). Spolsky (1969) states that there are a number of people such as learners, learner's peers and their teacher in a typical language learning situation and their attitudes to each other can be a significant factor in acquiring the language. If the learner develops negative attitudes towards a language, it becomes difficult to motivate him/her to learn and speak that language. On the other hand, positive attitudes towards a language facilitate learning and enhance the success (Ellis, 1994; cited by Firat, 2009).

Another factor which has a significant effect on language learning is foreign language anxiety. Studies show that there is a negative correlation between speaking skills and foreign language anxiety (Philips, 1992; Xianping, 2003). Students having higher level of foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986) state that they never feel quite sure of themselves, start to panic and are afraid of making mistakes while speaking in front of others in foreign language classes. MacIntyre & Gardner (1994) argue that foreign language anxiety is a significant problem for foreign language learners since it affects foreign language acquisition making it difficult for learners to speak in that language. Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel (2013) state that fear of failing in front of others, test anxiety, fear of making mistakes while speaking, teacher's role, competition and the lack of information are related to foreign language anxiety, and students

attribute language anxiety to external factors more than internal factors. This shows that anxiety-provoking situations stem more from external factors and in this regard, it is important to consider environmental factors that can cause anxiety.

It is thought that attitude and anxiety toward foreign language learning should be given importance since they affect success and language acquisiton. Students may have, consciously or unconsciously, negative attitudes and/or foreign language anxiety toward a language. This creates a problem for students in language learning. If students develop a negative attitude and high anxiety levels, it becomes difficult for them to motivate themselves to learn that language. In this case they feel that they are not capable of learning the language and may give up immediately (Ellis, 1994; cited by Fırat, 2009). To overcome such a crucial problem, it is suggested that attitudes towards English and anxiety levels of students should be measured at the beginning of the term, and seminars can be organized in order to reduce students' negative attitudes and high anxiety levels towards language learning. Learning techniques such as pair work, group work, role playing, simulation, problem solving to improve English speaking skill can be used, and positive attitudes towards English can be created in language classes and speaking exams.

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