



## Attitudes and perceptions of Gendarmerie Non-Commissioned Officers Vocational College students towards English instruction

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### Abstract

This study aimed at investigating attitudes and perceptions of second year students studying at Gendarmerie Non-Commissioned Officers Vocational College towards English instruction. Attitudes of students were examined by focusing on the levels of attitudes as low, moderate, and high. The three dimensions of an attitude; importance, enjoyment, and anxiety which were extracted through factor analysis were also explored. The students' perceptions were studied in relation with the dimensions of General English courses namely; objectives, content, learning activities, materials and evaluation procedures. The study also explored whether the learners' perceptions differed according to their level of attitudes. The sample of this study was consisted of 308 second year students studying at Gendarmerie Non-Commissioned Officers Vocational College. The data were collected through an attitude scale and a perception questionnaire and were analyzed descriptively and through chi-square test by using IBM SPSS 22.0. The results of the study revealed that majority of the participants held moderately low attitudes towards English language learning and teaching process. The students also displayed moderately low attitudes regarding each of the three dimensions of attitude. The perceptions of the students revealed that General English courses need improvement. Furthermore, it was found out that some of the students' perceptions varied according to their level of attitudes. In conclusion, based on the students' preferences and perceptions, in alliance with their attitudes, suggestions and recommendations were made to improve the General English courses in Gendarmerie Non-Commissioned Officers Vocational College.

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*Keywords:* Attitudes; perceptions; English language instruction

## 1. Introduction

English, as it has become the modern lingua franca, is the most common foreign language that is taught in almost all the academic institutions in Turkey (Karahan, 2007). A Turkish student starts learning English at the second grade with the current legislations and continues to be exposed to English almost at every stage of his/her education. Therefore, the level of success in English has always been an important concern for learners, parents, teachers, institutions and stake holders. Affective factors in

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learning a foreign language are among the leading sources influencing the process of achieving desired English proficiency level. Attitude is considered as one of the important affective characteristics as it has the role of both shaping and determining perception of learning (Chan, 2009). It has been claimed that learners' positive attitudes towards the language promote their motivation and that leads to success, and failure on the other hand arises from negative attitudes and low motivation (Kiani, 2010). Therefore, most of the researchers have analyzed the relationship between learners' attitude towards the target language and their achievement by using different types of attitude scales (Gardner, 1985). Language learners' perceptions are also valuable sources of information that lead improvements in language teaching and learning process if obtained and used effectively (Hawkey, 2006). Especially, learners' perceptions of their learning situations determine how students experience and perceive aspects of the classroom such as behaviors of instructors or instructional techniques (Brown, 2009).

Gendarmerie Non-Commissioned Officers Vocational College (JAMYO hereafter) is the only institution which was built for training up "non-commissioned officers" (NCO hereafter) for the Turkish National Gendarmerie Forces. 92% of Turkey's territory is under gendarmerie responsibility and 40% of Turkey's population lives in this region. The general aim of JAMYO is to train qualified personnel for this huge and critical mission. In order to gain these qualities students of this institution have to take different vocational courses such as preventive law enforcement services, general vocational knowledge for gendarmerie, judicial services, etc. Besides these vocational courses, the students are required to take General English courses for 4 semesters and it is for 2 class hours in a week. It is necessary for JAMYO students to graduate with the adequate English language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, and grammar) to have a certain status in their occupational lives. The graduates of this school are going to have significant positions in the Turkish National Gendarmerie Forces nationally, and they are going to have international missions as an obligation of their profession. However, it has been frequently observed by the English instructors of the institution that most of the students tend to ignore the importance of learning English. They are reluctant to participate in the classes, and they do not want to endeavor to be successful in their General English courses. When the students are asked about the possible reasons for this situation, they state some reasons, for instance, it is not important for them to learn a foreign language or they do not like English at all.

There are two significant reasons for NCOs to have adequate language skills. First of all, as Turkey is one of the members of NATO since 1952, there are many international joint operations in different parts of the world that gendarmerie personnel have to attend. Secondly, 30% of responsibility region of gendarmerie is touristic places like coastal areas or historical monuments. To deal with the problems of tourists effectively, NCOs have to have necessary language skills. If they accomplish their duties with tourists, they would not only represent Turkey effectively but also create a perception of secure and safe tourist destination for Turkey. Thus, success in their both academic and professional careers can be maintained by learning English, and this will also create a difference among the non-commissioned officers. Although English has an important place in their vocational training, students have difficulties in possessing language skills required. Studying their process of learning English as a foreign language considering the affective factors such as attitude and perception is going to provide valuable information to enhance this process. Although there are studies related to individual characteristics of English language learners such as attitude, motivation, aptitude, personality, age, gender, there is a lack of research considering law enforcement personnel's attitudes and perceptions especially regarding gendarmerie personnel. Therefore, this study of attitudes and perceptions will contribute to describe and improve current situation in terms of language learning and teaching.

### *1.1. Literature review*

Attitudes and perceptions of the language learners are two important affective factors that affect the language learning and teaching process especially in terms of determining learning styles and learning strategies (Chan, 2009). Attitude is mostly defined as “an inference which is made on the basis of a complex of beliefs about the attitude object” (Gardner, 1980, p.267) and its components are studied in various educational context by using attitude rating scales. Attitudes towards the culture of target language (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009; Gudykunst & Schmidt, 1987; Kassem, 2013; Tahaine & Daana, 2013; Yee & Young, 2006), attitude towards learning situation like instructors or instructional techniques (Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, & Alzwari, 2012; Hussain, 2010; Mirici, 2010), the effect of different variables such as grade level, gender, departments etc. on the learners’ attitudes (Gömleksiz, 2010; Hüssein, Demirok & Uzunboylu, 2009; Karahan, 2007; Kızıltepe, 2003; Koboyashi, 2002), and attitudes towards that language and the underlying orientations (instrumental or integrative) (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Cetinkaya, 2009; Karahan, 2007; Shirgabi, 2010;; Zafarghandi & Jodai, 2012) are the components which were studied most.

Perceptions of language learners were also studied mostly in language learning and teaching field. Researchers suggested students’ opinions, expectations and perceptions should be determined from time to time to close any existing gap between their perceptions and learners’ perceptions (Horwitz, 1985; McCargar, 1993; Peacock, 1999). If there is a discrepancy between teachers’ perceptions and learners’ perceptions, this may have negative impact on students (Barkhuizen, 1998; Brown, 2009; Bulut & Üğüten, 2003; Hawkey, 2006; Rao, 2002; Savignon & Wang, 2003; Schulz, 2001; Spratt, 1999). Especially in the lesson planning and implementation phases, learners’ perceptions are valuable sources for teachers to be able to identify possible threats and misconceptions beforehand (Hawkey, 2006).

### *1.2. Research questions*

Considering above, the following research questions were investigated;

1. What are the attitudes of students studying at JAMYO towards English language instruction regarding importance, enjoyment and anxiety dimensions?
2. What are the perceptions of students studying at JAMYO related to the General English courses provided regarding objectives, content, materials, learning activities and evaluation procedures?
3. Do perceptions of students differ according to their level of attitudes (low, moderate, and high) towards English language instruction?

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Research design*

In order to study attitudes and perceptions of the students studying at JAMYO towards English instruction, survey research was used. Therefore, data for this study were collected through an attitude scale and a perceptions questionnaire from 340 second year students studying at JAMYO selected through cluster random sampling.

## 2.2. Context and participants

JAMYO was built in 2003 in Ankara/Beytepe dependent on Gendarmerie Schools Command. It is a 2 year educational institution which was built for training up non-commissioned officers for the Turkish National Gendarme Forces which have the same mission with police forces in rural areas. When the 13 main qualifications required for NCOs to have are examined, it can be seen that learning a foreign language comes in the third place. Therefore, it would not be wrong to claim that as the foreign language in the school is English, learning English has a very crucial place in both vocational and social life of the graduates. Generally, English language teaching practices are designed in accordance with the legislations determined by the Language Schools of Turkish Armed Forces. The students are required to take General English courses for 4 semesters. These courses are also in the requirements of Council of Higher Education of Turkey for Vocational High Schools. In their first year, they take A1 (Beginner) level of English and in the second year they take A2 (Elementary) level of English based on Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. They have English for two hours every week. Headway course books and workbooks (Beginner and Elementary) from Oxford University Press are used as textbooks. The medium of instruction is English but instructors make Turkish explanations when it is necessary or when there is confusion among students.

Generally, the course is based on the activities presented in the textbook. Instructors strictly follow the course books. Grammar, vocabulary, reading, listening, speaking and writing activities provided in the text books are done respectively. Instructors do not include authentic activities such as role-plays or discussion, and they also do not make use of computer-based activities. Moreover, students have only access to reading texts in the class, and they do not have access to other reading materials such as magazines or journals outside the class. For final grade at the end of semester students have to take a midterm (28%) and a final exam (60%). 12% of the grade given by the instructor is based on the students classroom participation. Students have to take at least 60 out of 100 in order to pass the course. Although students are practicing all the skills in the course, they are not responsible for each of them in the exams. There are grammar (40%), vocabulary (20%), reading (30%), and writing (10%) sections in the exams.

In JAMYO, there were 2027 students in total, and 1000 first year and 1027 second year students. They were admitted to this school first by taking national university exam, and then, they had to take three special exams; compulsory medical examination, physical examination and interview. Due to the administrative restrictions and confidentiality issue in military organizations, the researcher could not collect data related to subject characteristics, age or educational background. The reason for choosing second year students was that they had more experience with the General English than the first year students. There were 1027 second year students in the institution, and they were placed into 36 groups consisting of 28-30 students. Since selecting individuals randomly was not possible due to administrative restrictions, cluster random sampling was used, and 12 groups out of 36 were randomly selected. Overall, 340 students from these 12 groups participated in the study, and they all answered the attitude scale and perception questionnaire.

## 2.3. Instrument(s)

To collect data for the study, two instruments were used. One of them was an attitude scale, and the other one was a perception questionnaire. The attitude scale and perception questionnaire were found appropriate for collecting data by the Ethics Committee of Research Center for Applied Ethics in Middle East Technical University. Moreover, permission from Gendarmerie General Command was taken in order to collect data from JAMYO for the spring semester of 2014-2015 academic year.

### 2.3.1. *The attitude scale*

The attitude scale was developed in Turkish originally, and it was thought that it would be more appropriate for the students studying at JAMYO considering their level of English. The original instrument was developed as a one-dimensional attitude scale through related literature, students' opinions and expert judgments. It is a 5 point Likert scale. The original attitude scale was modified based on factor analysis implemented, and 3 factors (importance, enjoyment, anxiety) were obtained and the new attitude scale consisted of 31 items. Initially, factorability of 56 items was examined. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .95, above the commonly recommended lowest value of .6, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $\chi^2(1540) = 12768.60, p < .00$ ). Based on these indicators, factor analysis was found to be suitable for 56 items.

Principal components analysis and three factors varimax solution were used because the primary purpose was to identify and compute composite scores for the factors (Neill, 2008) underlying the original version of the Attitude Scale on Affective domain in English Course by Gömleksiz (2003). Initial eigen values indicated that the first three factors explained 40%, 9%, and 4% of the variance respectively. Items which did not load to a cluster according to the factor analysis were discarded (25 items) and the total number of items was reduced to 31. 21 items measure favorable (high) attitude and the 10 of them measure unfavorable (low) attitude. Items that had loadings above .4 were selected and they were grouped according to the degree of loadings.

### 2.3.2. *The perceptions questionnaire*

"Perceptions Questionnaire" which was used to determine the JAMYO students' perceptions related to General English courses was developed by the researcher. The related literature and the instruments developed previously were reviewed in advance, and pursuant to data gathered, several drafts were created before the final version of the questionnaire. This questionnaire includes 44 items related to each dimension that a particular General English courses has to provide for the learners. These are specifically objectives, content, materials, learning activities and evaluation procedures. There are also several questions related to some specific issues of English instruction such as taking General English courses as electives. Students answer the Yes/No type of questions according to their perceptions related to how an effective language instruction should be. 7 of the questions require short answers after answering the Yes/No Question. Regarding the English level of the participants, the items are in Turkish to prevent possible confusions. For the reliability, content validity, face validity and clarity of the items both expert check and subject check were used.

## 2.4. *Data collection procedures*

The attitude scale and perception questionnaire were found appropriate for collecting data by the Ethics Committee of Research Center for Applied Ethics in Middle East Technical University. Moreover, permission from Gendarmerie General Command was taken in order to collect data from JAMYO for the spring semester of 2014-2015 academic year.

Data for this study were collected in the spring semester of 2014-2015 academic year. 340 students from 12 randomly selected sections were provided with the informed consent form at the beginning and necessary clarifications related to attitude scale and the perception questionnaire were made. Then, attitude scale and perception questionnaire were distributed to the students in the conference hall of the institution, and it took 30 minutes to complete these two instruments. On the other hand, attitude scales and questionnaires of 32 students out of 340 were found to be invalid as there were missing parts.

## 2.5. Data analysis

The data obtained by using the instruments were analyzed by using IBM SPSS 22.0 descriptively for the first research question “What are the attitudes of students studying at JAMYO towards English language instruction regarding importance, enjoyment and anxiety dimensions?” As there were 10 negatively worded items in the Attitude Scale, these items had to be reversed scaled before starting to analyze data. As the scale of measurement was interval in this scale, the data was parametric thus mean scores and standard deviations were calculated. The second research question was “What are the perceptions of students studying at JAMYO related to the General English courses provided regarding objectives, content, materials, learning activities and evaluation procedures?” and the necessary descriptive analysis was run. As the perception questionnaire includes yes/no questions the scale of measurement was nominal, and as the data was non-parametric, it was analyzed through frequency analysis.

In order to find out whether perceptions of students differ according to their level of attitudes toward English language instruction the chi-square test for independence was applied. To decrease the possibility of getting false positive error (Huck, 2004) Bonferonni adjustment was made. To determine which pairs of groups (low, moderate, and high) was significantly different post-hoc analysis for chi-square test was run using adjusted standardized residual analysis (Beasley & Schumaker, 1995; Garcia-Perez & Nunez-Anton, 2003).

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Attitudes towards English instruction

The aim of this study was to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of JAMYO students towards English instruction provided by their institution. In order to fulfill this aim the first research question was “What are the attitudes of students studying at JAMYO towards English language instruction?” In order to clarify this problem, descriptive analysis was run by using SPSS 22.0. There were 31 items in the attitude scale that were used for this study. 21 of the items were positively worded and 10 of them were negatively worded. Therefore, these 10 items were reverse scaled since they expressed low attitude. The mean scores of the participants both related to general attitudes and each dimensions are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for the attitude scale

	<i>Number of the items</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
General Attitudes	31	2.83	.93
Importance	12	2.86	1.21
Enjoyment	9	2.59	1.15
Anxiety	10	2.91	1.03

Based on the mean score of 308 participants of this study ( $M=2.83$ ,  $SD=.93$ ) it can be observed that they had moderately low attitudes towards English instruction as the mean score was below 3. In terms of the sub-dimensions of the scale, the participants also held moderately low attitudes. Based on the mean score in importance factor ( $M=2.86$ ,  $SD=1.21$ ), it can be observed that participants had problems in recognizing the significance and the value of learning English. Related to enjoyment factor ( $M=2.59$ ,  $SD=1.15$ ), it can be stated that generally participants did not like English as the mean score was low.

Lastly, as all the items in anxiety factor were negatively worded, the higher mean score ( $M=2.91$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ) showed that participants experienced situations that arouse their English anxiety. Participants of this study had the lowest mean score in enjoyment dimension compared to importance and anxiety dimensions. However, as all of them were below 3, it can be stated that they had moderately low attitudes in all three dimensions.

### 3.2. Perceptions about general English courses

The second research question was “What are the perceptions of students studying at JAMYO towards General English courses?” To clarify this problem descriptive analysis was run by using IBM SPSS 22.0. There were 44 Yes/No items in the perception questionnaire. Overall, the frequency analyses of these 44 items were done in seven different categories.

#### 3.2.1. Perceptions about Specific Issues in General English Courses

In this part, participants were asked some specific issues related to their General English Courses. Although percentage of positive response to each 6 questions in this part was above 50, the top two are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Participants’ perceptions about specific issues

Items related to specific issues in learning English	Yes	%	No	%
Do you think General English courses should be taken as electives?	228	74	80	26
Do you think it is necessary to attend a private language institution to improve your English language skills?	232	75.3	76	24.7

### 3.3. Perceptions about objectives of general English courses

This section includes items related to objectives of learning English. The students were asked which of the following objectives should be among the objectives of the General English courses. The participants were provided with 10 different objectives related to learning English. Although percentage of positive response to each objective in this part was above 50, the top four are presented in Table 3

**Table 3.** Participants’ perceptions about objectives

Objectives	Yes	%	No	%
To understand English of movies, songs, etc.	220	71.4	88	28.6
To read in English (literature/magazines/journals/articles, etc.)	220	71.4	88	28.6
To integrate English language skills into daily life	224	72.7	84	27.3
To use English in your occupation	222	72.1	86	27.9

### 3.4. Perceptions about content of general English courses

This section was related to the content of the General English courses provided in the institution. Although percentage of positive response to each 4 questions in this part was above 50, the top two are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Participants' perceptions about content

Items related to content	Yes	%	No	%
Do you think it is necessary to include topics related to your occupation in General English courses?	229	74.4	79	25.6
Do you think it is necessary to include topics related to your own life experiences in General English courses?	206	66.9	102	33.1

### 3.5. Perceptions about learning activities in general English courses

The items related to learning activities provided in an English course were analyzed individually. The participants were provided with 24 different learning activities and were asked "Which of the following activities do you think helps you to learn English better?" Although the percentage of positive response to each learning activities in this part was above 50, the top five are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Participants' perceptions about learning activities

Learning activities	Yes	%	No	%
Grammar exercises	229	74.4	79	25.6
Vocabulary exercises	234	76	74	24
Reading exercises (literature, books, articles, magazines, newspapers)	214	69.5	94	30.5
Working on your own	216	70.1	92	29.9
Computer based activities	214	69.5	94	30.5

### 3.6. Perceptions about materials used in general English courses

This section was related to materials that were used in General English courses. Participants presented their dissatisfaction related to use of textbooks, thus two of the lowest positive responses in this part are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Participants' perceptions about materials

Items related to materials	Yes	%	No	%
Do you think the textbook you used in General English courses was satisfactory?	136	44.2	172	55.8
Do you think it is useful to closely follow the content of the textbook of the course?	121	39.3	187	60.7



### 3.7. Perceptions about evaluation procedures in general English courses

This section included items related to evaluation procedures, and participants expressed their preferences related to these procedures. Two of the lowest percentage of positive responses and two of the highest percentage of positive response in this part are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Participants' perceptions about evaluation procedures

Items related to evaluation procedures	Yes	%	No	%
Do you think instructions in the exams should be in English?	118	38.3	90	61.7
Do you think grades of quizzes should be included to your final grade?	133	43.2	175	56.8
Do you think it is necessary to make self-evaluation in General English courses?	193	62.7	115	37.3
Do you think it is useful to examine the questions after exams?	218	70.8	90	29.2

### 3.8. Perceptions about specific issues with short answers

This category is related to specific issues about learning English and there were five items (40-44) in this category. These items were slightly different from the other ones as they required participants to give short answers after answering the Yes/No question. The responses of the participants to five Yes/No questions are displayed in Table 8. The analysis of the given short answers is also provided.

**Table 8.** Participants' perceptions about specific issues in learning English

Items related to specific issues in learning English	Yes	%	No	%
Do you think it is necessary to start learning English earlier in order to learn it better?	252	81.8	56	18.2
Do you think two credit hours were enough for General English courses?	125	40.6	183	59.4
Do you think it is necessary to have small class size in order to learn English better?	233	75.6	75	24.4
Do you think the lesson content should be interesting in order to learn English better?	218	70.8	90	29.2
Do you think exams are necessary to learn English better?	165	53.6	143	46.4

In relation with 40<sup>th</sup> question, participants were asked about their own starting age, and the ideal age of starting language learning. None of the participants shared their starting age. Only 43 participants out of 308 shared their opinions related to ideal starting age. Majority of the students suggested that the ideal starting age should be 5 to 8. In 41<sup>st</sup> question, students were requested to state how many hours their courses should be if their answer is no. Only 34 participants out of 308 answered this question and they stated that it should be 4 to 10 hours. In 42<sup>nd</sup> question, the students who said the class size should be small were asked about how large the class size should be. Only 39 participants answered this question

and stated the number of students in an English class should be 10 to 15. In 43<sup>rd</sup> question they were asked to state the topics which were interesting to them if their answer was yes. Only 21 students answered this question, and they stated vocational topics related to armed forces and current issues like social or political were interesting to them. In the last item, the participants who said exams were unnecessary were requested to state how the students in English classes could be evaluated. Only 5 students answered this question and one of them stated that students should be assessed based on their classroom participation, and the other four participants stated that students should be assessed based on their oral performances.

### 3.9. Perceptions and the level of attitudes

The third research question of this study was “Do perceptions of students differ according to their level of attitudes (low, moderate, and high) towards English language instruction?” In order to clarify this problem a chi-square test was run through IBM SPSS22.0 and to decrease the possibility of getting false positive error (Huck, 2004) Bonferonni adjustment was made. First of all, in order to construct the attitude level groups the students who scored between 1 through 2.49 were categorized in low attitude group, the students who scored between 2.50 through 3.49 were categorized in moderate attitude group, and the ones who scored between 3.50 through 5 were depicted in high attitude group (Huck, 2004). The frequencies are provided in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Frequencies and Percentages of Attitude Groups

	<i>f</i>	%
Low	94	30.5
Moderate	142	46.1
High	72	23.4
Total	308	100.0

Secondly, 6 items out of 44 were chosen from the perception questionnaire for analysis as they are the most representative ones considering general perceptions about learning English and participants' responses to those items. The findings of this analysis were given in Table 10.

**Table 10.** Chi-Square analysis results

	Low		Moderate		High		Chi-square	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)			
Do you think General English courses were useful for your future vocational development?	22.3	77.7	75.4	24.6	93.1	6.	104.218	2	.000*
Do you think General English courses should be taken as electives?	87.2	12.8	69.7	30.3	65.3	34.7	12.765	2	.002*
Is preparing for general national and international English proficiency tests among your goals of learning English?	13.8	86.2	63.4	36.6	84.7	15.3	93.177	2	.000*
Do you think there should be preparatory class in your school to learn English better?	13.8	86.2	59.2	40.8	66.7	33.3	61.109	2	.000*

Do you think it is necessary to start learning English earlier in order to learn it better?	81.9	18.1	80.3	19.7	84.7	15.3	.634	2	.728
Do you think two credit hours were enough for these courses?	34	66	45.1	54.9	40.3	59.7	2.856	2	.240

For item 1, Based on chi-square test results, significant relationship was found between the perceptions of students regarding their future vocational development and their level of attitudes (low, moderate, and high) towards English language instruction  $X^2(2, N = 308) = 104.218, p < .00$ . However, as there were three attitude groups, we did not know which pairs of groups were significantly different. Therefore, post-hoc analysis for chi-square test was run using adjusted standardized residual analysis (Beasley and Schumaker, 1995; Garcia-Perez and Nunez-Anton, 2003). The findings for item 1 were provided in Table 11.

**Table 11.** Post-Hoc test results for Item 1

Item 1	Adjusted Residual	Chi-Square	df	p
Low (Yes)	-9.89	97.81	2	.000*
Low (No)	9.89	97,81	2	.000*
Moderate (Yes)	-4.06	16.48	2	.000*
Moderate (No)	4.06	19.48	2	.000*
High (Yes)	-5.98	35.76	2	.000*
High (No)	5.98	35.76	2	.000*

\* Significant at the Bonferroni adjusted significance level:  $.05/6 = .008$

A significant difference was found among the three attitude groups. Thus, more participants from high attitude group (93.1%) found General English courses useful for their future vocational development than the participants in moderate and low group. In addition, more participants from moderate group (75.4%) regarded General English courses useful for their future vocational development than the participants in low attitude group (22.3%).

For item 2, Based on chi-square test results, significant relationship was found between the perceptions of students regarding taking General English courses as electives and their level of attitudes (low, moderate, and high) towards English language instruction  $X^2(2, N = 308) = 12.765, p < .00$ . However, as there were three attitude groups we did not know which pairs of groups were significantly different. Therefore, post-hoc analysis for chi-square test was run using adjusted standardized residual analysis (Beasley and Schumaker, 1995; Garcia-Perez and Nunez-Anton, 2003). The findings for item 2 are provided in Table 12.

**Table 12.** Post-Hoc test results for Item 2

Item 2	Adjusted Residual	Chi-Square	df	p
Low (Yes)	-3.50	12.25	2	.002*
Low (No)	3.50	12.25	2	.002*
Moderate (Yes)	-1.59	2.53	2	.282
Moderate (No)	1.59	2.53	2	.282
High (Yes)	-1.93	3.72	2	.155
High (No)	1.93	3.72	2	.155

\* Significant at the Bonferroni adjusted significance level:  $.05/6 = .008$

A significant difference was found only for low attitude group. Thus, more participants from low attitude group (87.2%) stated General English courses should be taken as electives than the participants in moderate and high groups. There is not any significant difference between moderate and high group.

For item 5, Based on the chi-square test results, significant relationship was found between the perceptions of students regarding their goal of learning English and their level of attitudes (low, moderate, and high) towards English language instruction  $X^2(2, N = 308) = 93.177, p < .00$ . The post-hoc analysis for chi-square test was run using adjusted standardized residual analysis (Beasley and Schumaker, 1995; Garcia-Perez and Nunez-Anton, 2003). The findings for item 4 are provided in Table 13.

**Table 13.** Post-Hoc test results for Item 5

Item 5	Adjusted Residual	Chi-Square	df	p
Low (Yes)	-9.19	84.46	2	.000*
Low (No)	9.19	84.46	2	.000*
Moderate (Yes)	-3.30	10.89	2	.004*
Moderate (No)	3.30	10.89	2	.004*
High (Yes)	-6.12	37.45	2	.000*
High (No)	6.12	37.45	2	.000*

\* Significant at the Bonferroni adjusted significance level:  $.05/6 = .008$

A significant difference was found among three attitude groups. More participants from high attitude group (84.7%) stated preparing for general national and international English proficiency tests as their goal of learning English than the participants in moderate attitude group (63.4%) and low attitude group (13.8%). Also, more participants from moderate attitude group stated preparing for general national and international English proficiency tests as their goal of learning English than the participants in low attitude group.

For item 6, Based on chi-square test results, significant relationship was found between the perceptions of students regarding preparatory class and their level of attitudes (low, moderate, and high) towards English language instruction  $X^2(2, N = 308) = 61.109, p < .00$ . However, as there were three attitude groups we did not know which pairs of groups were significantly different. Therefore, post-hoc analysis for chi-square test was run using adjusted standardized residual analysis (Beasley and Schumaker, 1995; Garcia-Perez and Nunez-Anton, 2003). The findings for item 6 are provided in Table 14.

**Table 14.** Post-Hoc test results for Item 6

Item 6	Adjusted Residual	Chi-Square	df	p
Low (Yes)	-7.75	60.06	2	.000*
Low (No)	7.75	60.06	2	.000*
Moderate (Yes)	-3.93	15.44	2	.000*
Moderate (No)	3.93	15.44	2	.000*
High (Yes)	-3.80	14.44	2	.000*
High (No)	3.80	14.44	2	.000*

\* Significant at the Bonferroni adjusted significance level:  $.05/6 = .008$

A significant difference was found among the three attitude groups. Thus, more participants from low attitude group (86.2%) did not want a preparatory class in their school in order to learn English

better than the participants in moderate and high group. Also, more participants from moderate group (40.8%) did not want a preparatory class in their school in order to learn English better than the participants in high group (33.3%).

In item 40, a chi-square test was performed, and no significant relationship was found between the perceptions of students regarding starting learning English earlier and their level of attitudes (low, moderate, and high) towards English language instruction  $\chi^2(2, N = 308) = .634, p > .7$ . In item 41, a chi-square test was performed and no significant relationship was found between the perceptions of students regarding weekly hours of General English courses and their level of attitudes (low, moderate, and high) towards English language instruction  $\chi^2(2, N = 308) = 2.856, p > .2$ .

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Main issues related to attitude

Based on the findings related to attitude, it was observed that there was a tendency of showing moderate attitude towards English among the participants ( $M=2.83, SD=.93$ ). In most of the countries where English is learned as a foreign language, students may have negative or moderate attitudes towards English as the target language is confined only to classroom settings and the learners barely find a chance to practice English outside their schools (Shirgabi, 2010). If a learner is not eager to learn the target language for communication purposes, it is possible that he will have negative attitudes and will not want to learn the language enthusiastically (Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, and Alzwari, 2012).

In further analysis, sub-dimensions (importance, enjoyment and anxiety) of an attitude were considered through factor analysis. Attitudes towards the importance of English include its recognized value, for instance English is a worthwhile and necessary subject or all students should be required to take English (Aiken, 1974). In the attitude scale, there were 12 items related to the recognized value of English, and based on the students' responses it can be observed that generally they were not aware of the significance and value of learning English ( $M=2.86, SD=1.21$ ). They did not consider English as an important and necessary course. Moreover, they did not think that they would need English in their future studies and their occupation. Karahan (2007) claimed that students consider English just as a school subject or as a mission to overcome some difficulties, so this results in negative attitudes especially when the affective aspect of attitude is regarded. Furthermore, awareness of importance of learning English can enhance the students' attitudes towards learning the language (Nair et al, 2014).

It has been claimed that there appears a link between motivation, enjoyment and achievement (Brantmeier, 2005). It is possible to enhance a student's motivation, attitude and achievement with the language activities he/she enjoys most (Savignon, 1976). Moreover, if a student holds positive attitudes towards the target language and is motivated to learn it, he/she most probably show persistence and enjoy the necessary activities to achieve this goal (Gardner, 2006). However, when the responses of the participants of this study to the items related to enjoyment are examined, it can be said that they did not like being in activities related to English ( $M=2.59, SD=1.15$ ). This can be explained by their general low attitudes towards English instruction.

In the countries where a language is learned as a foreign language, students experience various levels of being anxious and in return develop a specific attitude towards English (Hussain, Shahid & Zaman, 2011). Empirical evidence suggests that anxiety plays an important psychological role for language students and affect both their affective reactions and attitude which are likely to influence their decision to continue studying the language (Phillips, 1992). Findings of this study revealed that students studying at Gendarmerie NCO Vocational College experienced moderate level of anxiety related to English

instruction ( $M=2.91$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ). It can be stated that their level of anxiety interfered with their language learning as they hesitated to participate in the lesson or got nervous when the teacher asked a question. An important number of studies suggested that foreign language anxiety impedes foreign language learning (Horwitz, 1986; Young, 1991; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Baily, Daley & Onwuegbuzie, 1999; Williams & Andrade, 2008).

#### 4.2. *Main issues related to perception*

First of all, it was observed that 74% of the participants wanted to take General English courses as electives although they are the part of common compulsory courses determined by Higher Education Institution of Turkey (YÖK) for vocational colleges. This finding is in line with what Cakici (2007) found out with the first year students from İzmir Vocational College at Dokuz Eylül University. In her study, Cakici (2007) claimed that as the students of vocational colleges do not have the chance of choosing the language course, none of the students may actually select a language to learn and this causes low attitudes towards English instruction. As Wilkins (1974) stated that language learners should have freedom to choose taking a language course and as they have become volunteers they develop more interest and by this way foreign language teaching can reach its objectives (as cited in Cakici, 2007).

The students were provided 10 different objectives and they were asked which of the given objectives should be among the objectives of their General English courses. An important majority of the students (72.7%) chose “to integrate English language skills into daily life”. “To better use of the English language in their occupation” had the second highest percentage determined by the participants (72.1%). Based on these two results it can be assumed that the students were aware of the importance of both integrative purposes and instrumental purposes proposed by Gardner and Lambert in their very first book related to attitudes and motivation (1972).

Content is another dimension in General English courses. Participants were asked four questions in this category. 74.4% of the participants stated that it is necessary to include topics related to their occupation in General English courses and 62.3% of them found reading texts related to their occupation motivating. Content is an important dimension in foreign language learning as a language is learned most effectively for communication in meaningful, purposeful social and academic contexts and in real life, people use language to talk about what they know and what they want to know more about, not to talk about language itself (Snow, Met, and Genesee, 1989, p.202). Moreover, content provides the initial motivation for the learners and if it is valuable for them, they eventually conclude that language is worth learning (Snow, Met, and Genesee, 1989). Furthermore, the students' responses to item 43 supported this situation. 70.8% of them stated that the lesson content should be interesting in order for them to learn English better. In Gendarmerie NCO Vocational College students have to take many different vocational courses, and they are knowledgeable about their professions insofar. Because of the specific nature of their educational context, it would be motivating to integrate language instruction and content related to their occupation into their General English courses.

In the learning activities part, participants were asked 8 questions related to general concerns in teaching English and 1 question was related to learning activities and provided students with 24 different learning activities to choose. Regarding the general issues an important number of the participants (72.7%) stated that it was necessary to give responsibility to students in determining class activities. Ellis and Sinclair (1989) pointed out that;

helping learners take on more responsibility for their own learning can be beneficial because, learning can be more effective when learners take control of their own learning because they learn what they are ready to learn, those learners who are responsible for their own learning can carry on learning outside the classroom, and

learners who know about learning can transfer learning strategies to other subjects (cited in Yıldırım, 2012, p.20).

Eclectic approach in teaching English as a foreign language is desirable as it provides learners with variety of methodologies including interesting and interactive classroom activities and teaching aids like authentic and audio-visual materials (Mathew and Alidmat, 2013). With the crucial advances in technology, instructional methods, classroom activities and materials, the content delivery formats, the role of teachers and students are needed to be modified. For instance, traditional textbook can be supported by audio-visual aids (Su, 2009). In accordance with these claims, the majority of the participants found audio-visual materials (poster, television, video, computer, etc.), and authentic materials (restaurant menus, newspapers, magazines, advertisements) useful for learning English. Authentic materials like restaurant menus, newspapers, magazines, advertisements are regarded as useful tools in English Language Teaching as they present real world instead of artificially created linguistic data and provide learners with the language used in real and daily life (Rahman, 2014).

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## Jandarma Astsubay Meslek Yüksek Okulu öğrencilerinin İngilizce öğretimine yönelik algı ve tutumları

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### Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı Jandarma Astsubay Meslek Yüksek Okulu 2. sınıf öğrencilerinin İngilizce öğretimine yönelik algı ve tutumlarını belirlemektir. Öğrencilerin tutum seviyeleri düşük, orta ve yüksek olmak üzere incelenmiştir. Öğrencilerin tutumları faktör analizi sonucu belirlenen önem, hoşlanma ve kaygı alt boyutları göz önünde bulundurularak da incelenmiştir. Katılımcıların hedefler, içerik, eğitim durumları, kaynaklar ve sınav durumları gibi Genel İngilizce dersleri boyutlarına yönelik algıları belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca öğrencilerin algılarının tutum seviyelerine göre farklılık gösterip göstermediğine bakılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın örneklemini Jandarma Astsubay Meslek Yüksek Okulu'nda öğrenim gören 308 2. sınıf öğrencisini içermektedir. Veriler bir tutum ölçeği ve bir algı anketi kullanılarak elde edilmiştir ve IBM SPSS 22.0 programı kullanılarak betimsel analiz ve ki-kare test analizi yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları katılımcıların büyük bir bölümünün İngilizce öğretimine yönelik nispeten düşük tutum sergilediklerini ortaya koymuştur. Öğrencilerin önem, hoşlanma ve kaygı alt boyutlarına göre de nispeten düşük tutum sergiledikleri gözlemlenmiştir. Öğrencilerin belirlenen algıları ise Genel İngilizce derslerinin geliştirilmesi gerektiğini ortaya koymuştur. Bununla birlikte öğrencilerin bazı algılarının tutum seviyelerine göre farklılık gösterdiği ortaya çıkmıştır. Sonuç olarak, öğrencilerin tutumlarıyla birlikte tercihleri ve algıları göz önünde bulundurularak Jandarma Astsubay Meslek Yüksek Okulu'nda sağlanan Genel İngilizce derslerini geliştirmek amacıyla önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* Tutum; algı; İngilizce dil öğretimi

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