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## İngilizce Lisans Yerleştirme Sınavının ve Çeşitli Değişkenlerin Öğrencilerin Yabancı Dil Becerilerine Etkisi

*The Effect of English Admission Test and Various Variables on Foreign Language Skills of Students*

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## İngilizce Lisans Yerleştirme Sınavının ve Çeşitli Değişkenlerin Öğrencilerin Yabancı Dil Becerilerine Etkisi

Burak ASMA – Fatma Özlem SAKA

### Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, İngilizce lisans yerleştirme sınavının ve çeşitli değişkenlerin öğrencilerin dört temel dil becerisine etkisini tespit etmektir. Nicel araştırma yöntemlerinden yordayıcı korelasyonel araştırma deseni temel alınarak hazırlanan araştırmanın çalışma grubu, Türkiye'nin güneyindeki bir devlet üniversitesinin İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Ana Bilim Dalına yeni kayıt yaptıran ya da hâlihazırda bu bölümde okuyan 81 lisans öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak dört temel dil becerisini ölçen ve araştırma kapsamında geliştirilen İngilizce Yeterlilik Testi (İYT) ve öğrencilerin LYS-5 puanları kullanılmıştır. İngilizce Yeterlilik Testinin güvenirlik ve geçerlik analizleri klasik test teorisi ve madde tepki teorisi veri analiz yazılımı olan jMetrik ile yapılmış, ilgili testin madde güçlüğü ve ayırt edicilik değerleri ile KR-21 güvenirlilik katsayısı hesaplanmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular doğrultusunda, ilgili testin güvenilir ve geçerli bir ölçme aracı olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Katılımcıların bu testten aldıkları puanlar ile İngilizce lisans yerleştirme sınavından aldığı puanların basit doğrusal regresyon, çoklu regresyon analizleri ve karşılaştırma istatistikleri kullanılarak analiz edilmesi sonucunda araştırma bulguları elde edilmiştir. Buna göre, öğrencilerin İngilizce lisans yerleştirme sınavındaki puanlarının İngilizce Yeterlilik Testinden (İYT) aldığı toplam puanların ve okuma testinde puanlarının anlamlı bir yordayıcısı olduğu; dinleme, yazma ve konuşma testindeki aldığı puanları anlamlı bir şekilde yordamadığı belirlenmiştir. Araştırmada ayrıca İngilizce hazırlık eğitimi alan öğrencilerin konuşma ve dinleme testindeki puanlarının hazırlık eğitimi almamış öğrencilerden daha yüksek olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Öğrencilerin cinsiyetlerine göre yapılan karşılaştırma sonucunda, erkek öğrencilerin İngilizce Yeterlilik Testinin genelinde ve okuma testinde kadın öğrencilere kıyasla daha yüksek puanlar aldığı saptanmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına paralel olarak bazı önerilerde bulunulmuştur. Buna göre, dil eğitimi alanında öğrenim görecek öğrencilerin hedef dile ait becerilerinin tam anlamıyla ölçülebilmesi için dört temel dil becerisini başarılı bir şekilde ölçen bir sınava ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Bu amaçla hâlihazırda uygulamada olan Yabancı Dil Testinin (YDT) içeriği çok boyutlu ölçme yapabilecek şekilde genişletilebilir ve teste farklı dil becerilerini ölçen sorular eklenebilir. Geçiş sürecini kolaylaştmak ve alt yapıyı hazırlamak amacıyla dil becerileri aşamalı olarak teste eklenebilir ya da birden fazla beceriyi ölçen çok boyutlu soru türlerinden yararlanılabilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Lisans yerleştirme sınavı, Yabancı dil testi, Ölçme ve değerlendirme, Üniversite sınavı, Dil becerileri

### The Effect of English Admission Test and Various Variables on Foreign Language Skills of Students<sup>1</sup>

This study compares students' foreign language proficiency according to several criteria and the role of the English Admission Test (EAT). The predictive correlational research design, one of the quantitative research methods, was used in

<sup>1</sup> This study was produced from the master's thesis written by the first author under the supervision of the second author.

this study. The study group consisted of 81 undergraduate students studying in the English Language Teaching Department of a state university in southern Turkey. The English Proficiency Test (TELP) developed by the researchers and the EAT scores were used as data collection tools. The validity and reliability analyses of the test were conducted using jMetrik, a data analysis software for classical test theory and item response theory, and the item difficulty and discrimination values, as well as the KR-21 reliability coefficients, were calculated. In line with the findings, it was concluded that the relevant test is a reliable and valid measurement tool. According to the findings, the English Admission Test scores predicted students' total TELP and reading test scores but not their listening, writing, or speaking scores. Besides, the students who received the English preparatory training performed better on the speaking and listening tests than those who did not. Finally, male students outperformed female students on both the total of English Proficiency Test and the reading test but not on other tests. In parallel with the results of the research, some suggestions were put forth. Accordingly, a test that successfully measures four basic language skills is needed in order to fully measure the target language skills of the students who will study in the field of language education. For this purpose, the content of the Foreign Language Test (YDT), which is currently in use, can be expanded to make multidimensional measurement and questions measuring different language skills can be added to the test. In order to facilitate the transition process and prepare the infrastructure, language skills can be added to the test gradually or multidimensional question types that measure more than one skill can be used.

**Keywords:** University admission test, Foreign language test, Assessment and evaluation, University exam, Language skills

### Structured Abstract

Foreign language proficiency, which is one of the most prominent characteristics of a well-equipped individual today, emerges as a distinguishing characteristic not only in Turkey but also in many other countries. With this in mind, countries strive to maximize the foreign language proficiency of their citizens and produce future generations who can effectively express their feelings and thoughts in multiple languages. Individuals are offered, in addition to mandatory basic education, courses for personal development and language institutes with special incentives for this purpose. Diverse methods and strategies are employed to improve the efficiency of the process, and education and training processes are regulated based on research findings in this area. In light of the Turkish sample, it is difficult to assert that the desired success has been realized despite the numerous implementations. National and international reports corroborate this circumstance. Even though English has been taught since the second year of the 12-year compulsory education process and the students have undergone a ten-year education period, the students cannot communicate at the expected level and cannot express their feelings and thoughts in the target language effectively. In the literature, numerous explanations (grammar-based instruction, ignoring productive language skills, exam-focused instruction, insufficient class hours, etc.) are proposed for this phenomenon. Exams administered are one of the factors influencing the emergence of these justifications. Since the English teaching process is based on an exam-oriented teaching process, the applied method or strategy takes a back seat to the student's exam performance. It is evident that factors such as school pressure, parental pressure, and social pressure also play a significant role in this situation. In order for the students in the class to achieve passing

scores on the exam, the teachers structure the course according to the objectives of the exams and put skills and topics not assessed on the exam to the second plan. As a result of this phenomenon, which is also known as the washback effect in the literature, newly appointed teachers begin their education processes with the intention of using new and current teaching methods and strategies, but after a certain period of time, they return to traditional teaching methods and conduct an exam-oriented process.

#### *Method*

In this study, which examines the effects of the English admission test (LYS-5) and various variables on students' language skills, predictive correlational research design, one of the quantitative research methods, was used. For this purpose, the research tried to find answers to the following research questions and sub-research questions:

1. Do the LYS-5 English test scores of the students affect their general language skills?
  - Do students' LYS-5 English test scores affect their foreign language reading skills?
  - Do students' LYS-5 English test scores affect their foreign language listening skills?
  - Do students' LYS-5 English test scores affect their foreign language writing skills?
  - Do students' LYS-5 English test scores affect their foreign language speaking skills?
2. Do students' language proficiency test scores differ according to their preparatory school attendance status and gender?

The study group of the research consisted of 81 (Female: 56, Male: 25) undergraduate students who are newly enrolled or are currently studying in the English Language Teaching Department of a state university in the south of Turkey. While 25 of the students are students studying at the faculty or college of the university, 56 are newly enrolled students who have not received any education at the university yet.

Two data collection tools were used in the study: the LYS-5 scores of the participants and the English Proficiency Test (TELP).

The analysis of the data collected within the scope of the research was carried out using the quantitative data analysis program (SPSS 23.0). Simple linear regression analysis was used to test the relationship between the participants' LYS-5 scores and the total scores they got from the English Proficiency Test, and multiple regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between LYS-5 scores and each skill in the English Proficiency Test. Comparison tests were used to reveal the distribution of the scores in the English Proficiency Test according to the participants' preparatory education status and gender.

#### *Findings*

The simple linear regression analysis results showed that the LYS-5 scores of the participants significantly predicted the English proficiency test scores ( $R=0.281$ ,  $R^2=0.079$ ;  $p<0.036$ ) and explained 7.9% of the total score in the English Proficiency Test (TELP).

The results of multiple regression analysis regarding the prediction of the scores of the participants in the subtests of the TELP according to their LYS-5 scores showed that the regression model was significant ( $R=0.437$ ,  $R^2=0.191$ ;  $p=0.026$ ), LYS-5 scores predicted 19 % of the subtests in the TELP. However, it was determined that LYS-5 scores were a significant predictor of the reading test, but not a significant predictor of the other tests (writing, listening, and speaking).

As a result of comparing the scores of the participants in the TELP according to their preparatory school attendance, it was found that while the scores of the participants showed a statistically significant difference in the listening and speaking tests

[(Flistening (2.78) = 3.654; p=0.030), (Fspeaking (2, 78) = 8.927; p<0.001)], there was no statistically significant difference in the other subtests (reading and writing) and in the overall test.

According to the results of the comparisons made based on the gender of the participants, there was a statistically significant difference in the reading test and the English Proficiency Test in general [(treading=-2.653; p=0.010), (tgeneral=-2.219; p=0.029)]. While the male participants scored statistically higher than the female participants in these tests, no significant difference was found in other tests (writing, listening, and speaking).

#### *Discussion and Conclusion*

At the end of the research, it was determined that the LYS-5 scores of the students were a significant predictor of the total scores on the English Proficiency Test. In skill-based analyses, it was determined that students' LYS-5 scores were a significant predictor of their scores in the reading test alone but did not significantly predict scores in other skills. These findings of the study were similar to the findings of the studies (Çakıldere, 2013; Dağtan, 2012; Hatipoğlu, 2016; Özmen, 2011; Sayın & Arslan, 2016; Sevimli, 2007; Karabulut, 2007; Polat, 2017; Yıldırım, 2010) in the literature. In fact, in these studies, the negative washback effect of foreign language tests was emphasized. In addition, these studies noted that the central foreign language tests applied in Turkey do not fully measure receptive and productive language skills; the dimensions of reading skill, vocabulary and grammar knowledge are emphasized; and the test results do not reveal a holistic result about foreign language proficiency. The research results also showed that the students who attended compulsory English preparatory education performed better in the listening test than the students who did not pass the English compulsory preparatory exam and would take preparatory education. In the speaking test, on the other hand, it was concluded that the students who took the compulsory preparatory education had better scores than the students who were exempt from the preparatory education or who could not pass the preparatory exam and would take preparatory education. When the scores of the students in the TELP were compared according to their gender, it was determined that this difference was in favour of male students in both reading and TELP general scores. These findings of the study were supported by the findings of other studies (Aydin, 2006; Ünal, 2005) examining the relationship between foreign language achievement scores and gender in the literature, and it was revealed in these studies that female students had higher foreign language success scores than male students. In addition, Gömleksiz and Elaldı (2011) conducted a study to evaluate the reading skills of preparatory class students and found that female students' reading skills were higher than male students. The scores of the participants in the writing, listening and speaking tests did not differ statistically significantly according to their gender.

#### **Introduction**

Speaking a foreign language retains its importance today as it was in the past. Due to the advantages of speaking a foreign language, the popularity of learning a foreign language is growing by the day, and many people participate in a variety of educational programs to learn a foreign language (Özdemir, 2019). In Turkey, as in many other societies, these processes are attempted to be carried out both formally

and informally. Students in Turkey begin receiving foreign language education in the second grade of their 12-year obligatory education and strive to master the four abilities of the target language (MoNE, 2018). Various approaches, methods, or techniques are used and their effects on foreign language learning are investigated to achieve more successful results in foreign language teaching, to facilitate and accelerate learning, to increase students' interest in the lesson, and to raise individuals who can use their language skills competently (Memiş & Erdem, 2013). When it comes to the Turkish sample, the presence of two distinct circumstances stands out. Some Turkish teachers are attempting to attain success through the use of traditional teaching methods and are unwilling to learn and adopt new and alternative methods and strategies (Kayabaşı, 2012). In this method, teachers who continue the education process carry out foreign language teaching activities in a framework in which they are at the centre, direct the course flow and the students themselves, and the students are passive learners. Some teachers, particularly those who are just starting out or in their initial years of teaching, adopt language teaching methods, also known as current teaching methods, and use them to achieve success in the target language. Although these differences in the implementation of the education and training process lead to different applications in foreign language assessment and evaluation activities based on class and school, they do not have the same effect on the central exams, which are held throughout the country and whose results are very important for the education and professional careers of the students. In fact, a standard structure is applied in the exams held by the Student Selection and Placement Centre (ÖSYM), and the success of the candidates in the test is measured. Although the purposes of the three different exams (YDS, YÖKDİL, YDT) to measure foreign language skills are different, their structures are similar. This situation in foreign language exams administered by ÖSYM is considered important in terms of standardization.

### **Central Foreign Language Tests in Turkey**

In Turkey, the Student Selection and Placement Centre (ÖSYM) administers three different foreign language tests: the YDS (Test of Foreign Language Proficiency), the YÖKDİL (Foreign Language Test of Higher Education Institutions), and the YDT (Foreign Language Test). The outcome of the YDS, which began in 2013 with a reduction in the number of questions on the Public Personnel Foreign Language Placement Exam (KPDS), can be used for a variety of national purposes. With the YDS results, the candidates may apply for postgraduate education (master's and

doctoral degrees), receive language compensation, be exempt from the compulsory foreign language preparatory training, and use in applications for associate professorship, TUS (Medical Specialization Exam), DUS (Dental Specialty Entrance Examination), and apply for student exchange programs. The test consists of 80 multiple-choice questions and lasts 180 minutes. The test, which is held in 23 languages, is administered face-to-face three times a year and electronically (e-YDS) ten times a year. The e-YDS is administered within a set quota in the provinces of Ankara, Istanbul, and İzmir.

The Higher Education Institutions Foreign Language Exam (YÖKDİL), on the other hand, started to be implemented on March 5, 2017 and is a national foreign language test that assesses the foreign language proficiency of the candidates in three distinct fields: social, science, and health sciences. The results of the YÖKDİL, which is accepted as equivalent to the (YDS), can be used in all areas of use of the YDS, except for receiving foreign language compensation. In YÖKDİL, which has been adopted as a field-specific language exam, candidates solve foreign language questions related to the field they applied for (social, science or health) before the test. The YÖKDİL, which is held twice a year face-to-face, will be held electronically for the first time on May 14, 2022. In this way, candidates will be able to take the exam both face-to-face and electronically. The YÖKDİL has the same number of questions (80) and duration (180 minutes) as the YDS, but the question types are different (See Table 1). The YÖKDİL is conducted in English, German, French, and Arabic.

Previously known as the English Undergraduate Placement Exam (LYS-5), the English Admission Test (EAT) is one of the Field Proficiency Tests (AYT) used as the second stage of the Higher Education Institutions Exam. The test, which has been administered since 2018, is highly preferred by university applicants interested in studying in the field of language. The duration of the EAT, which consists of 80 questions, is 120 minutes. The YDT, which is administered in five languages: German, Arabic, French, English, and Russian, accounts for 60% of students' admission scores to universities. While until 2022, taking the test required passing the Basic Proficiency Test (TYT), the first stage of the university exams, and receiving the threshold score determined by this test, the threshold score requirement has been eliminated as of 2022. In comparison to other nationally recognised foreign language tests (YDS and YÖKDİL), there is only one purpose for the EAT (university

placement score). The EAT is held in the following languages: German, Arabic, French, English, and Russian.

**Table 1.** *Types and numbers of questions in central foreign language exams*

Question Type	YDS	YÖKDİL	EAT
Vocabulary and Grammar	16	20	15
Cloze test	10	10	5
Sentence Completion	10	11	8
Translation (Turkish-English, English-Turkish)	6	12	12
Reading Passages	20	15	15
Dialogue Completion	5	-	5
Synonym Sentence (English-English translation)	4	-	5
Paragraph Completion	4	6	5
Irrelevant Sentence	5	6	5
Finding the appropriate expression for the situation	-	-	5

### **Washback Effects of Foreign Language Tests**

Measurement and evaluation practices, which are integral parts of education and training activities, have the potential to influence learning directly or indirectly. This situation, also referred to as the washback effect, reflects the impact of the test on the design of the curriculum, instructional practices, and student behaviour (McKinley & Thompson, 2018). The effects of the test can be seen in students' and teachers' preferences: teachers can directly prepare students for a specific test and organise their teaching practises around it, or students can concentrate on specific aspects of language learning in light of the nature of the test they will take after the educational process. Typically, the washback effect is viewed as either negative or positive.

In studies (Hatipoğlu, 2016; Sayın & Arslan, 2016; Sevimli, 2007; Karabulut, 2007; Yıldırım, 2010) on the washback effect of the LYS-5, it was highlighted that the exam had a negative effect on learning and teaching processes; the curriculum was ignored and the test-oriented programme was taken as the basis due to the structure of the test; the skills such as listening, writing, and speaking were not focused enough since they were not prerequisites to be successful in the test; a teaching plan based on grammar, vocabulary teaching and reading skills was conducted. In the study conducted by Sayın and Arslan (2016) regarding the inhibition effect of LYS-5, it was determined that students had difficulty following the courses at the university because they were unable to achieve sufficient development in all of their language skills. The results of another study on the LYS-5 (Hatipolu, 2016) revealed that while the LYS-5 English

Test had a significant impact on the learning and teaching of English in Turkey, it did not serve as a practical communication tool in everyday situations. In the study, it was found that, due to the content and structure of the test, students were unable to transfer their knowledge to real-life situations and were unable to distinguish between small units of the target language.

It was discovered that similar findings were reached in the YDS, KDPS and ÜDS exams, all of which have a similar structure to the LYS-5. Several studies (Çakıldere, 2013; Dağtan, 2012; Özmen, 2011; Polat, 2017) have found that students focus on grammar and vocabulary learning, neglect productive language skills (writing and speaking) and listening skills, and focus on reading skills due to the structure of the KPDS and ÜDS, and have pointed out that there is a need for a change in the structure of these test to enable them to cover four fundamental language skills. In studies examining the opinions of academicians regarding the washback effect of foreign language tests (Akpinar & Çakıldere, 2013; Kasap & Saltaş, 2020; Polat, 2020), it was determined that the current foreign language tests do not contribute to the development of foreign language proficiency in Turkey, and academicians find themselves unable to communicate in the target language. It has been observed that they feel inadequate about the subject, and although they should make international publications and give presentations at conferences in order to advance their careers, they have not been able to do so with the tests in practice.

Examining the effect of the High School Entrance Examination (LGS) on the English teaching process at the secondary school level, Ekiz (2019) found that there are differences between public schools and private schools. According to the findings of the study, public schools prioritize an exam-oriented teaching process and preparation for the LGS; students in public schools neglect language skills and subjects for which they are not responsible in the exam, and the teaching process is geared toward increasing exam success. On the other hand, this situation has not been observed in private schools where the exam preparation processes are carried out through support courses, and activities aimed at improving the four basic language skills of the target language are continued in the lessons. Examining the washback effect of the TEOG exam, Çelik (2017) stated that teachers were caught in the middle of an inconsistency between the skills measured in the exam and the curriculum that was sent to them and required to follow, that they reluctantly and inevitably limited their teaching processes due to the exam format and success pressure, and that they preferred a teaching

process focused on exam success. In the study, positive washback effects related to the exam were shown to contribute to the development of students' reading skills and vocabulary. Kılıçkaya (2016), who conducted a study on the TEOG and reached similar findings with Ekiz (2019), also stated in his study that the exam also plays an important role in issues such as book selection, the language used in the teaching process, in-class assessment and evaluation activities, and student anxiety, and negatively affects the related issues.

Similar findings have been reached in international studies (Aftab, Qureshi & William, 2014; Ahmad & Rao, 2012) conducted on the washback effect of foreign language tests, which have a similar exam structure. The studies which examined the washback effect of the central English exam conducted in Pakistan revealed that teachers followed an exam-oriented teaching plan due to the exam format, focused on reading skills while neglecting non-exam skills (listening, speaking and writing), and concentrated on advancing students' memorization skills. It was stated that students' high-level thinking and critical thinking skills were not sufficiently developed, students spent a significant part of their time learning exam techniques and their communicative competence was negatively affected, and they developed a passive language learning approach rather than an active learning approach.

Mahmoudi (2015), who examined the effect of the national university entrance exam in Iran on the English learning process, underlined that since the test had a format that merely focused on reading, grammar and vocabulary, it had certain disadvantages (neglecting skills other than reading skills, application of an exam-oriented teaching process, language learning). On the other hand, he added that it helped students improve their self-development in the skills assessed by the exam.

### **Purpose of the research**

The purpose of this research is to determine the effects of the English undergraduate placement test and various variables on students' language skills. For this purpose, answers to the following research questions and sub-research questions were sought within the scope of the research:

1. Do students' English Admission test scores affect their general language skills?

- Do students' English Admission Test scores affect their foreign language reading skills?
  - Do students' English Admission Test scores affect their foreign language listening skills?
  - Do students' English Admission Test scores affect their foreign language writing skills?
  - Do students' English Admission Test scores affect their foreign language speaking skills?
2. Do students' language proficiency differ according to their compulsory English preparatory training situation and gender?

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The predictive correlational research design, one of the quantitative research methodologies, was adopted in this study, which investigated the impact of the English admission test (LYS-5) and numerous variables on students' language skills. Correlational research is a type of non-experimental research method in which a researcher measures two variables, understands and evaluates the statistical relationship between them without being affected by any external variable (Seeram, 2019). In correlational studies, which have two different types, exploratory and predictive, if the main purpose is to try to grasp an important situation by analysing the relations between variables, exploratory correlational research is used to examine the relations between the variables, and exploratory correlational research design is used when it tries to predict the other one based on the variable (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2008).

#### **Study Group**

The study group of the research consisted of 81 undergraduate students (Female: 56, Male: 25) who have just enrolled or are currently studying in the English Language Teaching Department of a state university in southern Turkey. While 25 of the

students are students studying at the faculty or college of the university, 56 are newly enrolled students who have not received any education at the university yet.

### **Data Collection Tools**

Two data collection tools were used in the study: the English Admission Test (EAT) scores of the students and the Test of English Proficiency Test (TELP). The EAT scores of the participants were obtained by taking the undergraduate placement results of each participant from the ÖSYM Candidate Processing System. To eliminate the effect of the success of the participants in the other tests, the correct numbers in the 80-question foreign language test were taken into account, and the EAT raw scores were calculated by multiplying the correct number of participants by 1.25.

The Test of English Proficiency Test (TELP), developed by the researchers, was designed as a foreign language assessment tool to measure both receptive (reading and listening) and productive (writing and speaking) language skills. In the first session of the test, which was conducted in two sessions, there were questions about reading, listening and writing skills, and the second session consisted of questions regarding speaking skills (See Table 2). Two different techniques were used to test the reliability and validity analyses of the test. Since the questions in the reading and listening sections consist of binary (1-0) items, the validity and reliability analyses of the questions in this section were conducted using jMetrik, a data analysis software for classical test theory and item response theory, and the item difficulty and discrimination values, as well as the KR-21 reliability coefficients, were calculated.

The item difficulty, which reflects the percentage of individuals who correctly answered the question, can take values ranging from 0 to 1. In the item difficulty as the higher the value is, the easier will be the relevant question. In the literature, items with a p-value of 0.90 are classified as very easy items, while items below 0.20 are considered very difficult. Therefore, a p-value of .50 is accepted as the optimum level (Boopathiraj & Chellamani, 2013). Item discrimination, on the other hand, denotes the power to successfully distinguish the individuals concerning the skill tested with the relevant item. As with item difficulty, 0.50 is considered the optimum value for item discrimination (Boopathiraj & Chellamani, 2013). Kuder Richardson -21 (KR 21), which assesses the internal consistency, is extensively used in tests with binary items (1-0) (Büyüköztürk, 2011).

To ensure consistency while assessing writing and speaking skills, rubrics were used for scoring these tests. Since the writing sections were adapted from the Pearson (PTE) Academic Writing Test format, the academic writing rubric used by Pearson was used for scoring the writing tasks. These rubrics, which have an analytical rubric structure, were evaluated separately by two experts and the coefficient of agreement between them (Cohen KAPPA) was calculated. The parts of the speaking test were adapted from the activities in the speaking section of the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). The students' speaking records were rated by two experts using the TOEIC's speaking task evaluation rubrics. The KAPPA coefficient was used to identify the agreement between experts. In Kappa analysis, which can be calculated in two different ways, Cohen and Fleiss Kappa, if the agreement between two raters is measured, Cohen Kappa is calculated, and if the number of raters with which the agreement is measured is more than two, the Fleiss Kappa coefficient is calculated (Kılıç, 2015). Within the scope of the research, the Cohen KAPPA coefficient was calculated since two experts were assigned for the writing and speaking sections. The reference ranges presented by Landis and Koch (1977) were considered in the interpretation of the fit values obtained as a result of the analysis (0.01-0.20 insignificant agreement; 0.21-0.40 weak agreement; 0.41-0.60 moderate agreement; 0.61—0.80 good agreement; 0.81—1.00 very good agreement).

**Table 2.** Content of the English proficiency test

Test	Tasks	Number of Questions	Duration
Reading	Two tasks (Careful reading)	19 questions (6=Multiple choice, 7=Matching heading, 6=True/False/Not Given)	40 mins
Writing	Two tasks (Summarizing a text and writing an essay)	2 questions (Summarizing text and writing an essay)	30 mins
Listening	Two tasks (Conversation and Lecture)	14 questions (7=Form completion, 2=Short-answer, 5=Multiple choice)	20 mins
Speaking	Six tasks (Reading a text aloud, describing a picture, responding to questions (3x), expressing an opinion)	6 questions (1=Reading a text aloud, 1=Describing a picture, 3=Responding to questions, 1=Expressing an opinion)	4-5 mins

**Table 3.** *Test statistics for reading and listening sections*

Reading			Listening		
Item No	r <sub>ix</sub>	p <sub>j</sub>	Item No	r <sub>ix</sub>	p <sub>j</sub>
1	0.68	0.45	1	0.63	0.48
2	0.63	0.52	2	0.69	0.34
3	0.64	0.41	3	0.61	0.34
4	0.60	0.38	4	0.78	0.55
5	0.57	0.38	5	0.76	0.45
6	0.79	0.55	6	0.44	0.59
7	0.70	0.41	7	0.61	0.38
8	0.70	0.34	8	0.61	0.41
9	0.58	0.34	9	0.55	0.41
10	0.52	0.41	10	0.51	0.62
11	0.60	0.66	11	0.72	0.76
12	0.33	0.31	12	0.49	0.41
13	0.54	0.59	13	0.52	0.45
14	0.73	0.59	14	0.46	0.69
15	0.71	0.48			
16	0.72	0.41			
17	0.65	0.45			
18	0.77	0.34			
19	0.65	0.62			
KR-21=0,78	$\bar{r}_{ix}$ 0.64	$\bar{P}_j$ 0.46	KR-21=0.72	$\bar{r}_{ix}$ 0.60	$\bar{P}_j$ 0.49

As a result of examining the item statistics of the reading and listening tests, it was determined that the difficulty of the items in the reading test ranged from 0.31 to 0.66, and the average difficulty was calculated as 0.46. While the item discrimination values of the reading test ranged between 0.33 and 0.79, the average discrimination level was calculated as 0.64. In the listening test, item difficulties ranged from 0.34 to 0.76, and the average difficulty was calculated as 0.49. The item discrimination levels of the listening test varied between 0.44 and 0.76, and the average difficulty value was calculated as 0.60. While the internal consistency coefficients of the tests were 0.78 in the reading test and 0.72 in the listening test, it was determined that both tests had an internal consistency coefficient above the 0.70 cut-off point stated in the literature. Considering the item difficulty and discrimination findings, and internal consistency coefficients of the tests, it was concluded that the tests are reliable and valid measurement tools.

**Table 4.** *Agreement ratios for writing and speaking tests*

Writing-Speaking		Kappa Coefficient of Agreement
Summarising a text		0.84
Writing an essay		0.85
Reading a text aloud	Pronunciation	0.89
	Intonation and Stress	0.86
Describing a picture		0.91
Responding to questions (1)		0.87
Responding to questions (2)		0.94
Responding to questions (3)		0.91
Expressing an opinion		0.92

As a result of the Kappa analysis performed separately for each task in the writing and speaking tests, it was found that the agreement between the raters ranged from 0.84 to 0.92. Accordingly, the agreement between the raters in the writing and speaking sections was determined as "very good agreement" in all sub-tasks.

### **Data Collection Process**

The data collection process started after obtaining the necessary permissions for the data collection process. A pilot application was made to a group of 28 people for the English Proficiency Test to be developed within the scope of the research. After the validity and reliability analyses of the test were made in line with the data obtained from the pilot application, the actual application was started. After the developed test was applied to the main study group, the data collection process was completed by obtaining the license placement results of the participants from the ÖSYM Candidate Processing System.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the collected data collected was made using the quantitative data analysis program (SPSS 23.0). Simple linear regression analysis was used to test the relationship between the participants' EAT scores and the total scores they got from the English Proficiency Test, and multiple regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between the EAT scores and each skill in the English Proficiency Test. Comparison tests were used to reveal the distribution of the scores in the English Proficiency Test according to the participants' compulsory English preparatory

training and gender. The normality findings of the data were taken as the basis for deciding on the analysis to be applied. Normality tests were based on three criteria (Kolmogorov Smirnov and Shapiro Wilk test results being more than 0.05 significance value, kurtosis and skewness values being within  $\pm 1$  tolerance, p-value calculated as a result of dividing the skewness/kurtosis value within its standard error  $\alpha =$  less than 1.96 for 0.05). As a result of the analysis, it was seen that each sub-level of the compulsory preparatory school training and gender variables met these criteria. the compulsory English preparatory training variable consists of three sub-levels, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), one of the parametric analysis techniques, was used in the analyses made with this variable, and samples t-test, independent of parametric analysis techniques, was used in the analyses made with this variable since the gender variable consisted of two sub-levels.

### Findings

**Table 5.** *Simple linear regression results for the prediction of English proficiency scores*

Variable	B	SH	$\beta$	T	P
Constant	-20.053	33.488		-	0.552
				0.599	
EAT* score	0.842	0.392	0.281	2.148	0.036
R =0.281		R <sup>2</sup> =0.079			
F <sub>(1,55)</sub> =4.614		p=0.036			

\*English Admission Test

The findings of the simple linear regression analysis results revealed that the EAT scores of the participants significantly predicted the English proficiency test scores ( $R=0.281$ ,  $R^2=0.079$ ;  $p<0.036$ ) and explained 7.9% of the total score in the English Proficiency Test (TELP). According to the t-test result regarding the significance of the regression coefficients, it is seen that the EAT score is a significant predictor of the total score of the English Proficiency test.

**Table 6.** Multiple regression results on the prediction of English proficiency scores

Variable	B	SH	$\beta$	t	p	R	$R^2$	F	p
Constant	76.834	3.387		22.687	0.000	0.437	0.191	3.009	0.026
Writing	-0.016	0.113	-0.019	-0.139	0.890				
Writing	0.445	0.160	0.379	2.785	0.008				
Listening	0.134	0.149	0.120	0.899	0.373				
Speaking	0.112	0.202	0.078	0.552	0.584				

The results of multiple regression analysis regarding the prediction of the scores of the participants in the subtests of the TELP according to their EAT scores showed that the regression model was significant ( $R=0.437$ ,  $R^2=0.191$ ;  $p=0.026$ ), the EAT scores predicted 19 % of the subtests in the TELP. However, it was determined that the EAT score was a significant predictor of the reading test, but not a significant predictor of the other tests (writing, listening, and speaking).

**Table 7.** Simple linear regression results for predicting reading test scores

Variable	B	SH	$\beta$	T	P
Constant	-17.830	9.038		-	0.054
EAT score	0.347	0.106		1.973	
$R=0.407$		$R^2=0.166$		0.407	0.002
$F_{(1,54)}=10.722$		$p=0.002$			

The simple linear regression analysis results regarding the prediction of the reading test scores of the participants according to the EAT scores showed that the EAT scores predicted the reading test scores in a statistically significant way ( $R=0.407$ ,  $R^2=0.166$ ;  $p<0.002$ ) and the EAT scores explained 16.6% of the scores in the reading test. According to the t-test result regarding the significance of the regression coefficients, the EAT score was found to be a significant predictor of the reading test score.

**Table 8.** Findings from the comparison of English proficiency scores by the compulsory English preparatory training and gender

Variable	Level	N	Writing X+S.S.	Reading X+S.S.	Listening X+S.S.	Speaking X+S.S.	TELP X+S.S.
English	1*	23	16.07±4.65	13.90±4.10	13.23±3.79	19.79±2.59	55.69±15.18
Preparatory	2**	36	14.49±5.67	12.10±3.84	12.00±4.04	18.27±2.87	53.55±13.69
training	3***	22	14.32±4.84	11.01±4.11	10.15±3.59	16.15±3.26	49.20±12.81
Statistical analysis			F=0.844 p=0.434	F=3.061 p=0.052	F=3.654 <b>p=0.030</b>	F=8.927 <b>p&lt;0.001</b>	F=1.935 p=0.151
Sig. Difference			-	-	1-3	1-3.2-3	-
Gender	Female	56	14.78±5.16	11.54±3.80	11.67±4.25	17.91±2.96	50.73±12.79
	Male	25	15.14±5.30	14.05±4.26	12.24±3.33	18.60±3.64	58.00±15.36
Statistical analysis			t=-0.286 p=0.775	t=-2.653 <b>p=0.010</b>	t=-0.596 p=0.553	t=-0.901 p=0.370	t=-2.219 <b>p=0.029</b>

\*Those who received compulsory English preparatory training, \*\*Those who were exempt from the compulsory English preparatory training \*\*\* Those who couldn't pass the test and would receive the compulsory English preparatory training

When the scores of the participants in the TELP were compared according to their compulsory English preparatory training, it was discovered that, while there was a statistically significant difference in the listening and speaking tests [(F<sub>Listening</sub> (2, 78) = 3.654; p=0.030), (F<sub>Speaking</sub> (2, 78) = 8.927; p<0,001)], there was no statistically significant difference in the other subtests (reading and writing) or in the overall test. The results of the post hoc test (Scheffe) revealed that participants who received compulsory English preparatory training scored higher on the listening test than those who did not pass but would receive preparatory training. On the other hand, participants who received compulsory English preparatory training scored higher than those who were exempt from the training and those who did not pass the test but would receive it.

According to the results of the comparisons made based on the gender of the participants, there was a statistically significant difference in the reading test and the English Proficiency Test in general [(t<sub>reading</sub>=-2.653; p=0.010), (t<sub>general</sub>=-2.219; p=0.029)]. While the male participants scored statistically higher than the female participants on these tests, no significant difference was found in other tests (writing, listening, and speaking).

### Conclusion and Discussion

The predictive relational/correlational research design was used in this study to examine the effects of the English Admission Test and several variables on students' four language skills. The study involved 83 students from an English Language Teaching Department at a state university in the south of Turkey. The following conclusions were drawn from comparing the researchers' TELP scores to the EAT scores and participant demographics:

The first research question explored the predictors of participants' EAT (English Admission Test) scores concerning their English Proficiency Test scores. As a result of the examination, it was revealed that the participants' EAT scores significantly predicted the English Proficiency Test scores and explained 7.9% of their overall TELP score. The EAT scores were found to be a strong predictor of the TELP, which assessed four fundamental language skills. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the predictive validity of the participants' EAT scores for each subtest (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) of the English Proficiency Test. The results indicated that the tested model was significant and that the EAT scores explained 19.1% of the subtests (reading, listening, writing, and speaking). When the significance levels for the subtests were analysed, it was revealed that the EAT scores were a significant predictor of the reading test but not of the other tests (listening, writing and speaking). Following this finding, the statistically significant reading test was isolated from the impact of other tests and put to basic linear regression analysis, to determine the predictive value of the EAT scores on the reading test. The analysis revealed that the EAT scores were a significant predictor of reading test scores, accounting for 16.6 % of the test scores. These findings of the study were consistent with the research findings in the literature. Indeed, studies in the literature (Çakıldere, 2013; Dağtan, 2012; Hatipoğlu, 2016; Özmen, 2011; Sayın & Arslan, 2016; Cüte, 2007; Karabulut, 2007; Polat, 2017; Yıldırım, 2010) underlined the negative washback effect of foreign language tests. They also stated that the central foreign language tests administered in Turkey do not fully measure receptive and productive language skills; rather, they emphasized the dimensions of reading skills, vocabulary and grammar. As a result, the test results did not offer a comprehensive picture of foreign language proficiency in Turkey.

The second research question compared the English Proficiency Test (TELP) performance of participants according to their compulsory English preparatory training and gender. After examining the participants' general and subtest scores in the TELP according to these variables, it was discovered that the scores of the participants on the listening and speaking tests differed according to their status of receiving the compulsory English preparatory training. On the listening test, it was observed that the students who took the compulsory English preparatory training received higher scores than the students who could not pass the test and would receive the compulsory English preparatory training. On the speaking test, the students who took compulsory English preparatory education received greater scores than the students who were exempt from the compulsory English preparatory training or who could not pass the test and would receive it. On the other hand, the participants' scores on writing and reading tests and on the overall test did not differ according to their compulsory English preparatory training. These findings of the study were similar to the findings of Aydin (2006), who compared the foreign language achievement scores of the students according to the compulsory English preparatory training in high school. Aydin found that the students who attended the training had better scores than those who did not. On the other hand, Erkensiz and Özkaya (2012), who evaluated the English preparatory training as compulsory and optional, examined the students' self-efficacy regarding their speaking skills and found that the students who voluntarily received English preparatory training had higher self-efficacy perceptions than the students who did not.

When the TELP scores of the participants were compared by gender, it was discovered that the participants' scores in the reading test and the overall test differed, and that this difference favoured male students on both the reading test and the TELP overall scores. The scores of the participants in the writing, listening, and speaking tests did not differ statistically significantly according to their gender. The findings of the study that male students scored more in the reading test and the overall test showed differences from the findings of other studies (Aydn, 2006; Ünal, 2005) conducted in the literature to investigate the relationship between foreign language achievement scores and gender and discovered that female students achieved higher foreign language achievement scores than male students in the literature. A study conducted by Temiz and Elald (2011) to analyse the reading skills of preparatory class students discovered that female students had significantly better reading skills than male students. Some studies emphasized that gender does not make a significant difference

in studies conducted for different purposes in foreign languages. In these studies, it was revealed that there was no difference according to the gender of the students according to students' speaking skills (Gürler, 2015), self-efficacy perceptions related to speaking skills (Gömleksiz & Özkaya, 2012), speaking anxiety (Boylu & Çangal, 2015), writing anxiety (Maden, Dinçel & Maden, 2015; Özdemir, 2019). ), foreign language concerns (Altunkaya, 2017; Erdil, 2016; Güneyli & Gökçebağ, 2018; Halat, 2015; Şen & Boylu, 2015), foreign language achievement scores (Yıldırın, 2010) and foreign language attitudes (Çakıcı, 2001).

### **Suggestions**

This research was conducted with a study group studying in the English Language Teaching Department of a state university in the south of Turkey. In future research, larger and more comprehensive sample groups can be explored, quantitative and qualitative measurement tools can be used, and comparisons can be performed based on other demographic characteristics of students.

As evidenced by the research findings, the EAT scores were found to be an insignificant predictor of students' listening, speaking, and writing abilities. To accurately assess the target language skills of students studying in the subject of language education, a test that examines four fundamental language skills is required. To do this, the content of YDT, which is currently in use, can be modified to allow for multidimensional measurement, and questions testing other language skills can be added to the test.

When compared to the number of students that take the university admission exam in Turkey each year, the number of students taking the English Admission Test is much less than other tests. As a result, changes in the structure of the test can be implemented considerably more easily and successfully than with other tests. To ease the transition and prepare the infrastructure, language skills can be gradually added to the test or multidimensional question types measuring several skills can be employed.

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1. Yazar/First author %50
2. Yazar/Second author %50

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