

FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING ANXIETY AMONG LOW INTERMEDIATE LEVEL EFL STUDENTS: A COMPARISON OF THE ANXIETY LEVELS OF STUDENTS ATTENDING THREE DIFFERENT TURKISH STATE UNIVERSITIES



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Abstract

The present study examined the general foreign language classroom anxiety of preparatory school students according to the type of University and gender. The sample consisted of 282 students from three preparatory schools. The students were from Anadolu University, Osmangazi University and Dumlupınar University. There were 150 male and 132 female students. One-Way ANOVA showed that there were no significant differences among the level of foreign language anxiety of preparatory school students from different Universities. In addition to considering anxiety in a gender differences t-test showed that female students have been found much more anxious than male students in foreign language anxiety.

1. Introduction

Foreign Language Anxiety is the fear or negative emotional reaction occurring when a learner is expected to perform in the foreign language (Oxford, 1999; MacIntyre, 1999). Anxiety is a complex psychological construct consisting of many variables; therefore, it is difficult to explain these variables into a single definition (Sellers, 2000). Sovel defines anxiety as fear or concern towards something or uncertainty (Sovel, 1991, p.13).

In the literature, it is seen that foreign language anxiety has been generally defined as "tension during second language learning" (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994, p. 284).

Many studies have revealed that anxiety complicates language learning. According to Horwitz (1996) language anxiety includes many variables such as beliefs, negative self-perception, and feelings.

The researchers have analyzed various variables that may affect a learner's foreign language learning. Affective variables are really useful in the way that explains the difficulties encountered in learning a foreign language. The affective variables include

motivation orientations, learning strategies and anxiety states of the learners (Dörnyei, 2003).

According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) that language learners do not originally have anxiety when they start learning. Anxiety is developed in the course of language learning. It is a "learned emotional response". A teacher does not immediately see anxious learners in the first meeting with a class. It occurs inside the students after starting to form impressions and attitudes towards language learning. If students' first impressions about language learning are negative, anxiety may begin to form. It is claimed by MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) that the negative effects of language anxiety disappear as proficiency increases and more positive experiences begin to accumulate. In their investigation they search the reason of anxiety not in the student but in the language learning experience, which indicates that the teacher of anxious students may be doing something unnatural leading the development of anxiety in his/her students.

According to Horwitz (1991); In general, students may experience disappointment in a foreign language they do not know exactly, especially when they try to speak. Students may experience some difficulties with this situation. In such cases,

involuntary actions such as stuttering, trembling, or rejection of speech can be observed in the students with anxiety.

According to Wilson (2006); The most important power that affects anxiety is the students' beliefs. Students may feel anxious if they have a negative bias about language learning.

According to Gaudry and Spielberger (1971) anxiety level can be determined in a variety of ways; such as Verbal Reports, Psychological Indications and General Behaviour.

“A student may refuse to make a speech of thanks to a distinguished visitor who has addressed the school assembly. The reluctant speaker may state that he refused to take on task because he gets so nervous in such situations that he has great difficulty in marshalling his thoughts. Or he may state that he shakes and trembles so much that he becomes incapable of commencing or completing his speech”(Gaudry and Spielberger, 1971).

While observing the classrooms nearly in all language classes there are a few test-anxious ones who can be easily noticed. These students mostly feel that anything except from a good grade from a test is a failure. Also test-anxious students experience more difficulty in language classes than other classes as there are lots of tests and quizzes.

In the literature, it was stated that the anxiety of learning foreign languages was based on communication, exam anxieties and fear of negative evaluation. Rather, it is a distinct complex of students' attitudes, beliefs, emotions and behaviors towards the unified language learning process (Horwitz & Cope, 1986).

According to MacIntyre (1999), the high level of FL anxiety affects success in learning a foreign language. "What can be done to reduce students' anxiety collectively?" a lot of research has been done since the early 1980s to answer this question (Horwitz, 2001).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Anxiety and Language Learning

Many students with a lack of self-confidence are more anxious than other students. They are concerned about the criticism and the negative evaluation of their classmates. Negative verbal communication that may occur between students is their most important causes of stress (Ellis, 1994; Frantzen & Magnan, 2005; Koch & Terrell, 1991; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Young, 1991).

Horwitz and his colleagues have developed a scale for measuring language anxiety. This scale is known as FLCAS (Foreign

Language Classroom Anxiety Scale). The scale includes three main factors. These; communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

Many researchers have investigated different dimensions or processes of anxiety. Some researchers investigated anxiety about foreign language writing skills (Daly & Miller, 1975; Cheng & Horwitz & Schallert, 1999), some researchers investigated anxiety about foreign language reading skills (Saito & Garza & Horwitz, 1999), some investigated anxiety about foreign language listening (Kim, 2000; Vogely, 1998 quoted in: Pichette, 2009).

Some students are always in anxiety. Even if the teacher wants something simple from them, they feel inadequate and weak. They have a negative bias and defend against the question of the teacher. Students with constant anxiety say excuses because they believe they will fail. It strives to prove that these excuses are justified. Even if teachers organize non-stressful activities, these students may tend to not participate in these activities(Lindgen, 1980).

A lot of research has been done to reveal the relationship between anxiety and foreign language learning performance. In their study, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) have recorded a video while students learned the vocabulary task in French. The anxiety level of the students who were recorded in the video was found to be elevated. They also revealed that their success performance decreased significantly.

Sparks and colleagues used Horwitz's FLCAS scale in one study. They selected the sample group from university and high school students. They also grouped them with high, average, and low anxiety. They tried to determine whether there is a difference between mother tongue skill and foreign language skill. As a result of the research, those in the low and average anxiety groups performed better in reading and speaking skills than those in the high anxiety group(Ganschow, Sparks, Anderson, Javorsky, Skinner, & Patton, 1994).

Sparks and Ganschow repeat this research in 1996 to a larger sample group. The result of this research supports the first research. They revealed that the group of students with high foreign language anxiety scored lower in measurements such as reading, spelling, speaking, and vocabulary.

2.2. Sources of Language Anxiety

Young (1991) stated that foreign language anxiety was fed by six powers. These are:

- 1) Personal and interpersonal anxieties,
- 2) Learner beliefs about language learning,
- 3) Instructor beliefs about language teaching,
- 4) Instructor-learner interactions,
- 5) Classroom procedures,
- 6) Language testing.

Students generally tend to compare their abilities with someone else. If the student evaluates his / her ability negatively as a result of the comparison, his/her anxiety level increases (Price, 1991). However, if the student has reached a positive evaluation result, this feeling helps her learn foreign languages (MacIntyre, Gardner, & Clément, 1997).

The student's belief is an important factor in learning a foreign language. In Wang's (1998) research; It has been revealed that Chinese students believe that learning English is difficult. The students mostly believed that their abilities were insufficient to learn English. Students declared that they can learn English if they go to an English speaking country.

In 2005, Cheng investigated the relationship between teachers' attitudes and students' foreign language learning anxiety. As a result of the study, it was concluded that when the teacher was smiling, patient and comfortable, the level of anxiety of the students is decreased. In addition, the teacher performing the exam without informing revealed that the students increased their anxiety level.

In another study, it was done on the way teachers correct students' mistakes. In this research, it turns out that if teachers stop their students speaking to correct their mistakes, they lead to a negative attitude development in students (Aydın, 2001).

According to Von Worde (1998); The sources of anxiety are listed below:

- 1) Low self-esteem of students,
- 2) Negative judgments against foreign language learning,
- 3) Relationship between teachers and students,
- 4) Teachers' tendency to constantly correct mistakes during speaking,
- 5) Students are inadequate preliminary preparation,
- 6) Teachers reflect their concerns to students,
- 7) Frequent trial exams,
- 8) Use of inappropriate education method,
- 9) Speaking activities without motivating students.

2.3. Measuring Language Anxiety

There are three different methods to measure anxiety. These are;

Behavioral Observation: It is based on measuring the actions of a person;

Physiological Tests: It is based on measuring the physiological symptoms in the person;

Self Reports: Based on collecting information about people's concerns with a data collection tool.

The self-reports method is easier to use in anxiety data collection than other methods. For this reason, the self-reporting method is frequently used by researchers (Scovel, 1991).

Horwitz et al. in 1986 have developed a scale to measure students' anxiety to learn foreign languages. This scale consists of 33 items in total. While developing this scale, the authors assumed that students' perceptions, emotions, beliefs, and behaviors affect foreign language learning performance.

2.4. Gender and EFL Anxiety

Wilson (2006) conducted a research with the participation of 40 learners. He examined the relationship between students' foreign language anxiety and variables such as age, gender and time to start learning English. As a result of the research, it was revealed that female students are more concerned than male students.

When the literature is analyzed, there are very few studies on foreign language learning anxiety by gender. In the research of Aydın and Takkaç (2007), the anxiety scale was applied to 114 students. As a result of the research, a meaningful relationship was found between gender and test anxiety in the context of distrust, discomfort and negative motivation caused by test anxiety. No significant relationship could be detected in other dimensions.

In some studies, female students compared to male students it was determined that he had higher levels of foreign language anxiety (Daly, Kreiser & Rogharr, 1994; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey & Daley, 1997). In Berger and Shechter's (1996) research, it was determined that "female students are more vulnerable in situations of anxiety and discomfort than male students.

3. Methodology

3.1. Significance of Study

In the research foreign language learning anxiety among low intermediate level EFL students were measured. Also, it aims to find out if there are any differences between genders. Identifying the anxiety levels of preparatory school students' will help them to decrease anxiety levels before attending to their own department. The results of the research can help educators better understand their students' anxieties. It can also provide insight into whether student anxiety varies by gender and school.

3.2. Research Questions

The study aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. *Are there any differences between the students of different schools in foreign language anxiety?*
2. *Are there any significant differences between genders in foreign language anxiety?*
3. *Are there any significant difference between the genders in terms of foreign language learning anxiety on the basis of the schools in which they are educated?*

3.3. Setting

This research was carried out in the academic year 2017-2018. This research was conducted in three universities: Anadolu University, Osmangazi University and Dumlupınar University. The participants of this study were drawn from among EFL students enrolled in preparatory classes. A total of 300 students were surveyed. As a result of the evaluation of the questionnaires, 18 questionnaires were eliminated by the researcher. A total of 282 questionnaires were taken into consideration.

3.4. Instruments

FLCAS was developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). There are three main factors in this assumption: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Considering these factors, a person's anxiety to learn a foreign language is determined.

FLCAS was translated into Turkish by Aydın (2001). The scale consists of 33 items. This scale is in the form of a 5-point Likert scale. The scale includes a total of 24 positive expressions and 9 negative expressions. During the analysis, negative expression values were reversed. Cronbach Alpha measure was found 0.87.

3.5. Data Collection

The relevant data for this study was collected in the spring term in 2017-2018 academic years. The precautions were taken in order to administrate the applications of scale. To distribute the questionnaire (FLCAS) to the participants, permission was taken from Anadolu University, Osmangazi University and Dumlupınar University. The students were informed in detail before applying the FLCAS. During the application students filled the blanks of scale in teachers' room. After the application the researcher thanked to students for their contributions to the research.

4. Data Analysis, Findings and Results

First of all, the statistical analyses were done according to 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 18, 0 for Windows)'. The collected data was analyzed by using the statistical techniques below.

The overall scores of FLCAS were calculated in order to answer whether there are any significant statistical differences between Universities. Therefore, in this section it was used the One-Way ANOVA. Primary hypotheses were tested and normal distribution criteria were provided before the administration of One-Way ANOVA.

The Levene test was used to identify whether there were significant differences between groups of variance. If the statistics of Levene test is more than 05 it indicates the homogenous of variance groups. (Field, 2005).

Also, the overall scores of FLCAS were calculated in order to answer whether there were any significant statistical differences between genders. Therefore, in this section it was used the Independent Samples and T- Test were used and the homogenous of variance were measured by Levene test.

4.1. Findings

This section includes descriptions of the sample group, answers to the research questions, and findings.

Table 1. Gender * University Cross-Tabulation

			University Name			Total
			Anadolu	Dumlupınar	Osmangazi	
Gender	Female	Count	48	49	35	132
		% within Gender	36,4%	37,1%	26,5%	100,0%
	Male	Count	51	49	50	150

		% within Gender	34,0%	32,7%	33,3%	100,0%
Total	Count		99	98	85	282
	% within Gender		35,1%	34,8%	30,1%	100,0%

A total of 99 students from Anadolu University participated in the research. 48 of them are women and 51 of them are men. A total of 98 students from Dumlupınar University participated in the research. 49 of them are women and 49 of them are men. A total of 85 students from Osmangazi University participated in the study. 35 of them are women and 50 of them are men.

Research question 1: Are there any differences between the students of different schools in foreign language anxiety?

In order to, find out whether there were any significant differences among the three preparatory schools students in foreign language anxiety, the One-Way ANOVA was conducted in table 2.

Table 2. FLCAS Scores According to Universities

The resources of variance	Total sum of squares	SD	Average of squares	F	P
Among groups	517,841	2	258,921	,780	,459
In groups	92588,318	279	331,858		
Total	93106,160	281			

As seen from Table 2, In the one-way analysis of variance, no significant difference was found between the groups. [$F(2-279) = 0.780, p > .05$]. It can be said that there is no significant difference between the foreign language learning anxiety of students studying in different universities.

Research question 2: Are there any significant differences between genders in foreign language anxiety?

In order to, find out whether there were any significant differences between genders in the foreign language anxiety of the preparatory schools students, the Independent Samples t-test was conducted in table 3.

In other words, the p-value was higher than 0.05, which means there were no significant differences among the level of foreign language anxiety of preparatory school students from different Universities.

After using the Levene test it was found that there was the homogeneous of variance [$F = 1.42, p > .05$].

Table 3. FLCAS Scores According to Gender

Gender	N	X	S	SD	T	P
Female	132	98,96	18,69	280	3,78	.000
Male	150	90,93	16,94			

As seen from Table 3, According to the gender variable, foreign language learning anxiety differs significantly. [$t(280) = 3,78, p < .01$].

Research question 3: Are there any significant difference between the genders in terms of foreign language learning anxiety on the basis of the schools in which they are educated?

Total average scores of students' foreign language anxiety in females ($x = 98,96$) are more than males ($x = 90,93$). It can be said that female students are more anxious than male students.

One-Way ANOVA was performed to find out whether there is a significant difference between the genders according to the school in which foreign language anxiety is studied. The result of this analysis is shown in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4. Distribution of Variables

Descriptives								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Anadolu (F)	48	99,04	21,456	3,096	92,81	105,27	48,00	138,00
Anadolu (M)	51	92,37	17,835	2,497	87,35	97,38	53,00	129,00
Dumlupınar (F)	49	99,51	17,338	2,476	94,53	104,49	53,00	130,00
Dumlupınar (M)	49	86,16	14,870	2,124	81,89	90,43	51,00	111,00
Osmangazi (F)	35	98,08	16,882	2,853	92,28	103,88	54,00	124,00
Osmangazi (M)	50	94,14	17,216	2,434	89,24	99,03	60,00	124,00
Total	282	94,69	18,202	1,083	92,55	96,82	48,00	138,00

Table 5. Results of One Way Anova Analysis

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	(Combined)		6302,620	5	1260,524	4,008	,002
	Linear Term	Weighted	16,738	1	16,738	,053	,818
		Deviation	6285,881	4	1571,470	4,997	,001
Within Groups			86803,540	276	314,506		
Total			93106,160	281			

As a result of the analysis, there is a significant difference between the groups (Sig < .05). Post-Hoc Tukey Test was performed to determine which groups these differences were. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the foreign language anxiety levels of Dumlupınar University preparatory class male students is significantly different from female students at their own universities and other universities were. It has been determined that Dumlupınar University preparatory class male students have lower anxiety levels than the others.

5. Discussion

In this study, foreign language learning anxiety level was analyzed in terms of gender. As a result of the research, it was determined that female students were significantly more anxious than male students. The result of the study reached similar conclusions with the research of Daly et al. (1994), Berger and Shechte, Onwuegbuzie et al. (1997), Huang's (2004), Wilson (2006).

When the details of the study were examined, Dumlupınar University Male students' foreign language anxiety level score was found to be the lowest. A detailed study should be conducted on the beliefs, emotions and behaviors of these students. Besides, how these students perceive the teaching method, what kind of teaching method is made, the approach style of the teachers

should be examined. When an accurate analysis is made, it can be determined in which situations the anxiety of learning a foreign language is low. Thus, the authorities can come up with new solutions to increase foreign language learning success.

6. Conclusions

The current study has examined to what extent foreign language anxiety influence language learners.

1. There were no significant differences among the level of foreign language anxiety of preparatory students from different Universities.
2. There were significant differences between genders in foreign language anxiety level of preparatory school's students from different Universities. Foreign language anxiety in female students is higher than mail students.

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