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A STUDY ON THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SELF EFFICACY AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING ANXIETY

YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENME ENDİŞESİ İLE ÖZ YETERLİK ARASINDAKİ KORELASYON ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

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ABSTRACT

Anxiety in language learning is one of the less researched areas; that is why this study explores whether the anxiety level of foreign language learners is related to their self efficacy levels. For this purpose, 100 participants joined the study and the Foreign language Learning Anxiety Scale and The Self Efficacy Scale were administered to them. The results show that both aspects are uncorrelated and gender plays no important role in terms of the anxiety level and self perception ratings of these junior teacher trainees.

Key words: anxiety, self efficacy, foreign language learning

ÖZ

Dil öğreniminin fazla keşfedilmeyen alanlarından biri olan endişe ile ilgili bu çalışma yabancı dil bölümünde okuyan öğrencilerin endişe seviyeleri ile kendilerine yeterlik düzeyleri arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığına bakmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu amaçla 100 öğrenciye Yabancı Dil Endişe Ölçeği ile Öz Yeterlik Ölçeği verilmiş ve sonuçlarda cinsiyet açısından bir farklılık olmadığı ve bu iki konu arasında bir korelasyon bulunmadığı gözlenmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: endişe, öz yeterlilik, yabancı dil öğrenimi

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INTRODUCTION

Students of all levels of academic achievement and intellectual abilities are believed to be affected by anxiety in language learning. This anxiety occurs in varying degrees and is characterized by emotional feelings of worry, fear, and apprehension. It can be exhibited differently by individuals (McDonald, 2001). As students progress, abundant pressures and different anxiety levels might affect students. To facilitate higher levels of performance, Nitko (2001) urges teachers to be cognizant of the language learning anxiety factor, which can negatively impact the performances of students (Supon, 2004). Nitko lists a lack of competence as the first reason for anxious students, the second is the lack of proper study skills, and the third is wrong self perceptions about their capacities.

Self efficacy is "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986: 391). Basically, it concerns the answer to the question,"Can I do this task in this situation?" This definition is similar to people's perceptions of their competence and self concept (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Self efficacy beliefs are more specific and situational judgments of capabilities: a self efficacy judgment in an advanced reading skills course might be expressed as "I am confident, I can get B+".

Self efficacy concerns primarily cognitive judgments of one's own capabilities based on mastery criteria (Bang & Clark, 2001), whereas self concept emerges as a more complex construct incorporating both cognitive and affective responses toward the self. Academic self concept and self efficacy are first compared from the following three conceptual perspectives: construct composition, nature of comparison, and generality and structure.

Construct composition is that a person's perceptions of her/himself are formed through his/her experience with his/her environment. Self concept may be described as organized, multifaceted, hierarchical, stable, developmental, evaluative and differentiable. The cognitive facet of self concept consists of awareness, understandings of the self and its attributes. Shavelson (1976) believes that the individual not only develops a description of her/himself in a particular situation but that s/he also forms evaluations of her/himself in these situations. The affective facet of self concept incorporates one's feelings of self worth. Self efficacy deals with cognitively perceived capability of the self. Whether or not one has the capability to carry out a course of the action that leads to the successful accomplishment of goals is the focus of efficacy.

With regard to nature of comparison frames, many academic self efficacy researchers presume that students arrive at their efficacy situation on the basis of mastery standards of success and failure. Regarding self efficacy, students assess how capable they are of enjoying success, whereas students' academic self concepts are products of two simultaneous comparison processes: social and self. Students compare their perceived competence with

their peers' ability in the same area or in other areas. Self efficacy beliefs are affected more by one's own direct experiences with the tasks than by social comparison. Academic self efficacy studies concentrate more on students' judgments of their capability. Pajares, Miller and Johnson (1999) found that although elementary school girls judged themselves to be better writers than the boys in their class, their writing self efficacy ratings did not differ significantly from those of the boys.

Generality and structure relates to Bandura's (1997) claim that self efficacy may be differentiated into academic, social, emotional, and physical domains. It has been assessed at task levels, whereas self concept is tapped at subject levels. Efficacy researchers tend to assume that self efficacy contains more domain or task specific components and, thus, is more differentiated than self concept. Yet, empirical evidence (Zimmerman, B. J., Bandura, A., & Martinez-Pons, M., 1992) seems to purport a different point of view. Verbal and math self concepts are always uncorrelated whereas verbal and math self efficacy are highly correlated.

Self efficacy theory maintains that general competence or self concept beliefs should be separated out from specific judgments. A second distinguishing feature (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003) is that it is used in reference to some type of goal, which may be determined by the individual, task conditions, or environment. In an academic setting, a student's self efficacy for learning and doing vocabulary exercises in a reading class may be lower than usual because the teacher uses a grading curve and the student thinks the others are better in reading.

Self efficacy is believed to be related to student engagement and learning. Figure 1 displays the general framework where different components are shown how self efficacy is related to each component.

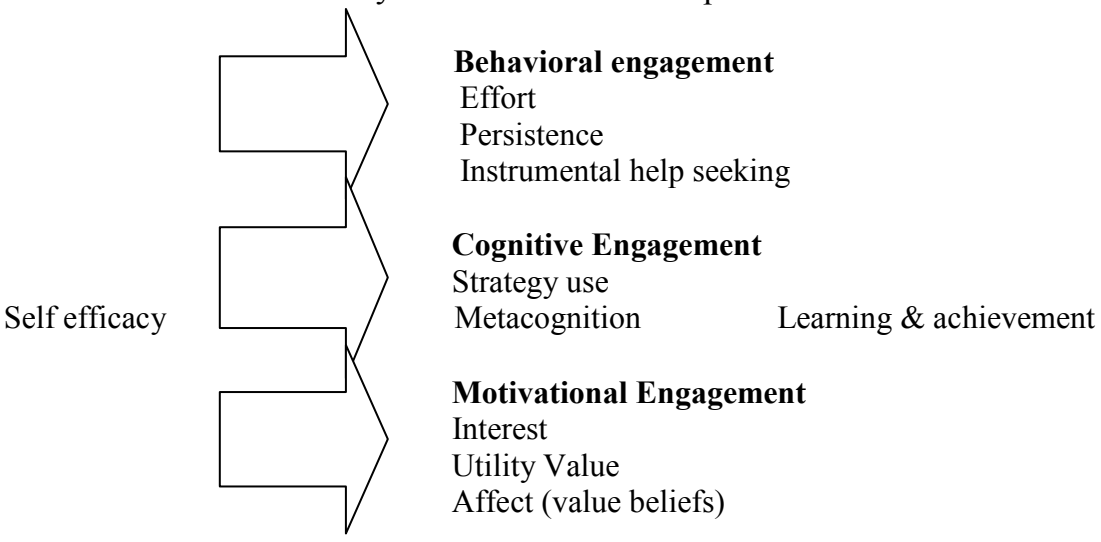

Figure 1: A General Framework for Self-efficacy Engagement, and Learning (Linnebrick & Pintrich, 2003).

Behavioral engagement involves observable behavior, the teacher can easily see if students are engaged in terms of effort, persistence and help seeking; cognitive engagement takes place in students' heads, that is why it is hard for teachers to gain access to students' cognition and thinking. Students who use more surface processing strategies like rehearsal learn the material but this does not result in deep learning. When students are engaged with the material at a deeper level, they are more likely to come to understand it better. Weinstein and Mayer (1986) show that students who are metacognitive in their learning are more actively and cognitively engaged. Motivational engagement, on the other hand, comprises personal interest (liking and disliking), value (importance and utility) and affect. Personal interest in the task results in higher learning and comprehension (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Value beliefs like importance and utility lead to an increase at the cognitive development (Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992). Finally, positive and negative affect can be linked to better learning. As can be seen in Figure 1, self efficacy can lead to more engagement and better achievement. The more self efficacy a student has, the more they are engaged. The more they are engaged, the more they learn and the better they perform.

The role of efficacy in behavioral engagement is that students who do not have confidence in themselves are less likely to exert effort and more likely to give up quickly. If students are given practice and instruction in how to do schoolwork better, their performance can be developed. There is another construct here - "learned helplessness" - which refers to students' beliefs that they cannot control their own behavior and there is no relationship between their behavior and an outcome. Those who ask for help and who think they are able and feel efficacious are not threatened by asking for adaptive or instrumental help. Besides, the quantity of effort, the quality of effort in terms of deeper processing strategies and a general cognitive engagement of learning has been linked to self efficacy perceptions. Those who are efficacious use more cognitive strategies than the others, who have lower self efficacy beliefs. However, some students have strong efficacy and they do not use their cognitive engagement fully and they think their knowledge is appropriate and they are doing fine. As to the role of self efficacy in motivational engagement, if students first like some task or topic area they are then drawn to the activity. However, Bandura (1997) suggests that individuals first develop a sense of competence or efficacy at an activity. There is both theoretical and empirical evidence to suggest emotions can influence efficacy and efficacy beliefs impact emotions. Another issue is that the increase in negative emotions most likely occurs because students with low levels of self efficacy do not feel as if they can meet their goals and therefore become depressed. It is possible to say self efficacy is positively related to adaptive motivational beliefs, like interest, value, and utility and to positive affective reactions and negatively related to negative emotions.

Based on the research reviewed, it is clear that efficacy plays an important role in engagement and achievement. It is necessary for teachers to combine their own experience. For example:

---help students maintain relatively high but accurate self efficacy beliefs
---provide students with challenging academic tasks that most students can reach.
---foster the belief that competence is a changeable, controllable aspect of development, (i.e., If teachers give low ability students easy tasks, high efficacy beliefs will be unlikely to develop).
---promote students' domain specific self efficacy beliefs rather than global self esteem. (Although global self esteem is important, it is more important for students' learning that they have accurate feedback about their performance.)

Hence, this study aims to highlight and to determine the relationship between foreign language learning anxiety and self efficacy and to probe whether low self efficacy increases anxiety or high self perception lowers the anxiety level.

METHOD

Participants

The set of participants were 100 junior level students from the English teacher training program at a university in Turkey. Their ages ranged from 20-22. The subjects were informed verbally that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and would not influence their grade in the courses.

Instruments

The Foreign Language Learning Anxiety Scale was developed from Horwitz, Horowitz, and Cope's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). It consists of 33 statements, each to be rated by the respondent on a 1 (no anxiety) to 5 (high anxiety) Likert scale. The statements describe language learning situations, which are rated as to the degree of anxiety that respondents perceived they would experience in certain situations. Item numbers 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 25, 28, and 32 were reverse scored. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .83 was reported for the FLCAS by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) and the reliability of the adapted scale was found to be 0.86 by the researcher.

The Foreign Language Self Efficacy Scale developed by the researcher consists of 10 items in a Likert format with 1 indicating no confidence in the student's ability to complete a task, to 5 indicating that the

student was very confident in completing a task. That is, the scale assessed students' beliefs regarding their language learning capacity and competency. Chronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale was .87.

Procedure

All students were first asked to respond to The Language Learning Anxiety Scale. After the students completed this scale, they were administered The Foreign Language Self Efficacy Scale.

Data Analysis

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of the Anxiety Scale given to the teacher trainees.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of the Language Learning Anxiety Scale of the Teacher Trainees

Language Learning Anxiety	Means	Std Dev.
1. I often feel like not going to my language class.	3.79	1.08
2. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	3.78	1.00
3. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	3.54	1.08
4. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	3.53	.95
5. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	3.48	1.02
6. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	3.45	1.09
7. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	3.44	1.07
8. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	3.35	1.06
9. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	3.32	1.01
10. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	3.30	.92
11. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am**.**	3.26	1.04
12. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says**.**	3.19	1.02
13. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	3.16	1.11
14. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	3.14	1.00
15. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	3.14	.98

As is clear, students do not feel comfortable when they talk, that is why they do not wish to volunteer to talk in the class. The self distraction they feel in the fifth item shows they are easily lost in the class. This might be due to many reasons ranging from lack of interest and/or motivation to the pace of

the class. However, the striking point is that students say they feel anxious while speaking in the class but not with the native speakers.

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations and the results of t-test of the teacher trainees according to gender. The result of the t-test shows that there is not a significant difference between female and male students regarding their choices where they feel anxious. It can be said that the anxiety is felt at the same level.

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations and Results of T-test for Anxiety According to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std Dev	Significance
Females	88	101.16	10.48	0.972
Males	12	101.75	12.30	Not significant

(p<.05)

Table 3, on the other hand, shows the teacher trainees' self efficacy. They think they are capable of succeeding in doing most of the items.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations of Self Efficacy of Teacher Trainees

Self efficacy	Means	Std Dev.
1. Sharing with a friend what happened on your most memorable day.	4.60	.82
2. Reading a news passage aloud to the class.	4.50	.96
3. Writing an essay of 400 words about what you did on holiday.	4.39	1.09

The results show that junior teacher trainees have high self esteem.

Table 4 indicates that there is no significant difference between female and male students regarding how they see their efficacy.

Table 4: Means, Standard Deviations and Results of T-test for Self Efficacy According to Gender

Gender	n	Mean	Std Dev	Significance
Females	88	37.88	5.26	0.678
Males	12	39.58	4.90	Not significant

(p<.05)

As to the correlation between anxiety and efficacy, it can be said that there is no significant relation between these two.

Table 5: Correlation between Anxiety and Self efficacy

		total anxiety	total efficacy
total anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	.297(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	100	100
total efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.297(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	100
	N	100	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

When one way analysis is done, it is apparent that if learners have low self efficacy, they are more anxious. But this does not create a huge gap between high and low efficacious learners.

Table 6: Anova Results of High and Low Efficacy

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
HIGH EFFICACY	Between Groups	296.527	38	7.803	1.410	.114
	Within Groups	337.583	61	5.534		
	Total	634.110	99			
LOW EFFICACY	Between Groups	649.693	38	17.097	1.776	.022
	Within Groups	587.267	61	9.627		
	Total	1236.960	99			

RESULTS

The results of the application of the Foreign Language Learning Anxiety Scale show that teacher trainees feel more tense and nervous in language classes than in any other classes, it embarrasses them to talk in the class, they feel that their friends speak English better than the others, and while speaking they feel tense and nervous. However, the anxiety is not felt when they talk with native speakers. It seems that speaking is a problem in the class atmosphere where the teacher is present. Besides, they think their classmates are better than they are so they are embarrassed to talk in the class. Despite the anxiety they feel, they are not hesitant to learn other foreign

languages. The t-test results yield no significant difference between girls and boys in terms of anxiety level. (For girls the means is 101.16, for boys it is 101.75.)

The Self Efficacy Scale yields a high level of self esteem among the teacher trainees. They believe that they are capable of writing an essay of 400 words about their holiday, explaining to a visitor the structure of their department, giving instructions to students on how they should organize themselves, sharing with a friend what happened on their most memorable day, taking down notes, explaining the functions of an adjective in a sentence, and reading a news passage aloud to the class. The t-test results display no significant difference between girls and boys regarding self efficacy, which shows that they are almost at the same level. When the results of these two scales are correlated, it is found that there is no significant correlation between language learning anxiety and self efficacy. However, those with low self efficacy have higher level of anxiety than the students with high self efficacy. But this is not considered as a crucial outcome.

DISCUSSION

Scholars recently have started to focus upon learning anxiety. There is no consensus among researchers as to whether anxiety has a debilitating or facilitating impact upon learners or whether it is correlated with self esteem. The results of this study demonstrate that the third year teacher trainees feel anxious in the language classes but this has nothing to do with their self efficacy levels. Most studies (Bandura 1992) maintain that students with low levels of self efficacy do not feel as if they can meet their goals and therefore become depressed. However, in this study whether students have high levels or low levels of self efficacy, the results do not change. The anxiety and efficacy levels are uncorrelated. This might be due to the Turkish educational setting, the way students are raised in Anatolian Teacher Training High Schools (all students are graduates of Anatolian Teacher Training High Schools, which are boarding schools and which have students coming from small towns), their shy personality, their inability to voice their opinions in public, or the infrequent chance to speak in the classes (rather than speaking in the class, they prefer speaking with native speakers due to lesser stress and tension). It is possible to say that anxiety is uncorrelationally related to self efficacy, which seems to contradict many studies such as Horwitz Horwitz and Cope's (1986); Hill and Wigfield's (1984); McIntyre and Gardner's (1995). In an Asian setting, Kim (1998), Liu & Littlewood (1997) and Jane Jackson (2002) find that students in conversational classes are more anxious than when they are in reading classes. Trylong (1987) and Mcıntyre & Gardner (1995) maintain that there is a negative relationship between students' anxiety levels and their self ratings of language proficiency, whereas in this study no correlation was found.

In conclusion, it is not easy to relate the findings of this study to many others except for some Chinese settings. However, it is hoped that with the advancement of more scales and more cross-cultural studies to probe efficacy, anxiety and achievement; more enlightening research will be stimulated and better knowledge about foreign language learning anxiety can be gleaned, leading to more accurate diagnoses.

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