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|---------------------------|---|
| Journal name | International e-Journal of Educational Studies |
| Abbreviation | IEJES |
| e-ISSN | 2602-4241 |
| Founded | 2017 |
| Article link | http://doi.org/10.31458/iejjes.1291763 |
| Article type | Research Article |
| Received date | 03.05.2023 |
| Accepted date | 14.08.2023 |
| Publication date | 21.10.2023 |
| Volume | 7 |
| Issue | 15 |
| pp-pp | 484-501 |
| Section Editor | Prof.Dr. Gülay EKİCİ |
| Chief-in-Editor | Prof.Dr. Tamer KUTLUCA |
| Abstracting & Indexing | Education Source Ultimate Database Coverage List EBSCO Education Full Text Database Coverage List H.W. Wilson Index Copernicus DRJI Harvard Library WorldCat SOBIAD |
| Article Name | Examination of Foreign Students' Anxiety in Learning Turkish in terms of Various Variables Services |

Author Contribution Statement

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Conceptualization, literature review, methodology, implementation, data analysis, translation, and writing.

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of anxiety level on foreign language success and to examine the level of anxiety in terms of various variables in learning Turkish as a foreign language. Descriptive analysis and measurement by scanning was used. Anxiety levels of students learning Turkish as a foreign language were examined in terms of various variables. "Foreigners' Turkish Learning Anxiety Scale" was applied. In conclusion; Anxiety is an effective factor in learning Turkish as a foreign language. While sufficient level of anxiety facilitates learning, high level of anxiety makes learning difficult. As a new concept, we can call it motivational anxiety. Anxiety levels of students do not differ significantly according to gender, country and time they live. When the anxiety levels of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language are examined according to the variable of the number of languages they know, there is a significant difference in favor of those who speak 4 languages or more. Since the majority of the students are at a moderate level in terms of both academic and self-esteem, it is thought that a moderate level of anxiety will contribute to success.

To cite this article:

Şimşek, T., (2023). Examination of foreign students' anxiety in learning Turkish in terms of various variables services. *International e-Journal of Educational Studies*, 7 (15), 484-501. <https://doi.org/10.31458/iejjes.1291763>

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Research Article**Examination of Foreign Students' Anxiety in Learning Turkish in Terms of Various Variables ***Tuğba ŞİMŞEK¹ **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of anxiety level on foreign language success and to examine the level of anxiety in terms of various variables in learning Turkish as a foreign language. Descriptive analysis and measurement by scanning was used. Anxiety levels of students learning Turkish as a foreign language were examined in terms of various variables. "Foreigners' Turkish Learning Anxiety Scale" was applied. In conclusion; Anxiety is an effective factor in learning Turkish as a foreign language. While sufficient level of anxiety facilitates learning, high level of anxiety makes learning difficult. As a new concept, we can call it motivational anxiety. Anxiety levels of students do not differ significantly according to gender, country and time they live. When the anxiety levels of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language are examined according to the variable of the number of languages they know, there is a significant difference in favor of those who speak 4 languages or more. Since the majority of the students are at a moderate level in terms of both academic and self-esteem, it is thought that a moderate level of anxiety will contribute to success.

Keywords: Teaching language, Turkish education, teaching Turkish as a foreign language, anxiety, motivational anxiety

1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapidly changing and developing technology, distances have lost their importance in the globalizing world. Students go to many parts of the world to receive language education. Language schools are established in many countries, especially language teaching centers are opened within universities.

Turkey is also among the preferred countries to learn languages the number of people who prefer to learn Turkish as a foreign language for reasons such as cultural, social, political, educational, etc. The increase in Turkey's commercial and economic relations with other countries and the fact that people from other countries prefer Turkey to receive education have increased the interest in Turkish in the last 20 years (Özdemir, 2019). According to the data of the Higher Education Institution for the 2022-2023 academic years, more than eight million students study in higher education institutions. There are nearly thirty million foreign students; of which nearly nineteen million are males and more than twelve million are females (URL 1). In order for these students to study, they must have a good command of Turkish. In addition, when we consider the people who want to learn Turkish as a second language for various reasons, the number increases considerably.

The number of people who want to learn Turkish, which is among the top five most spoken languages in the world, is increasing day by day (Kılınçarslan & Yavuz, 2014). The importance of the courses opened to learn Turkish increases in direct proportion to this. With the increasing demand, the

Received Date: 03/05/2023**Accepted Date:** 14/08/2023**Publication Date:** 21/10/2023

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number of Turkish Teaching Centers opened within universities is increasing day by day. Turkish language and culture is taught by the language teaching centers of universities in Turkey, Yunus Emre Institute, Turkish Maarif Foundation and Turcology departments in many foreign universities. (Polatcan, 2019). According to 2021 data, 131 Turkish and Foreign Language Application and Research Centers (TÖMER) are in operation (URL 2).

When the number of people who want to learn Turkish as a foreign language is so high, the importance of the factors that are effective in learning Turkish comes to the fore. There are various factors that affect learning positively and negatively. These include many factors such as mental, cultural and affective factors. One of these factors is anxiety, which has an affective character anxiety is one of the factors that positively or negatively affect learning a foreign language (Baş, 2014). According to Allwright and Bailey (1991) and Horwitz, Horwitz, K. and Cope (1986), foreign language learning anxiety should be considered separately from lesson anxiety experienced in other subjects. (Baş, 2014: 114). As a matter of fact, learning a foreign language is a new and worrying situation.

Anxiety is an unsettling emotion that appears when a strong desire or impulse seems to fail to reach its goal (Enç, 1990). Anxiety, in its broad sense, can also be defined as an emotional state in which a sense of perceived powerlessness is experienced during preparation for a perceived danger (Aydın & Zengin, 2008). The term anxiety is defined by Scovel (1978) as the feeling of uneasiness and anxiety or fear felt by the individual in the face of a threatening situation in general terms. Başaran (1991) states that the main source of anxiety is insecurity and unhealthy self-feeling. If a general definition is made, anxiety is a variety of behavioral and cognitive reactions that affect the person in the face of an unknown situation.

Learning a foreign language is a step into an unknown world. This situation, which creates anxiety and uneasiness, creates the anxiety of learning a foreign language. Language researchers almost agree that one of the main obstacles foreign language learners encounter while learning a foreign language is anxiety arising from the language learning process (Alrabai, 2014; Wu, 2010; cited in Çelik & Kaban, 2022).

In 1986 Horwitz et al. have taken the consuming anxiety literature one step further, by saying special case anxiety which they call “Foreign Language Anxiety” causes negative reactions of students towards language learning. (Tunçel, 2014a). Horwitz, et al. (1986) developed a new concept by revealing foreign language learning anxiety.

Many studies have been conducted on the state of anxiety in learning a foreign language (Djigunovic, 2006; İşcan, 2011; Lucas, Miraflores, & Go, 2011; MacIntyre, Noels, & Clement, 1997; Melanlıoğlu & Demir, 2013; Plotnick, 2009; Tunçel, 2014a). Horwitz, et al. (1986) stated in these studies that foreign language anxiety is a phenomenon specific to foreign language learning. When the results of many studies conducted in Turkey and abroad are examined, it is seen that foreign language anxiety is different from other anxieties and this anxiety is very effective in the foreign language learning process. The existence of studies dealing with anxiety about learning Turkish as a foreign language shows that this problem should be addressed in particular (Batumlu, 2006; Çelik & Kaban, 2022; Erdil, 2016; Özdemir, 2019; Polatcan, 2019; Sargül, 2000; Tunçel, 2014b). When the studies are examined, the common result is the finding that anxiety has an effect on foreign language learning. Anxiety also plays an active role in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. Therefore, it is important to examine foreigners’ concerns about learning Turkish. Examining the anxieties of students learning Turkish as a foreign language in terms of different variables will lead to the source of their anxieties. This will offer solutions for extreme anxiety or low anxiety.

1.1. The Aim of Study

The aim of this study is to examine the anxiety of learning a foreign language, to reveal the factors affecting the anxiety in learning Turkish as a foreign language and to offer improvement

suggestions by comparing them with the studies in the literature. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the state of anxiety in learning Turkish as a foreign language?
2. Does the anxiety of learning a foreign language affect learning positively or negatively?
3. Are there significant differences between the anxiety levels of students learning Turkish as a foreign language and the variable of gender, place of residence, number of known languages, and the variable of duration of residence of foreign students in Turkey?

The answers to these questions were compared with other studies in the literature, and comments were made on the results obtained. The findings between learning Turkish as a foreign language and the level of anxiety were discussed and presented.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Model

Descriptive analysis, content analysis and measurement by scanning were used in the parts where we discussed the anxiety in learning Turkish as a foreign language and how the anxiety of learning a foreign language affects learning. In the third part, the anxiety levels of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language and the variable of gender, place of residence, the number of known languages, and the variable of the time foreign students lived in Turkey were examined. It is aimed to determine the concerns of people who learn Turkish as a foreign language with a valid and reliable measurement tool.

2.2. Study Group

Foreigners learning Turkish were chosen as the study universe. The sample of the study consists of a total of 145 foreign students, 78 women and 67 men, learning Turkish at Dokuz Eylül University, Language Education Application and Research Center (DEDAM). The application to measure the anxiety levels of foreign students included in the study about learning Turkish was made to the students who volunteered. The results of the study were discussed by supporting the related studies in the literature.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

“Foreigners’ Turkish Learning Anxiety Scale” developed by [Sevim \(2019\)](#) was used to obtain the findings. This scale, unlike other scales, has been specially prepared for those who learn Turkish as a foreign language. For this reason, this scale was preferred. In the words of [Sevim \(2019\)](#), while developing this scale, after the literature review, a focus group interview was conducted with a group of eight students learning Turkish as a foreign language, and it was tried to determine the expressions of anxiety about learning a foreign language. As a result of this interview, an item pool consisting of 51 questions was created. In order to make the surface validity of the item pool, 18 questions were eliminated by taking the opinions of 4 academicians and a draft scale of 33 questions was obtained. In order to make the content validity of the draft scale, the items were tested with the participation of 10 academicians by applying the Lawshe Technique. In the analysis, it was understood that the content validity rates of the items in the draft scale were at an acceptable level. The draft scale, whose content validity was completed, was applied to a group of 30 students studying at different departments at Atatürk University. Necessary corrections were made by receiving feedback from these students about the intelligibility of the items. After the pilot application was made, the 33-question draft scale was applied to a group of 325 people who spoke Turkish at least at A2 level. In order to apply factor analysis to the draft scale, firstly, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test and Bartlett Sphericity Test were conducted to determine the suitability of the data set for EFA. The data set was found to be suitable for principal components testing ($p < 0.01$).

2.4. Data Analysis

In the research, a 5-interval Likert-type scale consisting of 22 items was developed to measure the anxiety of learning Turkish as a foreign language. This scale, whose validity and reliability has been proven, was used to determine the anxiety levels of foreign students, which constitute the third part of our study, while learning Turkish as a foreign language in terms of various variables. The data of this research were analyzed in the “SPSS 24.00” program. The Man-Whitney U test was used for pairwise comparisons and the Kruskal-Wallis H test for multiple comparisons. The reason for choosing this scale is that it is prepared for those who learn Turkish as a foreign language. In addition, this scale offers the opportunity to measure students' foreign language learning anxiety by comparing them with different variables. While parametric tests provide data only for statistical understanding, this scale we use also takes different variables into account. The application was made to the students who volunteered. It is aimed to discuss the results of the study by supporting the related studies in the literature.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Anxiety in Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language

Learning a foreign language is not an easy process for many people. Affective, cognitive, cultural etc. Factors such as these can complicate this process. One of the affective factors is anxiety. Fear and anxiety are concepts that are confused with each other in foreign language learning. Actually, the two terms have different meanings (Bacanlı, 2002). Barlow (2002) states that fear is a state of being alert to imminent or imminent dangers. Anxiety is the state of being alarmed for possible situations. Kierkgaard (2013) says that anxiety is completely different from fear and related concepts with a specific object, and therefore anxiety is not found in animals. As Köroğlu (2013) said, feelings of anxiety and fear are normal feelings for human life. Erdil (2016) explained the difference between the concepts of anxiety and fear with the example he gave as follows; A foreign student's hesitation about taking Turkish lessons because he does not like Turkish lessons and does not want to learn Turkish, and his avoidance behavior against this hesitation is an indication of “anxiety”. The moment he thinks he has to take a Turkish lesson and enters the classroom, the situation he feels before the Turkish lesson starts is an indicator of “fear”. The key difference between fear and anxiety is when the emotion arises. Anxiety is experienced before an event or potential event occurs. Anxiety is a reaction to an emotional state and external danger, that is, to any possible perception of pain (Freud, 2013). Fear is experienced after the event has occurred. While anxiety is in question for many situations, foreign language learning anxiety is specifically addressed in the literature.

Anxiety can be defined as involuntary reactions to possibilities in the face of an unknown situation. The student who learns a foreign language steps into the world of the unknown. A new language is the door to a new world. The anxiety and uncertainty that the foreign student felt before learning a new language reveals some involuntary reactions of the person. These reactions are sweaty hands, dry mouth, etc. It manifests itself cognitively and emotionally as well as having physical reactions such as Studies have shown that anxiety affects the person cognitively and as a result, it also affects the learning process. Kyosti (1992) argues that anxiety is associated with a threatening situation and that anxiety is a complex condition that includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Although learning a foreign language does not seem like a threatening situation, it is obvious that it affects the person in cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions. Ergür (2004) defines anxiety as the feeling of many emotions such as resistance, not feeling safe, and restlessness that occur in the process of learning a foreign language.

In 1986, Horwitz et al. took the anxiety literature one step further by stating that a special situation anxiety, which they named “Foreign Language Anxiety”, causes students to react negatively

to language learning (Tunçel, 2014a). Horwitz, et al. (1986) first discussed that foreign language anxiety is a phenomenon specific to foreign language learning and formed the conceptual infrastructure of foreign language anxiety. Horwitz, et al. (1986) define foreign language anxiety as a set of self-perception, emotions and behaviors specific to foreign language classes, arising from the uncertainties of the foreign language learning process. The anxiety specific to learning a foreign language is directly related to language learning areas. Foreign language anxiety is defined as a state of tension and fear that is identified with foreign language environments and affects speaking, listening and learning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). This anxiety is not a constant worry. It occurs in certain situations. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) state that foreign language anxiety is not among the permanent concerns, and it occurs when it creates temporary and special situations or threats, unlike the constant anxiety (Tunçel, 2014a). Of course, there are reasons for this concern. The newly learned language is full of unknowns for a foreigner. However, negative experiences, attitudes towards the learned language, cultural differences, personal characteristics, etc. affects anxiety. Krashen (1985) states that the high level of anxiety of the individual in foreign language environments prevents language acquisition or the realization of the language acquisition process. Horwitz et al., (1986) stated that anxiety is an important factor in language learning, that the foreign language learning process consists of more complex experiences and processes than other courses, and that although some individuals are willing to learn the target language, they cannot succeed in learning the target language due to their anxiety, They state that anxiety should be considered separately from the anxiety experienced in other lessons and that foreign language classes are environments where high-level anxiety is experienced. Horwitz et al., (1986), they found that individuals feel nervous, nervous and stressed in foreign language classes and that these people are mentally inhibited due to their high level of anxiety when they want to learn a foreign language. Although there are many examples of anxiety that makes it difficult to learn a foreign language, there are also different reasons that affect this situation. Horwitz et al., (1986), they found that even individuals who are highly motivated and highly motivated in areas such as music, mathematics, and science lose their motivation in the field of foreign language, and this is due to learning a foreign language in the classroom. The effect of anxiety on performance and success in foreign language learning. Foreign language anxiety can play a role in preventing success in language learning (Tunçel, 2014b). Unlike other courses, foreign language learning anxiety affects the learning process of the individual.

In the process of learning a foreign language, there may be different anxiety states for different skills. There are many studies on the effect of anxiety levels related to speaking skills on learning, especially in the foreign language learning process. In a case study conducted by Koch and Terrell (1991), they found that speaking in front of other students in a foreign language class was a source of anxiety. Contrary to other skills, it is seen that the anxiety of making mistakes is higher in speaking skill. The fear of being criticized for speaking in a foreign language in the community or to another person causes anxiety. Young (1986) states that anxious students fail in verbal production. Making grammatical mistakes, pronunciation mistakes, difficulty remembering words, fear of speaking in class or in front of a different crowd, etc. Possibilities such as increase the level of anxiety in the person. Kleinmann (1977) found that students with high anxiety levels use more difficult grammatical structures in speaking and writing skills. Individuals who do not have difficulty expressing themselves in their mother tongue and understanding others have difficulty in doing these in a foreign language, and they perceive any performance they are expected to perform in a foreign language as a threat to their self-perception. Self-perceptions of being successful communicators can be replaced by shyness, fear, insecurity and even panic in foreign language environments (Horwitz et al., (1986). Anxious students aim to make perfect interpretations (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Avoidance of making mistakes and perfectionism appear as factors that increase the level of anxiety.

Students who are anxious about learning a foreign language resort to various ways to avoid making mistakes. These; These are ways such as participating less in the lesson, avoiding speaking, keeping the texts short, and shortening the expressions. Phillips (1992) found that students with high levels of anxiety displayed their performances using fewer structures. Students use concrete statements using certain patterns rather than interpretation. Steinberg and Horwitz (1986) found that foreign language students with high levels of anxiety tended to use less interpretative power in productive skills than students with low anxiety. There are many studies that have found that anxiety increases the probability of making mistakes. The avoidance of making mistakes, on the other hand, reduces participation in the lesson and hinders creativity. Gregersen (2003) found that anxious students are more prone to making mistakes. However, the level of anxiety is also very important. Studies have revealed that students with high levels of anxiety generally have low achievement levels (Aydin & Zengin, 2008). It shows that students with low or acceptable level of foreign language anxiety are more successful in foreign language learning (Sallabaş, 2012). Based on this information, foreign language learning levels of students with high anxiety levels decrease, while students with low or medium levels of anxiety have higher foreign language learning success.

3.2. Examining the Anxiety of Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language in Terms of Various Variables

In this study, in which the anxiety levels of foreign students learning Turkish as a foreign language are examined according to various variables, N refers to the number of people and Mean Rank average score in the tables given. Since the answers are reverse coded, the highest score indicates the least anxiety.

3.2.1. Examining the anxiety of learning Turkish as a foreign language in terms of gender variable

The scale for anxiety in learning Turkish as a foreign language was applied to men and women at the rates shown in the table.

Table 1. Kruskal-Wallis H test results by gender variable

| Gender | N | Mean Rank | Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--------|-----|-----------|------------------------|
| Women | 78 | 69,71 | ,308* |
| Men | 67 | 76,84 | |
| Total | 145 | | |

* $p < .05$

Of the 145 people in Table 1 who learn Turkish as a foreign language, 78 are women and 67 are men. Although there is a 7-point difference in favor of women, there is no significant difference in terms of gender variable in foreigners' anxiety about learning Turkish. This 7-point difference may be the result of women being more emotionally sensitive. For this reason, the anxiety felt while learning Turkish as a foreign language may have been higher than that of men, although not at a significant level.

3.2.2. Learning Turkish as a foreign language investigation of anxiety in terms of place of residence variable

The scale for anxiety in learning Turkish as a foreign language was applied to students living in different countries who came to Turkey for education. Anxiety statuses are listed in the table according to the place where they live.

Table 2. Kruskal-Wallis H test results by country of residence variable

| Country | N | Mean Rank | Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) |
|-------------------|-----|-----------|------------------------|
| Turkish republics | 76 | 89,95 | ,000* |
| Arabic countries | 13 | 55,46 | |
| Persian | 21 | 52,52 | |
| Russia - Ukraine | 10 | 65,45 | |
| Far East | 26 | 54,46 | |
| Total | 146 | | |

* $p < .05$

Anxiety levels of students learning Turkish as a foreign language according to the country of residence variable are given in Table 2. When this table is examined, it is seen that there is no significant difference in anxiety according to the country of residence variable. However, it is thought that the significant number of students living in the Turkish Republics may cause this result. Foreigners learning Turkish are concentrated in the Turkish Republics. And when the table is examined, it is seen that the anxiety levels of the students living here are lower, although it is not at a significant level. The reason for this may be that the languages spoken in the Turkic Republics are generally dialects of Turkish. The decrease in anxiety levels of students living in Turkic Republics where these languages, which are distantly or closely related to Turkey Turkish, are spoken can be considered normal.

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3.2.3. Learning Turkish as a foreign language investigation of anxiety in terms of number of known languages variable

The scale for anxiety in learning Turkish as a foreign language was applied to foreign students who speak more than one language, and it was seen that bilinguals generally stated Turkish as a second language.

Table 3. Kruskal-Wallis H test results according to how many languages speak variable

| Number of Languages Known | N | Mean Rank | Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------------|-----|-----------|------------------------|
| 2 | 27 | 66,50 | ,042* |
| 3 | 53 | 65,01 | |
| 4 and more | 66 | 83,18 | |
| Total | 146 | | |

* $p < .05$

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference in the anxiety about learning Turkish as a foreign language in favor of those who speak 4 or more languages. This result is an expected result. As a matter of fact, foreign students who have learned four or more foreign languages before are experienced. Since they know the process, it is expected that they do not have to worry about what will happen or have a low level of anxiety.

3.2.4. Learning Turkish as a foreign language investigation of anxiety in terms of the variable of time living in Turkey

The scale for anxiety in learning Turkish as a foreign language was applied to foreign students who came to Turkey from different countries to learn Turkish. The distribution of students according to the time they have lived in Turkey is shown in the table.

Table 4. Kruskal-Wallis H test results according to the variable of length of living in Turkey

| How Long Has It Been Lived in Turkey | N | Mean Rank | Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----------|------------------------|
| 0-6 ay | 129 | 74,38 | |
| 6 months and more | 17 | 66,82 | ,488* |
| Total | 146 | | |

* $p < .05$

Table 4 shows the anxiety levels of foreign students learning Turkish as a foreign language according to the time they lived in Turkey. There is no significant difference according to this table. It is seen that the duration of foreign students living in Turkey is concentrated between 0-6 months. This strengthens the possibility that they came to Turkey for language education.

4. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

Although the word anxiety has negative connotations, this is not entirely true. As a matter of fact, it is very difficult for us to be motivated about a subject that we are not worried about. It would be very difficult to provide our inner motivation to move us if we did not have the anxiety of success. Anxiety prompts us to learn and gives us energy to work. Anxiety doesn't just express negative emotions. The level of anxiety is very important for it to be beneficial. In the literature review, it is seen that anxiety is handled at three different levels in foreign language teaching. These levels are:

High level of anxiety. Krashen (1985) states that the high level of anxiety of the individual in foreign language environments prevents the individual from acquiring the language or performing the language acquisition process. Andrade and Williams (2009) concluded that students with high anxiety are afraid to speak in a foreign language class. There are many studies that show that high anxiety negatively affects the process of learning a foreign language.

Medium anxiety level. According to the Yerkes-Dodson law, moderate anxiety affects the student's performance most positively and facilitates learning (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908). A moderate level of foreign language learning anxiety contributes positively to the learning process of the student.

Low level of anxiety. In addition to having a high level of anxiety, having a low level of anxiety can negatively affect the learning of the individual (Baş, 2013). Matsumoto (1989) found that the subject who had problems in listening and speaking had a low level of anxiety. The low level of foreign language learning anxiety makes the learning process of the student inefficient.

Being too anxious or carefree negatively affects learning. However, studies showing that a moderate anxiety in learning a foreign language facilitates learning are important. While anxiety was considered as a factor preventing foreign language learning in the 1960s, it was concluded that 'moderate' anxiety could play a role in increasing foreign language success in studies conducted in later years (Tunçel, 2014b). The fact that the student's level of anxiety while learning a foreign language is at a moderate level affects the learning process positively. The negative effects of high levels of anxiety on learning success and student performance have been demonstrated by many studies. The fact that the effect of anxiety on the success level of the student in the foreign language learning process has been proven by many studies emphasizes the importance of the level of anxiety. While a high or low level of foreign language anxiety affects learning negatively, moderate anxiety positively affects the success of the student in learning a foreign language.

Foreign language learning anxiety level affects learning. However, anxiety is not a situation that directly prevents learning. While a moderate level of anxiety affects learning positively, being

excessively anxious or carefree does not prevent learning. [Bacanlı \(2002\)](#) likens the effect of anxiety on learning to general arousal level and states that it differs from person to person. Features such as academic ability and self-esteem can differentiate the effect of anxiety on learning. While students with low and high academic ability are not affected by the level of anxiety, students with a medium academic level can learn less when they are overly anxious ([Bacanlı, 2002](#)). These students can learn even if they have anxiety levels that negatively affect the learning of other students. A similar study was conducted by [Spielberger \(1962\)](#). In the study, the school achievements of students with three different anxiety states and three different academic abilities were compared. According to the research results; The relationship between anxiety and learning depends on academic ability. Anxiety has little effect on the success of students with low and high academic ability. The main factor affecting the success of students is low academic ability. Students with high academic ability find learning so easy that anxiety does not affect them. Anxiety is very important for students with intermediate abilities. The reason for the low achievement levels of students with moderate academic ability and high anxiety level is that they worry too much about academic or non-academic subjects and do not pay enough attention to the subject. Since high anxiety also negatively affects attention, these students may not be able to focus their attention on the details of the subject they are studying, so they may be insufficient in what they need to learn, that is, incomplete learning. In addition, because of their high anxiety, they may not be able to show their real success in exams. Low and high anxiety do not make a difference in terms of success in students with low and high academic ability (intelligence score). However, high anxiety affects success negatively in students with moderate academic ability ([Ari, 2009](#)). Accordingly, the level of academic success of the student directly affects the effect of anxiety level on success.

There are many types of anxiety in foreign language learning. Although the types of anxiety that researchers present by categorizing differ, they are generally divided into three:

Personal anxiety. In some individuals, anxiety appears as a constant state. Anxiety is part of the human personality.

Situational anxiety. Anxiety is a reaction to a particular situation in a given time.

Event-related anxiety. It is the anxiety felt in the face of certain events ([Ellis, 1994](#)).

There are three types of foreign language learning anxiety. These types of anxiety are:

Communication anxiety: It is experienced by individuals who have immature views and thoughts but have immature communication skills in the target language.

Exam anxiety: It arises during the academic evaluation process. It is defined as the fear of failing in exams.

Fear of negative evaluation: It is a fear of foreign language learners who fail to make a decent social impression, arising from the evaluations made by others ([Young, 1991](#)).

Although these anxieties are common for every course, [Young \(1991\)](#) found in their research that there are six different types that affect foreign language anxiety. These types are:

1. Personal and interpersonal causes.
2. Individual differences in language learning.
3. Instructor beliefs about language learning.
4. Instructor - student interactions.
5. Classroom environments.
6. Language tests.

The causes of anxiety in foreign language learning were also defined by [Aydın and Zengin \(2008\)](#), and they obtained results similar to [Young \(1991\)](#). According to the results of the studies, the factors that cause anxiety are as follows:

Proficiency levels of foreign language students. [Bailey \(1983\)](#) found that those who find themselves inadequate compared to other foreign language learners tend to be anxious.

Exam applications. [Bailey \(1983\)](#) determined that mistakes and mistakes in exam applications and the behaviors exhibited by teachers are also sources of anxiety.

Teachers' behavior. [Bailey \(1983\)](#) emphasized their findings on exam practices as [Ellis and Rathbone \(1987\)](#) stated that students felt anxious because of teachers' threatening questions.

Difficulty level of foreign language lessons. As a result of two separate studies conducted by [Young \(1990\)](#) and [Price \(1991\)](#), they determined that the level of foreign language anxiety is related to the difficulty level of language lessons.

Language ability levels of students. [Sparks and Ganschow \(1991\)](#), in three separate studies, found that language skill level, which is one of the individual differences that directly affect language learning, is closely related to anxiety.

Cultural differences. The target culture causes some affective effects on foreign language learners and the affective situations experienced in the process of acquaintance with the target culture; emotional decline, panic, anger, self-pity, sadness and alienation Cultural differences. The target culture causes some affective effects on foreign language learners and the affective situations experienced in the process of acquaintance with the target culture; emotional regression, panic, anger, self-pity, sadness and alienation. Being lost in the target culture is a cause for anxiety is a natural consequence of intercultural differences ([Ellis, 1994](#)).

When the types of anxiety are examined, there are unknown or unpredictable situations, events, etc. in accordance with the definition. appears as a response to it. Anxiety occurs due to personality traits, language intelligence or language ability, adaptation skills, language learning environment, student's level, learning environment, test anxiety, fear of criticism. The level of foreign language learning anxiety also varies according to the size of the reactions given to such situations and events and personality traits.

We talked about the types of foreign language learning anxiety, since foreign language learning anxiety has different effects on students at different academic levels, and in some studies, low or high levels of anxiety have an effect on the level of foreign language learning. So, how to deal with anxiety in order to eliminate the negative situations caused by this foreign language learning anxiety?

Various types of anxiety give clues about coping with anxiety in foreign language learning. [Horwitz et al. \(1986\)](#) identified two methods to cope with anxiety. The first method is to teach students how to deal with anxiety-provoking situations. The second method is to make the learning environment less stressful.

[Ellis and Sinclair \(1989\)](#) argued that teachers should be trained in ways that students can learn better, focusing on how to teach rather than what should be taught. Another suggestion made by [Campbell and Ortiz \(1991\)](#) to reduce the level of anxiety is that students talk to their teachers or friends about their worries or keep a diary about this issue ([Aydın & Zengin, 2008](#)). Reviewing and reorganizing factors such as student, teacher, learning environment and learning path will be effective in bringing the level of anxiety to the desired level.

By examining the types of foreign language learning anxieties, improving the situations, events and emotions that cause anxiety will eliminate the negative effect on learning caused by anxiety. Foreigners' language learning or Turkish learning anxiety has been the subject of many studies. When anxiety researches as a foreign language are examined in the world, it is seen that anxiety researches generally concentrate on learning English as a foreign language. [Horwitz et al., \(1986\)](#) conducted a study on 75 university students, 39 men and 36 women, who were learning Spanish as a foreign language. As a result of this research, it was determined that students with high anxiety were afraid to speak in a foreign language class. The importance of this research is that they found the scale called "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety", which has been used by many anxiety researchers since 1986. Many studies conducted in Turkey are also carried out with the Turkish version of this scale.

[Sevim \(2019\)](#) Foreigners' Turkish Learning Anxiety Scale, on the other hand, was preferred in our study because it is a special scale prepared for Turkish.

In the studies conducted, the anxiety status of students who learn foreign languages through language skills such as reading, writing and speaking were examined, the results of the anxiety felt while learning Turkish were investigated, and the effects of anxiety on learning a foreign language were discussed. Academic studies on anxiety; it has gravitated towards more specific areas such as speaking anxiety and writing skills ([Tunçel, 2014b](#)). [İşcan \(2015\)](#), in his study on 100 students studying at the Turkish department of Jordan University, found that Jordanian students had high levels of somatic and social anxiety regarding their Turkish writing skills, while cognitive anxiety levels were low. The reason for this is that students feel under pressure due to the fear that their composition will be negatively evaluated by the teachers, lack of self-confidence, and time constraints. The fact that the anxiety levels of students who speak four languages or more were lower in our study shows that the students can overcome the lack of self-confidence and the fear of being under pressure with the experiences gained while learning other languages. As a matter of fact, the emphasis given to an unknown situation in the definition of anxiety may have revealed a decrease in the reaction to a known situation, that is, a decrease in anxiety. Again, [Aytan and Tunçel \(2015\)](#) conducted a study on a total of 422 foreign students, 183 women and 239 men, studying at Süleyman Demirel and International Antalya University in the first semester of the 2014-2015 academic year. At the end of the study, the "Turkish as a Foreign Language Writing Anxiety Scale" was found to be a valid and reliable measurement tool and it was stated that it would be useful for researchers who want to study the writing anxiety of foreign students learning Turkish. When the studies are examined, it is seen that writing and speaking anxiety are the most common types of anxiety in foreign language learning. [Lucas, Miraflores, and Go \(2011\)](#) conducted a study on 250 students enrolled in foreign language courses at De La Salle University. As a result of the research, they found that foreign students are generally anxious while learning English. When the studies are examined in general, anxiety emerges as an inevitable situation in foreign language learning. [MacIntyre, Noels, and Clement \(1997\)](#) conducted a study of 37 volunteer adolescent Canadian (29 women and 8 men) English-speaking students. As a result of the research, it was determined that students with high anxiety got lower scores than students with low anxiety in speaking proficiency, while anxious students underestimated their own capacity, while students with low anxiety tended to overestimate their own capacity. A low level of anxiety contributes positively to students' foreign language speaking skills. [Sallabaş \(2012\)](#), in his research titled "Assessment of Speech Anxiety of Learners of Turkish as a Foreign Language", found that students have a certain amount of anxiety when speaking Turkish, but this anxiety is not high. [Sevim \(2014\)](#), in his research titled "Examination of Foreign Students' Turkish Speaking Anxiety in terms of Some Variables", concluded that foreign students' Turkish speaking anxiety levels are low. While there are studies in which the level of anxiety in speaking skills is low in learning a foreign language, there are also studies in which it is determined at a medium level. For example, [Özdemir \(2013\)](#), in his master's thesis titled "Sources of Speech Anxiety of Learners of Turkish as a Foreign Language", concluded that the students who answered the scale had moderate anxiety in line with the average scores of the dimensions of speaking anxiety of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language when the scale was examined in general. When the studies dealing with the speaking skills anxiety of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language are examined, it is seen that the anxiety levels are generally low.

Foreign students' perspective on the foreign language they learn is also important. Positive feelings and thoughts about the learned language affect the level of anxiety and indirectly make learning easier or harder. [Sallabaş \(2012\)](#) conducted a research on 68 foreign students studying at C level at Ankara University Turkish Teaching Center Taksim branch. As a result of the research, it was determined that those who think Turkish is not a difficult language have significantly lower levels of

anxiety than those who think it is difficult, and that other variables do not make a significant difference. [Bacanlı \(2002\)](#) states that since the majority of the students are at a moderate level in terms of both academic and self-esteem, by following the middle path, the effect of worrying on learning is positive. When the studies conducted to keep the anxiety level at medium levels are examined, it will contribute to academic success.

There are many studies in the literature examining foreign language learning anxiety in terms of various variables. As a result of the literature research in foreign language learning, it was determined that the relationship between anxiety and gender had three different effects on language learning. While there are science researchers who found that the relationship between anxiety and gender in foreign language learning does not affect the language learning process, there are also science researchers who found that women students are more anxious than men students or that men students are more anxious than women students. In our study, there was no significant difference in the level of anxiety about learning Turkish as a foreign language in terms of gender variable. When we look at the studies examining the correlation between anxiety and gender in foreign language learning, it is seen that most of them have similar results with our study. Apart from foreign language anxiety, on writing anxiety, [İşeri and Ünal \(2012\)](#) concluded that there was no significant difference according to gender in their study titled “Examination of Turkish Teacher Candidates’ Writing Anxiety in Terms of Various Variables”. [Tunçel \(2014a\)](#), in his research titled “Anxiety Regarding Turkish as a Foreign Language and the Effect of Anxiety on Foreign Language Success”, determined that there was no significant difference between the participants' end-of-course final achievement exam levels depending on the gender variable. [Sevim \(2014\)](#), in his research titled “Examination of Foreign Students’ Turkish Speaking Anxiety in terms of Some Variables”, concluded that there was no significant effect of gender on the Turkish speaking anxiety levels of foreign students, and that the Turkish speaking levels of women and men students were the same. [Sarıgül \(2000\)](#) and [Batumlu \(2006\)](#) found that foreign language anxiety did not show any difference according to gender. [Tiryaki \(2011\)](#) concluded that writing anxiety did not differ according to gender in his master's thesis titled "University Students' Argumentative Text Writing Skills and Writing Anxiety and Critical Thinking Skills". [Lucas, Miraflores, and Go \(2011\)](#) concluded in their study, “English Learning Anxiety Among Foreign Students Learning English in the Philippines,” that test-exam thinking is a factor that increases anxiety among all groupings of boys and girls. These results are consistent with the findings of our study.

Although not many, there are also studies in which women's anxiety levels are higher in foreign language learning. [Aida \(1994\)](#) and [Dalkılıç \(2001\)](#) concluded that foreign language anxiety levels differ between men and women students. [Andrade and Williams \(2009\)](#) conducted a study on 253 students (132 men and 111 women) taught English by native English speakers from 6 different 4-year Japanese universities. As a result of this research, it was determined that women generally have more intense anxiety than men. [Plotnick \(2009\)](#) found that women have more anxiety than men. [Aydın, Yavuz and Yeşilyurt \(2006\)](#), in their research titled “Test Anxiety in Foreign Language Learning”, found that women students feel less confident and relieved than men students when they know that they will be tested; women students are more afraid than men students even if they are well prepared for the test; women students found that they studied more than men students if they had previously received low test scores. In this regard, although no significant difference was found in our study, it is seen that women have a higher level of anxiety than men, with a difference of 7 points. It is similar to the results of these studies in this respect. [Na \(2007\)](#), on the other hand, conducted a study on 115 Chinese students learning English as a foreign language and concluded that men students have higher levels of anxiety than women students.

When the relationship between the variable of permanent residence of foreign language learners and the level of foreign language learning anxiety was examined, it was concluded that there was no

significant difference in our study. [Melanloğlu and Demir \(2013\)](#) conducted a study on foreign students studying at Gazi University TÖMER. As a result of the research, “The Second Language Speech Anxiety Scale” was found to be valid and reliable. In addition, in the study, it was determined that the speaking anxiety of the students learning Turkish as a second language did not make a statistically significant difference according to the gender, country variable and age variable. The fact that there is no significant difference between the place of residence of foreign students and their foreign language learning anxiety is similar to the findings of our study.

When the relationship between the variable of how many languages the foreign language learners know and the level of foreign language learning anxiety, it was concluded in our study that there was a significant decrease in the level of anxiety in favor of those who knew four languages or more. [Tunçel \(2014a\)](#) conducted a research on 108 Greek students (82 women and 26 men) who attended the Turkish as a foreign language introductory (A1) level course opened within the Department of Modern Greek Languages at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. As a result of the research, it has been determined that anxiety plays a role in increasing success in foreign language learning up to a certain level and there is a positive correlation between foreign language success and foreign language proficiency rate. This result is consistent with the findings of our study. [Sevim \(2014\)](#), on the other hand, conducted a research on 74 foreign graduate and doctorate students studying at Atatürk University. As a result of the research, it was determined that foreign students had a low level of Turkish speaking anxiety. In addition, it was concluded that the anxiety levels of the students did not show a significant difference in terms of gender, field of study, educational status, knowing a language other than Turkish and the type of school they graduated from. Although the findings obtained by [Sevim \(2014\)](#) are mostly similar to the findings of our study, they differ in terms of the languages spoken by the students.

When the relationship between the variable of duration of foreign language learning students lived in Turkey and the level of foreign language learning anxiety was examined, it was concluded that there was no significant difference in our study. It is thought that the reason for this may be due to the fact that the duration of foreign students in the sample of our study is concentrated in the option 0-6 months (129 people). [Chiang \(2009\)](#) conducted a study on 327 interpreter students at 9 different institutes in Taiwan. 327 students have studied at schools that provide official English education for at least 6 years. As a result of the research, [Chiang \(2009\)](#) determined that foreign language anxiety in Taiwanese interpreter students is much less anxious than students learning different languages in different nationalities. This result is important in terms of showing that foreign language learning differs in countries and this affects the level of anxiety. [İşcan \(2011\)](#) conducted a research on the fear of learning Turkish among Indian students learning Turkish as an optional foreign language at Jawaharlal Nehru University, India. As a result of the research, [İşcan \(2011\)](#) determined that Indian students who learn Turkish as a foreign language have low Turkish learning anxiety and high Turkish learning success levels. The low level of anxiety of students learning a foreign language in their own country indicates that students feel more comfortable.

In this study, it is aimed to reveal the factors affecting the anxiety in learning Turkish as a foreign language and to offer improvement suggestions by comparing them with the studies in the literature. For this purpose, the study consists of three parts.

In the first part, anxiety in learning Turkish as a foreign language is discussed by comparing it with other studies in the literature. As a result, anxiety and fear are concepts that differ from each other in terms of timing. Anxiety is a reaction before an uncertain situation occurs. Foreign language learning anxiety has a different place in the literature. Research shows that; the anxiety felt while learning a foreign language is different from the anxiety felt in other lessons. Foreign language anxiety can be defined as a set of self-perception, academic abilities, emotions and behaviors specific to foreign language classes, arising from the uncertainties of the foreign language learning process.

Foreign language classrooms are environments with high levels of anxiety. The foreign language learning process consists of more complex experiences and processes than other courses. Even anxiety about different language skills gained while learning a foreign language varies. Anxiety can also vary for reading, speaking, writing, and listening skills. In particular, it is seen that the levels of anxiety towards speaking skills have increased significantly compared to other skills. This suggests that in addition to speaking in a newly learned foreign language, which affects the level of anxiety, speaking in public, establishing a dialogue, being afraid of making mistakes, and similar possibilities increase the level of anxiety by including social and individual anxiety situations. There are many internal and environmental factors that affect the level of anxiety. Therefore, the state of anxiety is not stable. The students found that they felt nervous, nervous and stressed in foreign language lessons, unlike other lessons, and that these people were mentally inhibited due to their high level of anxiety when they wanted to learn a foreign language. Again, no matter how eager the student is to learn the foreign language, he may not be successful in learning the target language because of his anxiety.

Foreign language learning anxiety is an affective reaction to a newly learned language. However, this response is a complex situation that includes cognitive, behavioral and physical dimensions.

Physically, anxiety about learning a foreign language, sweating of the hand, dry mouth, etc. manifests itself with symptoms such as: Behaviorally, foreign language learning anxiety determines the student's reactions while learning a foreign language. The student, who shows avoidance behavior uses formulaic sentences to avoid making mistakes, gives short answers and shows avoidance behaviors as much as possible. Cognitively, the anxiety of learning a foreign language affects the student's level of learning that foreign language. This is a controversial issue. As a matter of fact, although the results of many studies show that there is a negative correlation between anxiety level and foreign language learning success, there are studies showing that different factors also affect this success.

In the second part, an answer was sought to the question of whether foreign language learning anxiety affects learning positively or negatively. In addition to many studies that reveal the effect of high level of anxiety in foreign language learning that makes learning difficult, there are studies that prove and prove that it is far from being a factor that reduces success on its own. In conclusion; In order to determine the effect of foreign language learning anxiety on academic success, two questions are important: According to whom? According to what? It has been shown that foreign language anxiety, which was said to have a negative effect on academic achievement until the 1960s, is directly related to self-perception and academic ability level in later studies. This situation reveals that the level of foreign language anxiety alone cannot have an effect on academic achievement. As a matter of fact, anxiety is not the only factor affecting success.

There are factors that cause anxiety For example; reviewing and rearranging factors such as student, teacher, learning environment and learning path will be effective in bringing the level of anxiety to the desired level. By examining the types of foreign language learning anxiety, improving the situations, events and emotions that cause anxiety will eliminate the negative effect on learning caused by anxiety. Again, the level of anxiety does not have the same effect on every individual. For a student with a good self-perception and moderate academic ability, anxiety is a factor that increases academic success.

In the third part, the anxiety levels of students learning Turkish as a foreign language were examined in terms of variables such as gender, place of residence, number of known languages, and time lived in Turkey. In conclusion; there is no significant difference in anxiety level in terms of gender variable. However, it was determined that there was a 7-point difference in favor of women.

In terms of the place of residence variable, it has been determined that the students in the sample of our study constantly live in the Turkic Republics, Arab countries, Persian, Russia-Ukraine and the

Far East. There is no significant difference in terms of the variable of place where foreign language anxieties constantly live. However, when looking at the results, it is seen that foreign students mostly live in Turkish Republics. It is thought that this situation may have affected the result.

When the anxiety levels of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language are examined according to the variable of the number of languages they know, there is a significant difference in favor of those who speak 4 languages or more. The reason for the low level of anxiety of foreign students who speak 4 languages or more may be the effect of their previous experience on their anxiety levels. As a matter of fact, the experience of learning a foreign language and having achieved it four or more times may increase their self-perception and may suggest that their academic abilities are high.

When the anxiety levels are examined according to the variable of the time they have lived in Turkey, there is no significant difference. However, the fact that the density is in favor of foreign students living in Turkey between 0-6 months can significantly affect this result. Again, these foreign students living in Turkey between 0-6 months suggest that they live in the country for the purpose of learning a language.

In conclusion; although there are studies that show the effect of high anxiety level on the success of learning a foreign language, it has been concluded that looking at the anxiety level unilaterally will affect the reliability and reality of the results. There are many factors that affect the level of anxiety. Revealing these factors will help to find the real reasons for their effect on academic achievement. Academic success and self-perception anxiety level affect the student's learning of a foreign language. Students with low self-perception and students with very high self-esteem are not affected by the level of anxiety. Again, while the effect of anxiety level is limited on individuals with very low or very high academic ability; A medium level of anxiety positively affects the success of a student with a medium level of academic ability. There is no significant gender difference in foreign students learning Turkish. Research shows that the gender factor is not effective in learning a foreign language in other countries. Although there is no significant difference in terms of living space, the gathering of the majority in the Turkish Republics must have affected the result. The low level of anxiety of those who know four languages or more is an example of the effect of a previously experienced situation on the anxiety level. There is no significant difference in terms of the variable of duration of living in Turkey. However, the concentration of foreign students between 0-6 months may have affected the result.

As a result, although there are many factors affecting the level of anxiety in foreign language learning, the effect of anxiety level on foreign language learning success is clearly seen. While sufficient level of anxiety facilitates learning, high level of anxiety makes learning difficult. This anxiety, which is at a sufficient level, can be called motivational anxiety. Using motivational anxiety in education has a positive effect on success. It is important to consider anxiety levels together with different variables, not alone, and to develop new scales in which self-perception and academic ability variables can be measured with a multi-faceted research in order to make the results meaningful. In-depth investigation of the factors affecting the anxiety level of students learning Turkish as a foreign language will increase the quality of education. Again, the importance of anxiety in education, its positive and negative aspects should be investigated in depth.

Ethics Committee Decision

Ethical approval and written permission for this study were obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Dokuz Eylül University with the decision dated 18/12/2022 and numbered 457404.

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