

EFFECT OF PRE-LISTENING RELAXATION AND SELF-AFFIRMATION EXERCISES ON L2 LISTENING COMPREHENSION TEST PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This true-experimental design research study investigated the effect of pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation exercises on the listening comprehension test scores of 70 learners of English in the English Language Teaching department of a state university in Turkey. Participants in the experimental group completed relaxation and self-affirmation exercises before six listening comprehension practice tests while those in the control group took the same tests without exposure to such exercises. The t-test results did not reveal any significant difference, indicating that pre-listening exercises had no significant effect on listening comprehension test performance. Anxiety levels were tested through the Test Influence Inventory (TII). Pre TII results did not show any relationship between participants' self-perceived test anxiety levels and listening comprehension test scores and groups did not differ significantly in terms of anxiety levels, although there was a significant gender difference. However, post TII results using an independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference, indicating that the pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation exercises had a positive effect on the reported test anxiety levels of learners in the experimental group. ANOVA analysis revealed a significant main effect on the anxiety levels of the time that TII was administered, that is when it was given before versus after the experiment, as well as significant effects between time and gender, time and group, and time, gender and group. Tests of between-subject effects also revealed a significant main effect of group on TII scores.

Keywords: *pre-listening relaxation exercises, self-affirmation, L2 listening comprehension, foreign language anxiety, test anxiety.*

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Dinleme öncesi rahatlama ve olumlama etkinliklerinin dinleğini anlama sınav performansı üzerine etkisi

Özet

Bir Türk üniversitesinin İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı'nda öğrenim gören 70 öğrenciyle gerçekleştirilen bu deneysel çalışma, dinleme öncesi rahatlama ve olumlama etkinliklerinin dinlediğini anlama sınav sonuçları üzerindeki etkisini incelemektedir. Deney grubundaki katılımcılar altı dinlediğini anlama deneme sınavından önce rahatlama ve olumlama etkinliklerini tamamlamışlar, kontrol grubundaki katılımcılarsa herhangi bir etkinliğe maruz kalmamışlardır. T-test sonuçları herhangi bir anlamlı farka işaret etmediğinden, dinleme öncesi etkinliklerin dinlediğini anlama sınav performansı üzerinde herhangi bir etkisinin olmadığı sonucu çıkarılmıştır. Kaygı seviyeleri Sınav Etkisi Envanteri (TII) ile ölçülmüştür. TII ön test sonuçları katılımcıların kendi algıladıkları sınav kaygılarının dinlediğini anlama sınav sonuçlarıyla arasında bir ilişki göstermemiştir ve cinsiyet açısından fark olmasına rağmen gruplar endişe seviyeleri açısından anlamlı bir fark göstermemiştir. TII son test sonuçlarıysa gruplar arasında anlamlı bir fark tespit etmiş ve böylelikle rahatlama ve olumlama etkinliklerinin algılama üzerinde olumlu bir etkisi olduğu sonucu çıkarılmıştır. Ayrıca, ANOVA sonuçları da zaman, cinsiyet ve grup açısından da anlamlı farklılıklar belirlemiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *dinleme öncesi rahatlama etkinlikleri, olumlama, yabancı dilde dinlediğini anlama, yabancı dil kaygısı, sınav kaygısı.*

Listening is an essential component of language acquisition (Vogely, 1999). However, for many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, listening is the most difficult of the four skills (Xu, 2011), largely due to a high level of anxiety caused by the nature of listening activities (Arnold, 2000).

A distinction is commonly made between general classroom anxiety and foreign language (FL) classroom anxiety on the grounds that the latter is more complex, with characteristics peculiar to language learning (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). As Arnold (2000) suggests, adolescent and adult language learners experience great discomfort “trying to express mature ideas in front of their peers in an obviously still immature linguistic vehicle” (p. 777).

Rubin (1994) emphasizes the important role of affective factors in second language (L2) comprehension, suggesting that good memory and attention, two vital characteristics for learning, are critical for good listening skills in FL. Similarly, Damasio (1994) indicates that emotions have a direct influence on mental processes and thereby on learning; past experiences in particular

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determine the quality of future performance in a learning environment (Arnold, 2000). In the case of listening comprehension, it is likely that past problems result in low performance in future listening tasks. According to Arnold, L2 listening comprehension has the potential to create great stress and anxiety because learners need to process incoming information in a very limited time, which together with negative factors such as lack of sound clarity and an unfamiliar accent, may result in a high level of anxiety. In a listening comprehension test, where test anxiety is added to listening comprehension anxiety, doubling the anxiety level, learners may score much lower than they would do in an anxiety-free state. According to Eysenck (1979), individuals experience test anxiety as a result of worry, which is composed of several elements including concern about performance, negative expectations, and feelings of tension, nervousness and uneasiness. Sieber (1980) defines test anxiety as a “special case of general anxiety consisting of phenomenological, physiological, and behavioral responses related to a fear of failure” (p. 17).

In the relevant literature, there have been few studies directly investigating test anxiety in the language classroom (In’ami, 2006), and even less on L2 listening test anxiety (Elkhafaifi, 2005). Previous studies tended to reveal a negative but generally moderate correlation between test anxiety and test performance (e.g., Sapp, 1999). There have also been studies (e.g., Hembree, 1988) which found a very weak relationship (as low as $r = -.12$) between these two variables. However, some recent studies such as In’ami (2006) did not find any effect at all of anxiety on the listening test performance of L2 learners. In’ami interprets this as being due to three factors: “(a) test takers’ personal characteristics (especially, test takers’ proficiency levels, experience of successful test performance in the past, and self-esteem), (b) strategic competence that controls anxiety, and (c) the low stakes nature of test results” (p. 333).

It is clear, therefore, that anxiety might play a negative role in L2 learning; in which case, it is the responsibility of researchers to seek a solution to the problem. More specifically, language teachers should look for ways to reduce anxiety level in language classrooms, especially among teacher candidates, because, as Kunt and Tm (2010) suggest, it is important that “instructors should recognize student teachers’ feelings of FL anxiety instead of simply evaluating them” (p. 4675). In this respect, Horwitz et al. (1986) suggest that teachers should deal with anxiety by making the learning environment as

stress-free as possible. In fact, as early as the 1970s, popular language teaching methods of the time such as Suggestopedia and the Silent Way attempted to create a stress-free classroom environment with the help of relaxation exercises, claiming that a non-threatening atmosphere would guarantee maximum learning.

One of the pre-listening exercises that can be used to reduce anxiety before a listening comprehension test is systematic desensitization (Arnold, 2000), achieved through repeatedly exposing learners to anxiety-causing situations by means of guided visualization exercises. Arnold's study is a good example of how guided visualization can significantly improve the listening comprehension test performance of L2 learners. Another pre-listening technique is the use of music and relaxing videos. The findings of recent studies in neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and cognitive science provide evidence of the positive effects of music (e.g., Hallam, Price, & Katsarou, 2002) and binaural alpha waves (e.g., Filimon, 2010) on working memory, relaxation and concentration (e.g., Gantt, 2011). Self-affirmation can also be used as a pre-listening relaxation technique on the grounds that increased self-confidence will lead to a reduced level of anxiety and thus better performance in L2 listening comprehension tasks and tests because, as Arnold suggests, "self-concept can greatly affect behavior" (p. 780). Similarly, Joiner (1986) proposes that anxiety during a listening task usually arises from low self-esteem; and Xu (2011) suggests that "we should decrease listening comprehension anxiety by increasing self-confidence in the FL classroom" (p. 1715). Although research into self-affirmation has generally revealed that learners who focus on their positive characteristics, values and abilities through self-affirmation exercises achieve better results in a task, there are also contradictory findings, as in Murray and Fogliasso (2011), which show that affirmation exercises may not be as effective as reported in previous research.

Although numerous researchers argue in favor of pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation on the basis of these activities being effective in reducing anxiety; little research exists concerning their effects on improving learners' performance during a listening comprehension task (Chang & Read, 2006). Previous research generally indicates that anxiety plays a negative role in language learning; however, the effect of anxiety on L2 listening comprehension is not straightforward, with contradictory findings and opinions. Some studies have shown that anxiety may not even be a debilitating factor in

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the listening comprehension of L2 learners (e.g., In'nami, 2006). Thus, the present study aims to gather quantitative data on the use of pre-listening relaxation and affirmation exercises as a means of reducing anxiety and increasing self-confidence before a series of listening comprehension tests in the Turkish EFL Context. To this end, the study addresses four research questions (RQs):

RQ1: Is there a relationship between the participants' listening comprehension test scores and their self-perceived anxiety level?

RQ2: Would learners exposed to pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation exercises and listening comprehension practice perform better on a posttest than those who were exposed only to listening comprehension practice?

RQ3: Would learners exposed to pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation exercises and listening comprehension practice report a significantly lower anxiety level on a posttest anxiety scale than those exposed only to listening practice?

RQ4: Would there be a significant interaction on the participants' TII results and listening comprehension test scores according to their gender, group and the time that they took the tests and survey?

Predictions

Given the absence of consensus concerning the effect of anxiety on listening performance of L2 learners, this study first investigated the relationship between FL listening comprehension and test anxiety. A significant relationship between learners' listening comprehension test scores and their self-perceived anxiety level was expected. Next, the study investigated the effect of relaxation and affirmation exercises on learners' listening comprehension test performance. A positive effect of the pre-listening exercises under investigation was predicted on the listening comprehension test performance of L2 learners. Following Arnold's (2000) study, it is considered that learners who complete relaxation and affirmation exercises before listening comprehension practice tests will significantly outperform those who take the same tests without doing these exercises. Finally, no interaction was expected between the independent variables of the study, namely group and gender.

Method

Participants

The participants were selected from a total of 154 first year students in the English Language Teaching (ELT) Department of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey. They were all teacher candidates and were all taking the compulsory Listening and Pronunciation II course offered by the first author. In order to enter the first year of study, all participants had previously passed an upper-intermediate level proficiency examination, which tested their proficiency in all language skills including listening. Their mean scores for three TOEFL listening tests were taken into consideration as the selection criterion. Those who had scored two standard deviations higher or lower than the mean score, as well as those above the age of 24, were excluded for the sake of homogeneity. Participants were randomly chosen from among the remaining 119 learners and non-systematically allocated to the experimental group or control group. Thus, 35 students were placed in each of the two groups. Of the participants, 23 were male (13 in the experimental, 10 in the control group) and 47 were female (22 in the experimental, 25 in the control group).

All students volunteered to participate because they did not feel sufficiently competent in L2 listening skills and this experiment would be a good opportunity to practice these skills. In addition, they would also receive an extra 10 points in their final grade of the Listening and Pronunciation II course by taking part. For the sake of equality, the students who did not participate were told that they could also gather up to 10 extra points by doing the two optional assignments. The participants were told that the purpose of the study was to help them with their L2 listening comprehension and to see the effects of different pre-listening activities on test performance. In order to ensure that they took the experiment seriously, they were also informed about grading; i.e. they were told that the scores from the tests would be taken as their mid-term and final listening examination grades.

Procedures

The participants were informed about the schedule two weeks before the beginning of the experiment. They were asked to participate in eight sessions on two successive weekends, two on Saturday and two on Sunday. In each session, they would take a listening practice test. There was a minimum one-hour break between sessions held on the same day. Before the experiment, both groups

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completed a questionnaire, the Test Influence Inventory (TII) developed by Fujii (1993), to collect data on their self-perceived test anxiety level (see Appendix). TII was chosen as the best tool to measure the psychosomatic aspects of test anxiety such as emotionalism, nervousness, bodily arousal, and perspiration resulting from worry (In'nami, 2006). Fujii reported a test-retest reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .87$ for TII.

The control group was given a series of eight TOEFL listening practice tests. The first and last of these tests (which were the same test) were given as a pretest and posttest, respectively. It contained 42 test items, all in multiple-choice format. For each test, the students had to answer 5 or 6 questions following a 4 to 6-minute listening passage. The six practice tests, which included 30 multiple-choice test items, as well as the pre/posttest, were not graded for difficulty but were all adapted from the same TOEFL practice test material (Sharpe, 2008) and thus assumed to have a similar level of difficulty. All tests were of an academic nature; and in each, there were six listening passages in which there was either a conversational exchange between two students or a student and a professor or a lecture on a topic related to the humanities or sciences as is the case in real TOEFL exams. All tests were scored by counting the number of correct answers.

The participants in the experimental group also took the eight tests but completed pre-listening relaxation and affirmation exercises, except before the pretest and posttest. These exercises were mainly done in the participants' mother tongue so that they would be able to process and internalize the information better as suggested by Arnold (2000). None of the participants were exposed to any other strategy instruction or listening practice in regular class hours within the period of the experiment. The entire experiment took place outside the regular class schedule in the language laboratory equipped with a computer, projector and headphones for all students.

The pre-listening relaxation and affirmation exercises lasted for approximately 20 minutes and included a short 2-3 minute teacher talk as warm-up, an affirmation video in Turkish for 3-4 minutes, scenery with baroque music as suggested in Suggestopedia for 4-5 minutes, and finally a visualization exercise or a relaxation video with breathing exercise alternatively for 3-4 minutes. In other words, the participants in the experimental group had 1 talk, 2 videos, and 1 breathing or visualization exercise altogether before each of the 6 listening tests.

In the first part of these exercises, self-affirmation was encouraged in the participants visually and orally because it was assumed that self-affirmation would help build self-confidence for the coming examination. The second part of the exercises was directed at producing a state of relaxation and comfort in accordance with the important role that relaxation plays in overcoming negative feelings and anxiety (Davis, 1986). In the visualization exercise, they were led in their imagination to a safe place where they could spend time with people they liked and feel totally relaxed. In one of these exercises, they were also led to believe that they could overcome any obstacle on the way to success. Alternatively, a breathing exercise was also done before listening by expelling negative feelings with each breath they exhaled.

Once the participants in the experimental group had completed the affirmation and relaxation exercises, they were given the attendance sheet to sign. While doing this, they were exposed to binaural alpha waves through headphones for 4-5 minutes. After everyone had signed, they were given the examination papers and three minutes to read through the questions. The binaural waves continued during the checking of exam questions. Learners in the control group were given the same time to sign the attendance sheet (approximately five minutes) and look through the questions (three minutes) before listening, however, without exposure to binaural alpha waves. Thus, participants in both groups took the same test in the same setting within the same duration. The only difference was the pre-listening relaxation and affirmation exercises and exposure to binaural alpha waves before the exam. Just before the posttest, both groups were given the TII for a second time to determine possible changes in their self-perceived test anxiety level.

Results

RQ1: Is there a relationship between the participants' listening comprehension test scores and their self-perceived anxiety level?

Learners' pretest scores and pre TII scores were not significantly correlated (Pearson's $r(70) = -.08, p = .52$). A correlational analysis between test anxiety levels of participants as measured by TII and their pretest scores revealed no significant relationship between the two variables, which means that the listening comprehension test scores of the participants in this study were not positively or negatively affected by their perceived level of anxiety or vice versa. In this respect, even if relaxation and affirmation exercises helped

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decrease participants' perceived anxiety levels according to TII, it was possible that this decrease might not be reflected on their posttest scores, since there seemed no relationship between TII results and pre LC test scores of the participants.

RQ2: Would learners exposed to pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation exercises and listening comprehension practice perform better on a posttest than those who were exposed only to listening comprehension practice?

An independent-samples t-test was administered on the test scores (Table 1).

Table 1
Between-Participants T-Test Results on Pretest and Post Test Scores

	95 % CI	Group				t-value (68 df)	Sig.(2-tailed)
		Experimental (n = 35)		Control (n = 35)			
		M	SD	M	SD		
Pretest	-.86, 2.84	19.65	3.58	18.71	4.36	.98	.37
Posttest	-.82, 3.22	23.54	4.25	22.34	4.24	1.18	.24

The pretest scores, which were normally distributed in both groups according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality ($p = .072$ for the experimental group, $p = .097$ for the control group), revealed no difference ($p = .37$) between the experimental group and control group in the pretest. This was an indication that the groups were statistically equal in terms of their listening comprehension (see Table 1) skills before the experiment, and that any difference in the posttest scores could be attributed to the effect of the intervention in the experimental group. However, the posttest scores, as analyzed by t-tests, did not show any significant difference ($p = .24$) between groups. In other words, the pre-listening relaxation and affirmation exercises had no effect on the test scores of learners in the experimental group, thus the groups were still statistically equal in terms of their listening comprehension test scores.

Due to the fact that learners in the experimental group had not engaged in pre-listening exercises before the pretest and posttest but only before the six practice tests between them, the mean score of these six tests was calculated for

each individual, and this time the groups were compared according to this score with an independent-samples t-test to find any significant difference between groups. The results are given in Table 2.

Table 2
Between-Subjects T-Test Results on Mean Score of Practice Tests

	Group						t-value(68 df)	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Experimental (n = 35)			Control (n = 35)				
95 % CI	M	SD	M	SD				
Mean Score of Practice Tests	-.22, 1.61	17.78	1.97	17.09	1.87	1.49	.139	

Table 2 reveals that, just as comparison of the groups according to posttest scores showed no significant difference between experimental and control groups, comparison between the mean scores of the practice tests did not reveal any significant difference ($p = .139$) either, indicating that the pre-listening relaxation and affirmation exercises did not have any immediate effect on the test scores of learners.

Based on these findings, the answer to Research Question 2 is negative. In other words, learners who were exposed to relaxation and affirmation exercises and listening comprehension practice did not perform better on the posttest or practice tests than those who were exposed only to listening comprehension practice.

On the other hand, a comparison of scores from the pretest with those from the posttest within each group by means of a paired-samples t-test revealed a significant ($p < .0001$) increase in the mean scores of both the experimental group ($t = -5.02$, $p < .0001$) and control group ($t = -4.35$, $p < .0001$). The results are given in Table 3.

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Table 3
Within-Subjects T-Test Results on Pretest and Post Test Scores

Group	95 % CI	Mean Time 1 (SD 1)	Mean Time 2 (SD 2)	N1/N2	t-value	p-value
Experimental	-5.21, 2.25	19.65 (3.58)	23.54 (4.25)	35	-5.92	.000**
Control	-5.32, 1.93	18.71 (4.36)	22.34 (4.24)	35	-4.35	.000**

** Significant at the $p < .0001$ level.

Figure 1 shows this increase as well as parallelism between the groups.

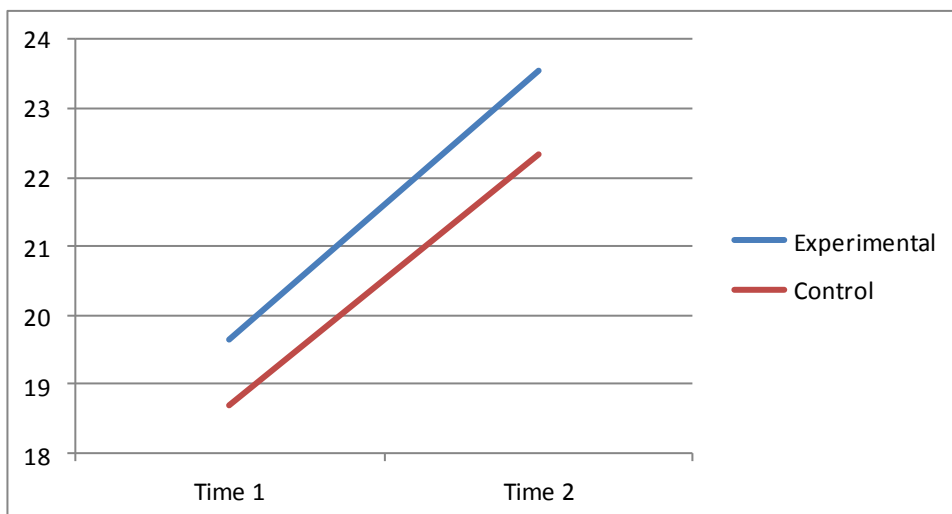


Figure 1. Within-subjects Change of Scores after Six Sessions.

As Table 3 and Figure 1 indicate, a significant ($p < .0001$) increase was observed in the scores of the participants when their pretest and posttest scores were compared within each group through a paired-samples t-test. However, since the independent-samples t-test scores did not show any significant difference between groups, this increase should be attributed to the effect of taking six practice tests of similar difficulty between the pretest and posttest as well as taking the same test twice within a relatively short period of time.

RQ3: Would learners exposed to pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation exercises and listening comprehension practice report a significantly

lower anxiety level on a posttest anxiety scale than those exposed only to listening practice?

An independent-samples t-test was administered on post TII scores. The same questionnaire had been given before the experiment and had found no significant difference between the two groups in terms of their test anxiety levels. Levene's test for equality of variances did not show any significance in the t-test results of the pre questionnaire scores ($F = 1.63$, $p = .205$) or in the t-test results of the post questionnaire scores ($F = .107$, $p = .745$), therefore the group variances were assumed to be equal. The t-test analysis of the total post TII scores revealed a significant difference ($t(68) = -3.72$, $p < .0001$, $d = .89$) between groups (Table 4).

Table 4
Between-Subjects T-Test Results on Pre/Post TII Scores

	95 % CI	Group		M	SD	t-value (68 df)	Sig. (2- tailed)
		Experimental (n = 35)	Control (n = 35)				
Pre TII	-10.38, .32	48.97	9.83	54	12.45	-1.87	.65
Post TII	-16.22, -4.91	43.02	10.98	53.6	12.67	-3.72	.000**

** Significant at $p < .0001$ level.

The results shown in Table 4 indicate that in the experimental group, the participants' self-perceived test anxiety decreased significantly whereas that of learners in the control group did not change. The difference can be attributed to the pre-listening exercises because this was the only difference between the two groups.

RQ4: Would there be a significant interaction on the participants' TII results and listening comprehension test scores according to their gender, group and the time that they took the tests and survey?

The t-test results reported in Tables 1-3 indicate that time rather than intervention had a significant effect on the post listening comprehension test scores of participants; and that the intervention had a significant effect on the post TII results of the participants in the experimental group as shown in Table 4. In order to see whether time, gender and group had a main effect on the test scores and TII results, and whether there would be interaction between these three variables, a three-way $2 \times 2 \times 2$ repeated measures (RM) ANOVA was used

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to analyze both the listening comprehension test and TII scores. The results are given in Table 5.

Table 5

Tests of Within-Participants Effects on Pretest and Posttest Scores

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Testtime (pretest/posttest)	494.064	1	49.470	.000**	.428
Testtime * Gender	.106	1	.011	.918	.000
Testtime * Group	.620	1	.062	.804	.001
Testtime * Gender * Group	9.599	1	.961	.330	.014

** Significant at the $p < .0001$ level.

Table 5 shows that only testing time, that is giving the same test as first a pretest and then a posttest before and after the experiment respectively, had a significant main effect on the test results of the students ($F(1) = 49.47$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .42$). However, nonexistence of a significant interaction between time and other variables such as gender and group indicates this main effect cannot be related to gender or group differences but rather a result of the practice effect, as discussed earlier.

A three-way $2 \times 2 \times 2$ RM ANOVA analysis was also conducted on the pre and post TII results (Table 6).

Table 6

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects on Pre and Post TII Results

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Surveytime (Pre/Post)	352.029	1	5.011	.029*	.071
Surveytime * Gender	302.510	1	4.306	.042*	.061
Surveytime * Group	320.933	1	4.568	.036*	.065
Surveytime * Gender * Group	339.833	1	4.837	.031*	.068

* Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 6 indicates a significant main effect of time ($F(1) = 5.01, p < .05, \eta^2 = .071$) on the TII results. As well as this, there were significant interaction effects between time and gender ($F(1) = 4.3, p < .05, \eta^2 = .061$); time and group ($F(1) = 4.56, p < .05, \eta^2 = .065$); and survey time, gender and group ($F(1) = 4.83, p < .05, \eta^2 = .068$). A between-subjects ANOVA analysis of the post TII results also revealed a main effect of group ($F(1) = 10.41, p < .005, \eta^2 = .136$) on the TII scores.

Overall, there was a significant decrease in the self-perceived anxiety of participants in the experimental group whereas there was no difference in the anxiety level of participants in the control group. According to pre TII results, there was a significant difference between anxiety levels of male and female participants, with females reporting a higher level of anxiety before the experiment. However, after the experiment, both male and female participants in the experimental group reported similar lower levels of anxiety ($p > .05$), indicating that the experiment was significantly effective on the perceived anxiety levels of female participants in the experimental group whereas no change was observed in the control group.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the present study indicate that relaxation and affirmation exercises help decrease self-perceived anxiety among language learners before a major FL listening comprehension test. However, the participants may not positively reflect this change on their listening comprehension test scores, especially if there is no relationship between anxiety level and listening comprehension scores, as was the case with participants in this study. In this respect, it can be considered normal that the decrease in the participants' perceived anxiety levels did not have a positive effect on listening comprehension test scores in the experimental group.

According to the posttest scores, learners in both groups increased their scores significantly after taking six similar listening comprehension tests within a period of eight days. However, the absence of any significant difference between the two groups in terms of pretest and posttest scores reveals that this increase had not been caused by the pre-listening exercises but as a result of taking six more practice tests in between the pretest and posttest, as well as the practice effect, i.e. more practice equates to better performance.

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Finally, RM ANOVA results showed that time, that is giving the same test as a pretest and posttest within 8 days, had a main effect on the listening comprehension test scores and TII results and that there were significant interaction effects between time and gender, time and group, and survey time, gender and group. Between-participants ANOVA analysis also revealed a main effect of group on TII results.

Implications

The implications of the present study are two-fold. Based on these findings, which are in contradiction with those of Arnold (2000) but in keeping with the results of In'nami (2006), it would not be wrong to claim that pre-listening relaxation and affirmation exercises may not be effective on the listening comprehension test scores of students who do not display significant exam anxiety, or on those whose listening comprehension test scores are significantly correlated with their exam anxiety. Therefore, one implication of this study is that students' previous exam results should be correlated with test anxiety scales before embarking on relaxation and self-affirmation exercises if the aim is to help them obtain better scores by reducing their anxiety level, since the findings of this study indicate that the test scores of L2 learners may not be significantly and positively affected by a reduced anxiety level.

Another implication of the study is related to the World Englishes (WE) perspective as suggested by Kachru (1986) as well as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) discussions that have gained in popularity in recent years, largely due to studies by Seidlhofer (e.g. Seidlhofer 2001) and Jenkins (e.g. Jenkins, 2006). According to both WE and ELF, the so-called native-speaker models from inner-circle countries such as the USA and UK, as in Kachru's model, may not be suitable for learners in outer circle countries such South Africa or Nigeria and expanding circle countries like Turkey and Japan mainly due to the fact that trying to be native-like in speech and pronunciation especially is an unattainable goal for many language learners; thus, language education should evolve towards mutual intelligibility rather than adopting an idealized native-like model .

The fact that the listening materials used in this experiment only reflected the General American (GA) accent as in a real TOEFL test might have played a role on the anxiety levels of the students. Therefore, the findings also implicate that similar studies should take into account English varieties from each one of

the all three circles in Kachru's (1986) Model, namely the inner, expanding and outer circles; and compare learners according to their perceived anxiety levels as well as their listening comprehension test scores to find any possible differences according to the variety used in the listening test. In other words, the variety used in listening passages can make a difference in terms of the perceived anxiety levels of the participants as well as the effect of pre-listening relaxation and affirmation exercises on anxiety level and listening comprehension test scores.

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Appendix. Test Influence Inventory (Fujii, 1993)

Instructions: Please mark the choice that best describes your test-taking habits.

1= Never; 2 = Almost never; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Almost always; 5 = Always

	1	2	3	4	5
01 I get nervous during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
02 I feel like going to the bathroom during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
03 I feel my heart beating very fast during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
04 I feel uneasy during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
05 My hands feel numb during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
06 I feel thirsty during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
07 I think of other students too much during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
08 I yawn during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
09 My hands perspire during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 I cannot think straight during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 I feel sleepy during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 My eyes feel tired during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 I feel less confident during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14 I do not know what I am doing during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 I perspire during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 I have memory lapses during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17 My eyes feel tired during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18 I get irritated during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19 My shoulders feel stiff during tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20 I cannot concentrate during tests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>