



## Students' Language Learning Anxiety Level and Their Perception of Teacher Behavior in an EFL Context<sup>1</sup>

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Received: 08 October 2018, Accepted: 14 December 2018

### ABSTRACT

Most instructors aren't aware of the fact that their students experience anxiety. A certain amount of anxiety is normal and doesn't have a detrimental effect on students' performance. However, this is not the case for all students. Anxiety is a factor of affective domain and it plays a very important role in shaping human behavior and may affect foreign language learning. Thus, anxiety has always been of much concern to EFL researchers. Its relation with several variables has been investigated. One of the variables that might affect students' anxiety level is teacher behavior. Thus, this study aimed at examining the students' language learning anxiety level and their perception of teacher behavior as supportive or controlling. It was also an attempt to investigate the effect of anxiety on students' perception of teacher behavior. The participants of the study were 154 prep-school students who were studying at a preparatory school in Turkey and they were given two questionnaires measuring their anxiety level and perception of teacher behavior. The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics (Chi-square test). The results of the study indicated that the participants showed all anxiety levels as low, moderate and high. Students with low anxiety level outnumbered moderate and high anxiety level groups. Results of the study yielded that 61% of the participants perceived their teachers as more controlling than supportive. Moreover, a statistically significant difference wasn't found between students' anxiety level and their perception of teacher behavior as controlling or supportive. All anxiety groups as high, medium or low perceived their teachers as more controlling than supportive. As a consequence, no sign of teacher-generated anxiety was found in this study.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Perception, Teacher Behavior, Controlling, Supportive.

### EXTENDED ABSTRACT

#### Introduction

Most instructors aren't aware of the fact that their students experience anxiety. A certain amount of anxiety is normal and doesn't have a detrimental effect on students' performance. However, this is not the case for all students. Anxiety is a factor of affective domain and it plays a very important role in shaping human behavior and may affect foreign language learning. Thus, anxiety has always been of much concern to EFL researchers. Its relation with several variables has been investigated. Teacher behavior is one of the factors that can affect students' anxiety to learn a foreign language (Von Wörde, 2003; Huang, Eslami & Hu, 2010). Academic and personal support from teachers helps students to control their anxiety level. If students feel that their teachers emotionally support them they tend to put more effort to learn and they experience less anxiety (Huang, Eslami & Hu, 2010). Thus, this study aimed at examining the students' language learning anxiety level and their perception of teacher behavior as supportive or controlling. It was also an attempt to investigate the effect of anxiety on students' perception of teacher behavior.

#### Methodology

The participants of the study were 154 prep-school students who were studying voluntarily at a preparatory school at Namık Kemal University, in Tekirdağ / Turkey. Students were given two questionnaires to measure foreign

<sup>1</sup> This study was presented at 3rd BELL International Conference (17-18 May, Zonguldak)

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language classroom anxiety and students' perceptions of teacher behavior in the spring semester of academic year 2017-2018 in the participants' classroom at their regular class time and 20 minutes were allocated. The questionnaires used are The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Questionnaire (FLCAS) and Teacher Behavior Questionnaire (TBQ). The reliability of both questionnaires was analyzed through Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha of the foreign language anxiety questionnaire of the current study was found to be .963 which indicated a high level of reliability. Similarly, the overall reliability of the Turkish version of teacher behavior questionnaire was found as .706.

The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics (Chi-square test). A total of 154 questionnaires were returned to be examined. However, while analyzing the data, 8,4% of the students which means 13 of them perceived their teachers neither controlling nor supportive which means their mean scores for both categories were the same so they were categorized as neutral group. The neutral group was excluded when Chi Square analysis was done because the sum scores of those were equal in teacher behavior part; thus, the categorization could not be established when deciding whether students perceived teacher as controlling or supportive. As a consequence, the data from 141 questionnaires were taken into the SPSS to run Chi Square analysis to understand if anxiety levels of the students have an effect on their perception of teacher behavior.

### *Results*

The results of the study indicated that the participants showed different anxiety levels. 30 of the participants which accounts for 19,48% of the total participant group showed high levels of anxiety. 29,87% of the students which makes 46 students suffered from moderate levels of anxiety. 78 of the students (56,65%) experienced only low levels of anxiety. As a result, most of the students didn't experience high levels of language learning anxiety. The results of the descriptive statistics analysis also indicated that there were 47 students who perceived the teacher behavior as supportive. On the other hand, those who perceived the teacher behavior as controlling outnumbered the other perception; that is, there were 94 students who thought their teachers being controlling. 13 of the participants perceived their teachers equally controlling and supportive.

Moreover, a statistically significant difference wasn't found between students' anxiety level and their perception of teacher behavior as controlling and supportive ( $\chi^2(1) = 0,823, df = 2, p = ,389$ ). On average, 60% of the participants in all three categories perceived their teachers as more controlling than supportive. All anxiety groups as high, medium or low perceived their teachers as more controlling than supportive. No significant sign of teacher-generated anxiety as suggested by literature (French, 1997) was found in this study.

# Öğrencilerin Öğretmen Davranışı Algısı ile Dil Öğrenme Kaygıları Arasındaki İlişki<sup>1</sup>

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**Başvuru Tarihi:** 08 Ekim 2018, **Kabul Tarihi:** 14 Aralık 2018

## ÖZET

Birçok öğretmen öğrencilerinin kaygı yaşadıklarını fark etmezler. Belli seviyede yaşanan kaygı normaldir ve öğrencinin performansı üzerinde zarar verici bir etkisi yoktur. Ancak, bu bütün öğrenciler için geçerli değildir. Kaygı, duyuşsal faktörlerden birisidir ve insan davranışı şekillendirmede çok önemli bir rol oynar ve dolayısıyla yabancı dil öğrenimini etkileyebilir. Bu yüzden, kaygı yabancı dil öğrenimi araştırmacılarının dikkatini çekmiştir ve kaygının diğer değişenlerle olan ilişkisi araştırmaya değer görülmüştür. Öğrencilerin dil kaygısı düzeyini etkileyebilecek etmenlerden birisi de öğretmen davranışdır. Bu yüzden, bu çalışma öğrencilerin dil öğrenme kaygı düzeyleri ve öğretmen davranışını denetleyici ve destekleyici olarak nasıl algıladıklarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, çalışmanın bir diğer amacı da dil öğrenme kaygısının öğrencilerin öğretmen davranışı algılarına etkisi olup olmadığını belirlemektir. Türkiye’de bir devlet üniversitesinde gönüllü olarak İngilizce hazırlık eğitimi gören 154 hazırlık sınıfı öğrencisi çalışmaya katılmıştır. Öğrencilere kaygı düzeylerini ve öğrenme davranışı algılarını ölçmeye yönelik iki anket verilmiştir. Veriler betimsel ve çıkarımsal (ki-kare testi) istatistik yöntemleri kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonucunda öğrencilerin düşük, orta ve yüksek olmak üzere çeşitli kaygı düzeyleri olduğu saptanmıştır. Katılımcı grubunun %61’i öğretmenlerini destekleyiciden ziyade denetleyici olarak değerlendirmiştir. Dahası, öğrencilerin dil öğrenme kaygı düzeyleri ile denetleyici ve destekleyici olarak öğretmen davranışı algıları arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunamamıştır. Düşük, orta ya da yüksek olarak kaygı düzeyleri fark etmeksizin öğrenciler öğretmenlerini destekleyiciden çok denetleyici olarak değerlendirmişlerdir. Bu durumda, bu çalışmada öğretmen kaynaklı dil öğrenme kaygısı bulunamamıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kaygı, Algı, Öğretmen Davranışı, Denetleyici, Destekleyici.

## 1. Introduction

As it is the situation in many countries and in many other language learning contexts, Turkish students also experience medium or high levels of foreign language anxiety (Çakar, 2009). Even though students experience anxiety in almost every aspect of language learning, much of the anxiety is associated with understanding and speaking the target language (Liu & Jackson, 2008; Çağatay, 2015). This anxiety causes them to be passive participants in class and also some students do not join their lessons. Talking in front of the class discourages students since it arouses anxiety if the learning environment isn’t supportive. Thus, being in a supportive classroom atmosphere that is provided by the teacher is important. Thus, another element that can provoke students’ anxiety is teacher. Teachers’ role as a container or generator of anxiety cannot be denied as supported by literature (French, 1997; Huang, Eslami& Hu, 2010). Although there are several studies carried out to investigate anxiety, there are only a few that have investigated its relation with students’ perception of teacher behavior in a Turkish EFL context.

As the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between preparatory school students’ anxiety levels and their perception of teacher behavior as controlling and supportive at university level in an EFL context, the following three questions will be addressed:

1. What are the students’ anxiety levels?
2. What are the students’ perceptions of teachers’ behavior?
3. Is there any relationship between students’ anxiety level and their perceptions of teacher behavior?

<sup>1</sup> Bu çalışma 3. BELL Uluslararası konferansında sunulmuştur. (17-18 Mayıs 2018, Zonguldak)

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### 1.1. Anxiety

For many decades EFL researchers have been aware that EFL learning is often associated with affective factors and these involve risk of embarrassment or humiliation for language learners (Kessler, 2010). As one of the affective domains of foreign language learning and one of the inhibitors to language learning, anxiety is also gaining a growing body of research. One of the simple definitions of anxiety is the dictionary definition made by Cambridge Dictionary Online (2018) as “an uncomfortable feeling of nervousness or worry about something that is happening or might happen in the future”. And another dictionary (Collins Online Dictionary, 2018) defines anxiety as “a state of uneasiness or tension caused by apprehension of possible future misfortune, danger, etc.; worry”.

However, there is a kind of anxiety that is only specific to language learning. Language learning anxiety has been defined by several researchers in a similar way. Horwitz (2001) defines language anxiety as one of the most important affective factors influencing the success of language learning. MacIntyre (1999) defined language anxiety as follows:

the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient . . . the propensity for an individual to react in a nervous manner when speaking, listening, reading, or writing in the second language. (p. 5)

Most cited definition is the one made by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) “Language anxiety is fear or apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in the second language”. Language anxiety results from the natural procedures of language learning especially caused by classroom procedure factors such as speaking in front of class, tests, and being called on by the teacher (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991). Moreover, six interrelated sources of language anxiety were identified by Young (1991). He suggested personal and interpersonal anxieties which can be related to communication apprehension; learner beliefs about language learning process; teacher beliefs about language teaching; student-teacher interaction; classroom procedures and language testing.

Language learning anxiety took attention starting from 1970s and 1980s. The first attempts to identify language anxiety was done through learner diaries (e.g., Bailey, 1983; Hilleson, 1996). Since it is difficult to interpret diaries and keeping a learner diary takes time, alternative ways emerged. Spielberger and Gorsuch designed an instrument to assess learners' anxiety called the state-trait anxiety inventory (STAI) in 1966 (as cited in Huang & Hung, 2010) and many researchers have benefited from this instrument (e.g. Fati-Ashtiani, Ejei, Knodapanahi & Tarkhorani, 2007). Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) designed the most common used instrument to measure students' language learning anxiety called “the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale” (FLCAS) consisting of 33 items. They used this instrument in their study and found a negative correlation between language proficiency and anxiety (1986). Since then this questionnaire has been widely used and yielded valuable results. The outcomes of Horwitz and Young's (1991) study that they carried out using FLCAS have showed a significant negative relationship between anxiety and several other factors such as final grades and oral proficiency tests.

Foreign language anxiety is common among learners all around the world, since performing in another language challenges an individual's self-concept and lead to reticence (Liu, & Jackson, 2008; Çakar, 2009). This language learning specific anxiety has many symptoms such as trying to avoid difficult linguistic features, avoid participating class activities and avoid volunteering for answers and so on (Wei, 2007). In addition, students show nonverbal clues related to their anxiety. In his study, Gregersen (2005) reported that students who experienced anxiety showed limited facial activity, less eye contact, and less active gestures.

Anxiety can be experienced at different levels as other affective factors. Learners sometimes experience anxiety as a response to a particular situation or event. This momentary or situational level is called ‘state or situational anxiety’. This type of anxiety generally is a passing state and diminishes over time (Oxford, 1999; Brown, 2000). Communication anxiety can be given as an example to state anxiety (Hilleson, 1996). Nevertheless, if the situation that causes anxiety repeats happening, students associate anxiety with their language performance. This type of deeper, long-term anxiety is called “trait anxiety”. This type of anxiety becomes a personality trait for the learner permanently affecting language learning negatively (Oxford, 1999; Brown, 2000). Moreover, based on Tobias's (1985) study, two models of anxiety were shaped namely interference model of anxiety and interference retrieval model of anxiety. According to interference model, anxiety hinders the recall of previously learned material in the output

stage and interference retrieval model relates the problems in the input and processing stages of learning (Koçak, 2010).

However, researchers have contradictory ideas about the function of anxiety in language learning. Anxiety has been discussed as helpful, harmful or as having no effect at all on learners' performance and L2 achievement (Dörnyei, 2005). Some researchers claim that some learners may benefit from their anxiety and their anxiety helps them not to lose their focus and keep them alert. According to Ehrman and Oxford (1995) this type of facilitating anxiety is common among learners with high proficiency level and learners who are confident. Some early studies yielded results that supports this view and showed that anxiety results in higher motivation and more effort and, thus, better learning outcomes (Chastain, 1975).

Another kind of anxiety is called 'debilitating anxiety' which is the negative kind of anxiety that harms learners' performance both directly and indirectly. Students experience worry, self-doubt and they stop participating in class (Oxford, 1999). Horwitz (2001) is one of the researchers who supports debilitating kind of anxiety and consider is as one of the factors that contributing poor linguistic performance. Debilitative anxiety can result from due to personal characteristic of learners such as having a lack of self-confidence, self-esteem or can result from language learning procedures such as involving in difficult tasks or unfriendly atmosphere (Horwitz, 1986, 2001; Horwitz et al., 1986).

Teacher behavior is another factor that can affect students' anxiety to learn a foreign language (Von Würde, 2003; Huang, Eslami & Hu, 2010). Academic and personal support from teachers help students to control their anxiety level. If students feel that their teachers emotionally support them, they tend to put more effort to learn and they experience less anxiety (Huang, Eslami & Hu, 2010).

### 1.2. *Teacher Behavior as Controlling or Supportive*

Expectations of teacher behavior in teaching and learning environment resulted in many statements about the role of the teachers and the definitions of controlling and supportive teacher behavior. In the forthcoming sections, some of these definitions and studies focusing on teacher controlling and supportive behavior will be presented. In its dictionary use (Oxford Advanced Learners, 2003), control is to have a power over someone or something so that you decide what they must do or how something must be done; and support means helping and encouraging. These definitions of the words are also applied in education. Akhter (2003) mentions that teachers' control orientations were defined by two constructs: autonomous versus control, and humanistic versus authoritarian.

Den Brok, Bergen, Stahl and Brekelmans (2004), and Kiany and Shayestefar (2011) state that teacher control behavior can be divided into three categories as strong, shared and loose control. Kiany and Shayestefar (2011) mention that "strong teacher control is defined as taking over learning activities (cognitive, affective, and metacognitive) from students' hands and is employed by teachers who try to regulate or control students' processing of subject matter. In doing so, they minimize students' opportunities to utilize their thinking activities". They also explain what shared and loose controls are. According to them, shared control means encouraging and facilitating different learning activities by providing opportunities for student interaction and performance. In this process, both teacher and student initiations are required as students carry out different learning strategies and functions while teachers serve as a scaffolding element, which results in a sharing of control between teachers and students. Lastly, loose control is seen as giving the whole responsibility of learning into students' hands to "evaluate and reflect on their textbook content, reading texts, grammar or vocabulary learning; to think about next learning activities; to proceed based on their own speed; and to self-test and monitor their progress. When practicing this model, teachers capitalize on students' supposed skills in regulating learning, thinking, and in performing independently" (Kiany & Shayestefar, 2011).

Reeve and Jang (2006) break down the control into two categories being autonomy-supportive and controlling teacher behavior. In supportive environment, teachers encourage students and give opportunities to them to realize the relationship between their classroom behaviors and inner motivational resources. On the contrary, when controlling, teachers do not pay attention to students' inner motivational resources and they try to catch up their personal agendas which are teacher-centered, and through these plans they decide about what students should and should not do, and they try to tailor the students aiming to teach the planned behaviors of their agenda.

Finally, the definitions to be used in the current study are the ones that Kususanto, Ismail and Jamil (2010) used in their article. They mention two kinds of definitions for teacher behavior, the first one is controlling teacher behavior which is defined as controlling students' behavior to avoid general disciplinary problems, and the second one is supportive teacher behavior which is supporting the improvement of academic achievements.

### 1.3. *Empirical Studies on Anxiety and Teacher Behaviour*

Anxiety has been one of the concerns in language learning research and students' anxiety levels in different contexts were investigated.

Kunt and Tüm (2010) investigated anxiety level of Turkish students in North Cyprus and the results of the study showed that students experienced different levels of anxiety. The results of open-ended question revealed that some learners do not believe that they can learn English in their own learning environment or at home. Some reported that they need communication courses to improve their speaking abilities. Some believed that they needed practice. These negative beliefs about language learning caused anxiety and they reported that they felt anxious and forgot things while speaking and they were afraid of making mistakes. Kocak, (2010) examined Turkish prep school students speaking anxiety and found out they became anxious due to various reasons such as lack of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax knowledge or fear of failure etc.

Anxiety's relation with many different variables has been investigated. It has been stated that students experience anxiety when they are listening, writing and speaking. Also, relation with other affective factors has been a research interest for many years.

Wei (2007) conducted another study to examine the relationship between anxiety levels and motivational patterns of the students. 57 university students at environmental science program participated in the study. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Motivation questionnaire were used as the research instruments. It was found that the more anxious the learners, the less low-proficient they see themselves.

Other research topics that were investigated related to anxiety are test anxiety (Huang & Hung, 2010; Fook, Sidhu, Rani & Aziz, 2011), writing anxiety (Cheng, 2002; Öztürk & Çeçen, 2007), listening anxiety (Shomoossi, 2009; Wang, 2010), unwillingness to communicate and foreign language anxiety (Liu & Jackson, 2008), influence of anxiety upon fluency (Kessler, 2010) and so on.

Although anxiety's relation with various variables has been studied, speaking is the skill that perceived as the most difficult task and is the skill that has been studied most. Several studies have been conducted to investigate the relation with anxiety and oral performance scores. The results of studies that were conducted to investigate the relationship between anxiety and oral production scores revealed a negative relationship between anxiety and oral exam performance (Fook, Sidhu, Rani & Aziz, 2011; Hewitt & Stephenson, 2011; Philips, 1992; Wilson, 2006; Zhang, 2004). Participants who exhibited higher levels of anxiety performed worse on their oral exams; the higher the anxiety score, the lower their oral performance score was.

Another concern of this study is students' perception of teacher behavior. There are numerous studies looking into the teacher behavior and its relationship with different aspects of teaching and learning environment. These studies dealing with teacher controlling orientations and student motivation revealed that autonomy-supportive teacher behavior yielded higher degrees of intrinsic motivation and perceived self-esteem, self-regulation and competence when compared to controlling teacher behavior (Deci, Schwartz, et. al., 1981; Green & Foster, 1986; Grolnick & Ryan, 1992; as cited in Akhter, 2003).

Another study examined the relation between teacher behavior and students' academic achievements and reached the conclusion that academic achievement was very high when both the teacher and student control were equally high in classroom, and it was lowest when the control was lowest for both groups (Eshel & Kohavi, 2003). As a result of their study conducted on Iranian students, Kiany and Shayestefar (2011) also found that 26% of the 27 teachers were 'highly controlling, and this controlling behavior has a negative correlation with academic achievement as when the teacher puts more emphasis on independent learning process and student control, the more successful the students are or vice versa.

Further studies have analyzed the role of supportive behavior in teaching and have found out that there is a positive correlation between supportive environment and both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (e.g. Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Moreover, supportive environment resulted in higher academic achievement, higher preference for difficult tasks, deeper understanding, enjoyment, and perceived competence while controlling environment disclosed more anxiety, higher preference for easy tasks, and a dependence on other for evaluation of one's own work (e.g. Boggiano & Katz, 1991). Urhahne (2015) examined the relationship between teacher behavior and student motivation and emotion. According to the results of the study teacher behavior can mediate the relationship between teacher judgment and students' motivation and emotion.

There are also studies investigating the relations between anxiety and teacher behavior. Huang, Eslami, and Hu (2010) examined the relationship between language-learning anxiety and teacher and peer support. The results of the study showed that language-learning anxiety and support were found to be correlated. Any support from teachers was positively related with students' comfort to learn English. Abu-Rabia (2004) is another researcher who investigated the relationship between teacher's role and FL anxiety among students studying English as a FL. The results of their study revealed that students' anxiety level was moderate, and students perceived their teachers as supportive of their English learning. Moreover, it was found as a result of this study that the more supportive teacher was the less anxious students became. Von-Wörde (2003) examined students' perspectives on foreign language anxiety and found out that there was an obvious connection between anxiety and teacher behavior. Students reported that they were less anxious with supportive teachers. It is suggested that teachers' role to reduce anxiety might be more important than any methodology. Alrabai (2015) examined the influence of teachers on learner anxiety to learn English as a foreign language. The results of the study reinforce the fundamental role of teachers in reducing the learners' anxiety.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Participants

In total 154 preparatory school students studying English as a foreign language at Namık Kemal University, Tekirdağ, Turkey participated in the study. Students' age ranges from 18-20 and although they were all learning English in the preparatory program of the university, the students were from different departments such as engineering, economics, administration, and fine arts. Also, all the students were learning English voluntarily. Students received 24 hours of English instruction per week. They took 3 midterms and 1 final exam together with 10 pop quizzes. To be able to pass preparatory program successfully, they had to gain at least 60 points at the end of the term. Students were given two questionnaires to measure foreign language classroom anxiety and students' perceptions of teacher behavior in the spring semester of academic year 2017-2018. The questionnaires of the study were administered in the participants' classroom at their regular class time and 20 minutes were allocated.

### 2.2. Instruments

#### *The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Questionnaire (FLCAS)*

FLCAS which was designed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope in 1986 was chosen as the study instrument. The reason of choosing this instrument was that it has been the most widely used one and its reliability and validity was determined by Horwitz (1986). The FLCAS consists of 33 items scored on a five-point Likert scale, from strongly agree (5 points) to strongly disagree (1 point). Turkish version of FLCAS was used to avoid misunderstanding and so that students comprehend each item better and give satisfactory answers. Turkish version was taken from Aydın 's study (2001). The 27th item "I feel tenser and more nervous in my language class than in my other classes" was excluded by Aydın since it is not suitable for Turkish students as they learn English in an EFL context (2001). The answer "strongly agree" shows high anxiety for all the items except item 5. For the 5th item which is "it would not bother me at all to take more English Classes", "strongly disagree" reveals high anxiety. The reliability and validity of the Turkish version of FLCAS was determined by Aydın (2001) and found to be high (internal consistency .91). The Cronbach's alpha of the current study was found to be .963 which indicated a high level of reliability.

### *Teacher Behavior Questionnaire (TBQ)*

In order to measure students' perceptions about teacher behavior, a 5-point Likert scale Teacher Behavior Questionnaire (TBQ) adapted from a study carried out by Ismail and Majeed (2011) was used. The Turkish version of the questionnaire was administered, and this version was formed by means of back-translation with the help of four EFL instructors. The questionnaire includes 20 statements about controlling and supportive teacher behaviors and each statement is evaluated according to its frequency in the classroom showing a range from never to always. Ten items of the questionnaire belonged to controlling behavior and the other ten were about supportive behavior. When it comes to the categorization of the perceptions, the perceptions would be classified by means of mean scores: if a student had a higher mean in controlling behavior section, then, s/he would be accepted as perceiving teacher behavior as controlling or if it were the opposite, then, the perception would be accepted as the supportive. Regarding reliability, the Cronbach's alphas of statements were presented as .77 for controlling behavior items and .76 for supportive teacher behavior items (Kususanto, Ismail & Jamil, 2010). In a similar manner, the overall reliability of the Turkish version questionnaire was found as .706.

### *2.3. Data collection procedure and analyses*

In the data collection procedure, the participants were given the questionnaires together and required to complete them in 20 minutes in their regular class hours. A total of 154 questionnaires were returned to be examined. However, while analyzing the data, 8,4% of the students which means 13 of them perceived their teachers neither controlling nor supportive which means their mean scores for both categories were the same, so they were categorized as neutral group. The neutral group was excluded when Chi Square analysis was done because the sum scores of those were equal in teacher behavior part; thus, the categorization could not be established when deciding whether students perceived teacher as controlling or supportive. Consequently, the data from 141 questionnaires were taken into the SPSS to run Chi Square analysis to understand if anxiety levels of the students have an effect on their perception of teacher behavior.

The gathered data were analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. The reliability of both questionnaires was analyzed through Cronbach's alpha. As for the first two research questions, frequencies and percentages were calculated to interpret the data. The third question was analyzed through chi-square in order to find out whether there is a relationship between anxiety and teacher behavior. Chi-square test was preferred because the aim was to compare the expected and observed data owing to the nominal nature; therefore, the collected data were categorized. As stated in the instruments section, anxiety level was classified as low, moderate and high according to the sum scores. On the other hand, students' perceptions of teacher behavior were divided into two: controlling and supportive using mean scores. At last, as far as the variables of the study were considered, the independent variable of the study was anxiety level and dependent one was the perception of teacher behavior as controlling and supportive.

## **3. Results**

### *3.1. Research Question 1: What are the students' anxiety levels?*

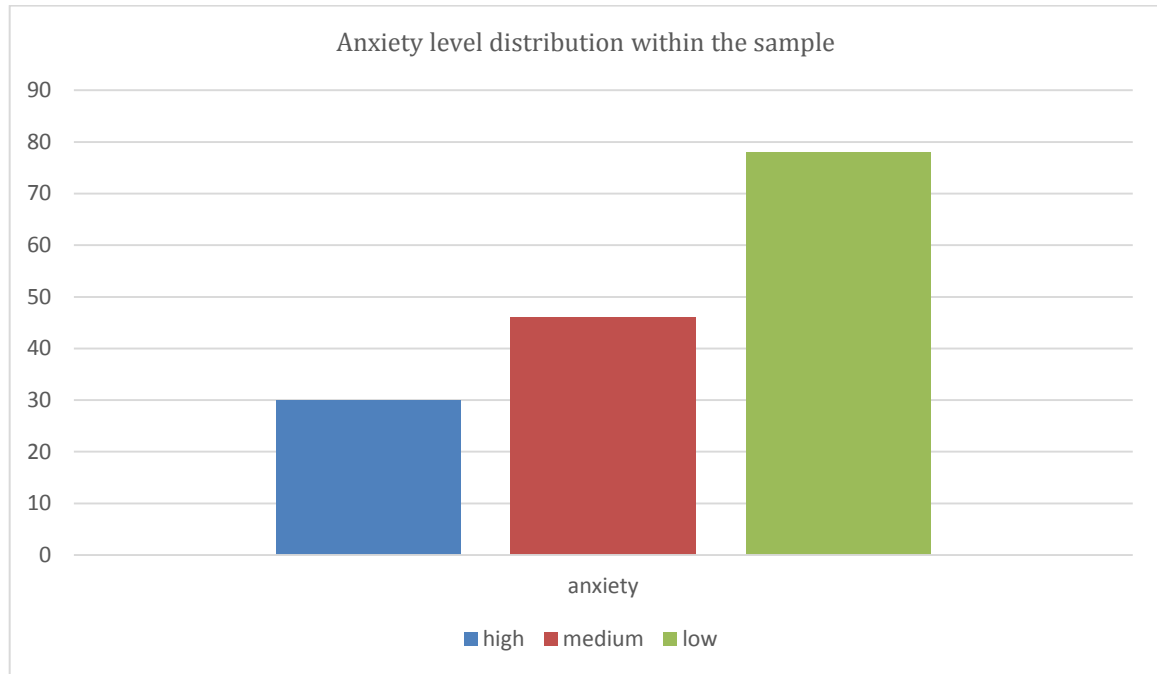
The results of the interpretation of anxiety questionnaire revealed that students experienced different levels of anxiety. 30 of the students had high, 46 of them had moderate and 78 of the students had low levels of anxiety as shown by the frequency table (see Table 1).

**Table1**  
*Students' Anxiety Distribution within the Sample*

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
High	30	19,48
Moderate	46	29,87
Low	78	56,65
Total	154	100



As seen in Figure 1, students who showed low anxiety levels outnumbered the moderate and high anxiety level groups. Only 30 of the participants which is 19,48% of the total participant group showed high levels of anxiety. 29,87% of the students which makes 46 students suffered from moderate levels of anxiety. 78 of the students (56,65%) experienced only low levels of anxiety. As a result, most of the students didn't experience high levels of language learning anxiety.



**Figure 1.** Anxiety Level Distribution within the Sample

### 3.2. Research Question 2: What are the students' perceptions of teachers' behavior?

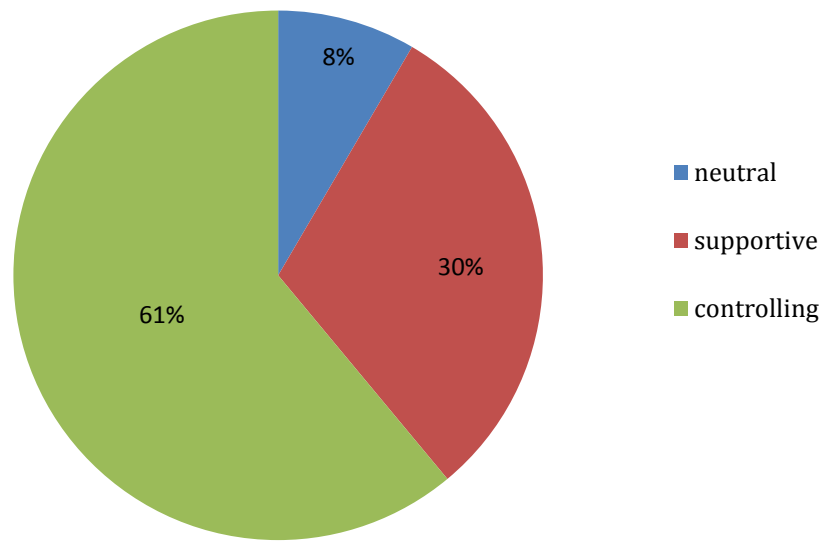
The results of the descriptive statistics analysis indicated that there were 47 students who perceived the teacher behavior as supportive. On the other hand, those who perceived the teacher behavior as controlling outnumbered the other perception; that is, there were 94 students who thought their teachers being controlling. 13 of the participants perceived their teachers equally controlling and supportive (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Teacher Behavior Distribution within the Sample*

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
controlling	94	61,03
supportive	47	30,51
neutral	13	8,44
	154	100

As seen in Figure 2, there were more students who thought teacher behavior as controlling (61%) than those who perceived their teacher's behavior as supportive (30%). 94 students out of 154 participants considered their teachers as controlling. As a result, preparatory school students were found to perceive teacher behavior as controlling in general



**Figure 2.** *Teacher Behavior Distribution within the Sample*

**3.3. Research Question 3: Is there any relationship between students' anxiety level and their perceptions of teacher behavior?**

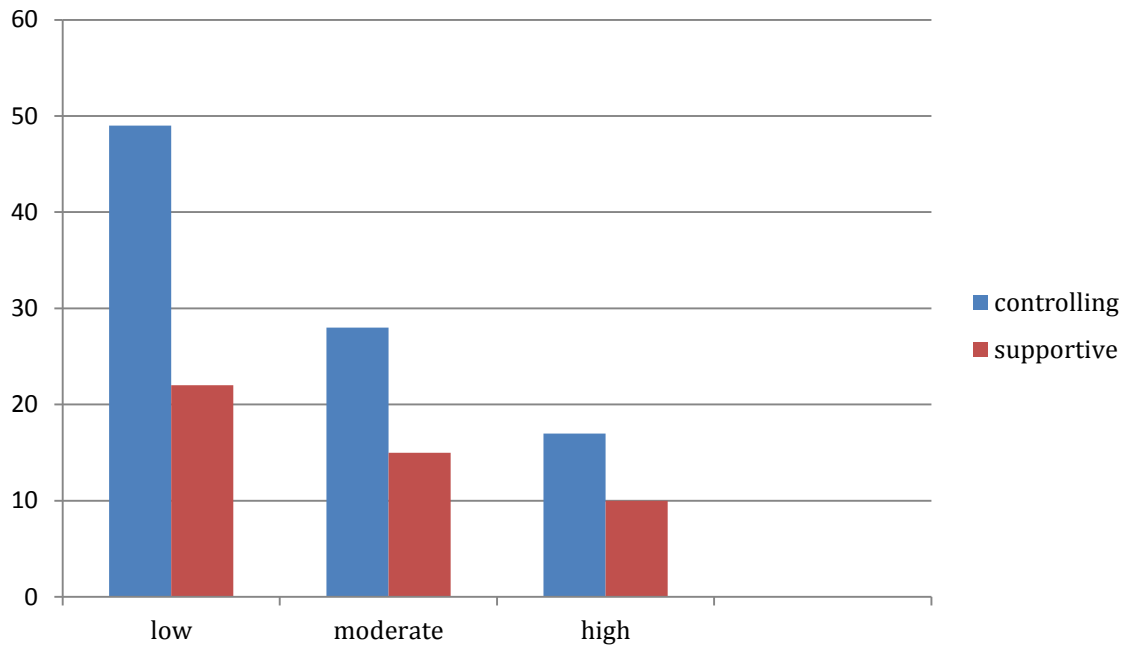
A 2 X 2 Chi-square was conducted to find out the relationship between anxiety levels of the students and their perception of teacher behavior using SPSS version 25. The findings indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference between the students with low or moderate level of anxiety and those with high level of anxiety in terms of their perceptions regarding teacher behavior ( $\chi^2(1)=0,823, df= 2, p= ,389$ ). On average, 60% of the participants in all three categories perceived their teachers as more controlling than supportive. A minor difference was found between them regarding their perception of teacher behavior. When students with a low level of anxiety were taken into account, it can be seen that they perceived their teacher more controlling than supportive slightly more than the other two categories. 69% of the students in low anxiety group perceived their teachers as controlling, 65% of the moderate group and 63% of the students in high anxiety group perceived their teachers controlling (see Table 3).

**Table3**

The Crosstabulation for teacher behavior by anxiety

		Teacher behavior		
		Controlling	Supportive	
Anxiety	High	17	10	27
	%	63	37	
	Moderate	28	15	43
	%	65	35	
	Low	49	22	71
	%	69	31	
Total		94	47	141

As far as the distribution of teacher behavior by anxiety was considered, all anxiety level students, whichever moderate, high or low, perceived their teachers' behavior as controlling (see Figure 3). The lower students' anxiety level gets the more they perceive their teacher controlling. The higher their anxiety level gets the more they perceived their teachers as supportive. As a consequence, teacher behavior was perceived as controlling by all anxiety levels in general.



**Figure 3.** *Teacher Behavior by Anxiety Distribution within the Sample*

All in all, the participants in the current study were found to have a low, a moderate or high level of anxiety. In addition, about two-thirds of the participants perceived teacher behavior as controlling rather than supportive. Moreover, a significant relationship was not found between anxiety level and the perceptions of teacher behavior. Only slight differences regarding those variables were found. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that when the anxiety level of students is lower, they are more likely to see their teachers' behaviors as supportive or vice versa.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to identify foreign language anxiety level of preparatory school students and their perception of teacher behavior as controlling or supportive. Another aim of the study was to see if there was a correlation between the independent variable of the study which is foreign language anxiety and dependent variable of the study which is the students' teacher behavior perception.

The results of the study yielded that student experience different levels of anxiety and students' anxiety scores ranged from minimum 35 (not anxious at all) to maximum 156 (highly anxious) similar to the results of Kunt and Tüm (2010)'s study. Contrary to Çakar's (2009) study in which Turkish university EFL students' foreign language anxiety levels were calculated as moderate, Çağatay's study (2015) in which preparatory school students' speaking anxiety level was found moderate, and Wei (2007)'s study in which Chinese university students' foreign English anxiety was found moderate; in this study, more than half of the students which makes 56,65% of the participant group reported that they experienced low levels of anxiety and only 19,48% of the students reported to have a high level of anxiety. This result is promising because high levels of anxiety might have a negative effect and hinder language learning (Oxford, 1999; Horwitz, 2001; Brown 2000).

We can assume that when students start university, their anxiety levels develop and precede because they gain new experiences, or they interact with different people. In the same way, the participants were freshmen students in our study, so they had just begun the university. In Turkey, students must take a national entrance exam to enter a university. They study with a lot of effort for this exam for years. Moreover, they have so many competitors and even a small difference in exam results affects their chances of getting in a university. Consequently, entering a university is a real challenge for most of the students and perhaps passing this entrance exam and becoming a university student is the first significant success for many students. The reason of the low anxiety level of our participants might be this feeling of success and accomplishment owing to being a university student.

Another thing is that all participants of the study were studying English voluntarily which might mean that only students with the awareness of the importance of English and who felt the need to learn it chose to study at a preparatory program. Students who experience higher levels of language learning anxiety might have felt that they couldn't be successful and didn't want to study English. Moreover, the English language is accessible everywhere. Most of the students have smart phones and use applications to help them to learn English, to remember vocabulary better, and most of them watch English movies, follow English TV series and play online games in English. So, they started to be naturally exposed to language before they come to university which might help them to feel less anxious about the language because it wasn't unknown for them.

In a university context, teachers mostly behave students as individuals and more importantly as young adults, which may affect students' anxiety levels. Another thing is that, peer interaction can be a factor which has an important effect on students' anxiety. Students find themselves in a new social context with a need to make new friends. As McCroskey, Daly, Richmond and Falcione (1977) supported, individuals derive their feelings about self from their interactions with others. Since the data were collected in the second semester, students had already become familiar with the university life and they had made a lot of friends. Being an individual in this new social community may have a positive effect on their anxiety. In addition, Harter (1999) stated that society is another factor that helps individuals to shape their opinions about themselves. Society also views university students as responsible grown-ups and achievers because they become university students by passing a challenging entrance exam. Therefore, it can be concluded that due to the affecting factors mentioned above, only a few participants with a high anxiety level was found. This pleasing result can be attributed to the fact that the participants have confidence and they believe in themselves as individuals.

Second research question of the study was related to the students' perceptions of teacher behavior. Ismail and Majeed (2011) examined the relationship between achievement and teacher behaviors using the same teacher behavior questionnaire. The results of their study showed that high achiever students perceived their teachers as more supportive whereas low achievers perceived their teachers as controlling. In current study, all anxiety groups perceived their teachers more controlling than supportive contrary to Ismail and Majeed (2011) and Abu- Rabia (2004) 's study. The controlling behaviors that students agreed most were "My teachers are frequently punishing misbehaving student", "My teachers are more likely to scold students with discipline problem, instead of students with low academic performance" and "My teachers are likely to prefer silent students than students who actively asking academic questions". This may stem from the fact that some students expect the controlling teacher in the class. As Nicholas (1996) stated, the consensus is that with the help of a 'well-disciplined environment', learning can be best achieved so schools should have an 'acceptable' level of control on students' behavior, and this creates a responsibility of control for the teachers.

On average 30% of the students perceived their teachers supportive regardless of their anxiety level. The supportive behavior that students agreed most was "My teachers pay more attention to students with high academic achievements, regardless to her/his disciplinary records", "My teachers more likely to praise on good performance more than good behavior" and "My teachers pay less attention to small disciplinary problem to students with high academic achievement". This shows us that teachers put more focus on academic achievement than minor discipline problems.

The final research question of the study was formed to investigate the relationship between students' anxiety level and their perceptions of teacher behavior. The statistical analysis showed that there was not a significant relationship between students' anxiety levels and their perceptions of teacher behavior. No significant sign of teacher-generated anxiety as suggested by literature (French, 1997) was found in this study unlike Abu-Rabia's study (2004) where teachers' attitudes perceived by the students indicated a significant prediction of L2 anxiety. In this study, teacher behavior didn't influence students' anxiety negatively or positively contrary to some studies (Huang, Eslami& Hu, 2010; Von-Wörde, 2003).

All anxiety groups considered their teacher more controlling than supportive. This result is surprising because the assumption was that students with higher levels of anxiety consider their teacher as controlling. This may result from students' expectations from university and especially studying English voluntarily. When students were asked the reasons why they perceived their teachers as controlling they commented that they started university with some anticipations. Firstly, they thought that attendance wouldn't be a problem, so they would have plenty of chances to skip the lessons. Thus, tight schedule and

intense program as complained by other university students in Turkey (Armagan, Bozoglu & Güven, 2016) might be the cause why they perceived their teachers as controlling. However, preparatory school programs by regulations require student to attend 85% of the lessons otherwise it would be impossible to learn a foreign language. So, attendance is important and strictly kept, because language learning takes time and effort. Another assumption was that they would not have lessons during the first week, the week before midterms and the last week of the terms. Since there are topics to be covered determined by the syllabus, students have lessons unless there are any social activities that students attend together. Moreover, they thought that they would not have many homework assignments, but they were asked to keep a portfolio and put written assignments in it. Doing homework was another complaint that arose from the students.

Furthermore, during their last year of high school education, since they were going to take an important exam, they were free not to attend the lessons and their schedules were flexible so that they could prepare themselves for the university exams. This means that they weren't used to attending the classes, doing homework or studying regularly and following a program at school. Thus, attending 85% of the lessons, following a program, having classroom rules such as delivering assignments on time, not being able to use their phones for entertainment in class made them feel that they are controlled by their teachers.

Based on the study results, it can be suggested that teachers should receive regular feedback from the student so that they can adopt more supporting teaching practices. Moreover, teachers should try to encourage student ask academic questions. Also, students should be made more aware of the system of language learning and be given objectives and rationale of what they are doing in class so that instead of evaluating classroom procedures as controlling they could interpret them as necessary. The limitation of the study is that the reasons of students' low anxiety levels can be analyzed in depth with qualitative research techniques. As further research areas suggested depending on the result of the study, different aspects of teacher behavior can be another research area such as being expertise in the subject, interacting with students using technology, and outside the classroom. Besides, there is a need to carry out the same study in different educational contexts other than university setting. In addition to other contexts, other variables beside self-esteem such as proficiency level can be searched in line with teacher behavior. Furthermore, other supplementary instruments like interviews may be included to support the questionnaire data. Lastly, not only students' perceptions with respect to teacher behavior but also teachers' perceptions about their own classroom behaviors can be examined to provide further insights to the language teaching field. Their perceptions and students' perceptions can be compared.

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