STUDY INTO THE SOURCES OF TURKISH LEARNING ANXIETY OF FOREIGN STUDENTS IN TURKISH UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to determine such influences as gender, age, the type of native alphabet, academic branches and academic achievement on learners' Turkish language anxiety in the context of Turkish Universities in the first academic term of 2014/2015. In an effort to delve into the issue of affective variables related to Turkish language learning, we tried to determine the extent to which foreign students in some universities perceive Turkish language learning anxiety in terms of gender, age, native alphabet and native country and to see if there is any significant difference in terms of their academic branches to learn Turkish Language and academic achievements in tests of Turkish Language. For this purpose, a 16-item scale with a five Likert-type was used. The questionnaire was applied to 133 beginner level and lower intermediate level Turkish Language learners in Atatürk University, Erzincan University, Ondokuz Mayıs University, and Gazi University. After analysing the collected data, the findings indicated that academic branches and non-Latin native alphabet can be considered as a significant anxiety factor for foreign students learning Turkish language for education in Turkish Universities. The study also offers some context-specific pedagogical implications, suggestions and ways to decrease learners' anxiety for Turkish Language teachers and practitioners.

Key Words: Language Anxiety, Foreign Students, Classroom Environment, Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, Language Teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION

As Turkey geographically is a bridge between Asia and Europe, it has a good chance to reflect its cultures, values and experiences. Its deep historical roots, cultures, values and beliefs in Middle East, Anatolia, North Africa, Balkans and Caucasia are of great importance to create its cultural richness and diversity. As a centre of several civilizations since ancient times, Anatolia has its own unique social and cultural characteristics among which there are cuisine, music, arts, literature and architecture.

Modern Turkey, since it was founded in 1923, has achieved to have strong historical and cultural ties with its neighbours. So far, Turkey has been playing an active role and set an example of spreading democracy, cultural understanding and meeting at intercultural

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crossway in this region, as a way to building cooperation and bringing peace and security and development to the region. Modern Turkey has a developing economy, a dynamic open society and an advanced democracy. Within the last decade, Turkey has achieved remarkable economic growth and substantial progress in political and social fields. Turkey is one of the fastest growing economies in the World and now the 6th largest economy in the Europe and 16th largest economy in the world (Sulyani, 2013:1)

With the introduction of liberal policies into Turkey in 1980s, the adoption of Free Market Economy, and the changeable trends of the world, teaching Turkish to foreigners has been of great importance. (Ökten and Kavanoz, 2014:850)

Academic language in higher educational institutions in Turkey is Turkish, however some universities offer Turkish and English together. The other European languages like French and German are taught as foreign languages in higher education curriculum. For foreign students, those who are admitted to an academic program where the language of instruction is Turkish must learn Turkish to attend to any university. For them to learn academic Turkish Language, there are some alternative ways such as Turkish Language Teaching and Research Centre at the respective university (TÖMER), Language Centre at the respective university, Online Turkish Certificate Program offered by Anadolu University, Yunus Emre Institute and Turkish Cultural Centres, Private Language Schools and Student Clubs.

The number of people who want to study at Turkish Universities is increasing, with Turkey's prestige and popularity increasing year by year, as almost all universities in Turkey begin admitting foreign students. Opening the doors of its universities for international students from all over the world, Turkey provides almost all foreign students with scholarships through the Organization of "Turkey Scholarships". This year the Organization of Turkey Scholarships has received about 95.000 applications from all around the world, which suggests that the popularity of Turkish universities and the education quality in Turkey are increasing year by year.

In the study, we tried to find out the sources of anxiety that foreign students experience in classroom and out-of-school environment, and recommend what the teachers and learners should do to deal with learners' anxiety so that they can achieve success in learning Turkish language.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The people who learn Turkish as a foreign language have difficulty both as Turkish language belongs to different language family from theirs and due to the differences in grammar and pronunciation (Tüm, 2010:1902).

In learning a foreign language, the similarities between native language and target language affect success positively, while the differences between them affect it negatively (Aytan and Güney, 2015:287). Alphabet difference between native language and Turkish as a foreign language leads the learners to feel anxious in writing and reading.

According to Dulay and Burt (1977:96), motivation, self-esteem and anxiety play an important role in language learning. The higher the motivation and self-confidence and the lower the anxiety levels, the more likely students will be to succeed in learning a new language. Language teachers are thus encouraged to create low-anxiety environments and highly motivating activities.

According to Allwright and Bainley (1991:163), native language is of a major role in the increase in the level of foreign language learning anxiety. They also argue that the students feel the anxiety in foreign language classes even in their foreign language courses as in science, math and music.

Hashemi and Abbasi (2013:645) argue that language anxiety is likely caused by every factor or situation creating possibilities or enhancing the chances of exposing their deficiencies and language imperfections in front of others Scovel (1978:28) stated the necessity to distinguish the difference between debilitating anxiety which complicates learning process and hinders student success, and facilitating anxiety which contributes to individuals' achieving more success than their naturel acquisition. Facilitating anxiety makes student eager to learn and encourages them to participate in learning process actively. Debilitating anxiety leads learner to feel sadness or doubt of himself, thus using target language inefficiently.

Horwitz and Young (1991:27) researched three performance related anxieties such as communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, and determined a relationship between foreign language anxiety and three performance related anxieties.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991:514) argues in their study that anxiety is not so important at the beginning of foreign language learning in the period, when individuals have high motivation, whereas it developes as a result of reiterative failures.

Nascente (2001:18), in a research, explained physiological and psychological dimensions of anxiety. He characterized stomach tingling, cold sweat, nausea and fast heart-pulse as distinct physiological manifestations of anxiety. Fear or panic suggests psychological dimension of anxiety.

Ay (2010:83) argued that fear of negative evaluation resulting from an individual's view of being evaluated negatively, causes the individual to avoid others' evaluations and evaluative situations.

In some studies, collaboration in classroom has been found to help decrease the students' level of anxiety for foreign language. If language teachers become aware of the negative influence of affective factors on the learners, the level of anxiety can be decreased by using more collaborative and engaging activities in a less threatening environment (Taysi, 2015:589)

In the study conducted on language teachers by Aslan et al (2015:2704), they ranked the difficulties faced by foreign students as inability to express themselves, being timid and passive in the course, learning in long time, inability in reading comprehension and answering to the questions, lack of communication.

Affective filter of excited or anxious students is high and this hinders acquisition or learning. Creating a classroom environment away from anxiety has a positive impact on students (Çakıcı, 2015: 503).

3. METHOD

This study presents a descriptive and survey- based study which tried to explore the relationship between foreign language anxiety and the participants' gender, age, native alphabet, native country and academic branches.

3.1 Purpose
In the study, we aimed to find answers to the questions of whether there is a relationship between lack of confidence and communication comprehension, and fear of making mistake and negative evaluation as the sources of anxiety in learning Turkish in Turkey in terms of (1) gender, (2) age, (3) native alphabet, (4) native country, (5) academic branches of foreign students?

3.2. Participants
We applied the scale to total 138 students learning Turkish as a foreign language in Atatürk University, Erzincan University, Gazi University and Ondokuz Mayıs University in Turkey. Of these students, 16 students are in Ataturk University, 44 in Erzincan University, 51 in Gazi University and 27 in Ondokuz Mayıs University. Their age range was between 20 and 30.

3.3 Data Collection Tool
The most suitable instrument for measuring language learning anxiety is Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) with 5- Likert type developed by Horwitz et al. due to its high validity and reliability. However, aiming to examine the source of anxiety in learning Turkish as a foreign language in classroom environment, the researcher modified some of the items included in FLCAS and reduced it to 16 items. To determine the sources of anxiety, anxiety factors were divided into two categories: The first category is 'lack of confidence and communication comprehension', and the second category is 'fear of making mistake and negative evaluation'. The items related to the lack of confidence and communication

comprehension are 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, and to the fear of making mistake and negative evaluation are 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16.

3.4 Procedure

The author translated questionnaire from English version into Turkish version to ensure that the participants had no problem in understanding the questionnaire. The questionnaire translated into Turkish was given to three experts who are competent on translation to evaluate its validity. Having been given for the comments of experts on the first draft of the questionnaire, some of the items were revised in an attempt to create a more valid version. In the next stage, a pilot version of the questionnaire was applied to 27 language learners. The internal reliability of the Turkish version of the questionnaire was found the alpha coefficient to be .86. To obtain the data from foreign students coming Turkey to study in universities, the author applied the final version of the questionnaire to the participants in Ataturk University, Erzurum, Erzincan University, Erzincan, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Samsun and Gazi University, Ankara. After the data were completed, they were analysed quantitatively by SPSS 20.0. In doing so, the researcher calculated each participant's anxiety score by adding his or her ratings of the whole16 items. With minimum point for each item is 1 and the maximum point is 5, the range of this scale is between 16 and 80.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To find answers to the problems and determine the source of foreign students' anxiety in learning Turkish in the universities in Turkey, we examined the results of questionnaire applied to the students through various tests and analysis by SPSS 20.0

Problem 1. "Is there a relationship between lack of confidence and communication comprehension, and fear of making mistake and negative evaluation in terms of gender of foreign students?

In order to determine as to whether there is a significant difference between language Learning Anxiety points of Foreign Students in terms of gender, t test was applied and the findings obtained are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Findings Regarding Gender of Participants

Factors	Gender	N	X	Ss	t	p
Lack of esteem	Male	58	25,0833	4,73820	-1.740	.084
	Female	76	26,3846	4,03630		
Fear of making mistake and negative evaluation	Male	58	24,5000	4,95574	-1.822	.071
	Female	76	25,9359	4,28934		
Total Language Learning Anxiety Points	Male	58	49,5833	9,04844	-1.944	.054
	Female	76	52,3205	7,48070		

In Table 1, it was found that lack of esteem dimension of average points for language learning anxiety of foreign students was (t_{132}= -1.740, p>.05), Fear of making mistake and negative evaluation was (t_{132}= -1.822, p>.05) and there was no significant difference in total language learning anxiety in terms of gender. (t_{132}= -1.944, p>.05)   As a consequence of this finding, we can say that gender is not a significant factor in language learning anxiety of foreign students.

Problem 2. "Is there a relationship between lack of confidence and communication comprehension, and fear of making mistake and negative evaluation in terms of age of foreign students?

In order to determine as to whether there is a significant difference between language Learning Anxiety points of Foreign Students in terms of age, single factor Variance Analysis ANOVA was applied and the findings obtained are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Findings Regarding Age of the Participants

	Age	N	X	Ss	t	p
Lack of esteem	18-20 years old	36	25,5676	4,42556	.701	.593
	21-23 years old	25	26,2692	4,22902		
	24-26 years old	38	25,1000	4,74909		
	27-29 years old	10	25,9000	4,53260		
	30 + years old	25	26,8400	3,90171		
Fear of making mistake and negative evaluation	18-20 years old	36	25,2973	4,76016	1.716	.150
	21-23 years old	25	26,4615	4,38389		
	24-26 years old	38	23,8500	4,92794		
	27-29 years old	10	26,1000	3,84274		
	30 + years old	25	26,1600	4,16013		
Total Language Learning Anxiety Points	18-20 years old	36	50,8649	8,55103	1.303	.272
	21-23 years old	25	52,7308	7,58713		
	24-26 years old	38	48,9500	8,91254		
	27-29 years old	10	52,0000	7,94425		
	30 + years old	25	53,0000	7,36546		

In Table 2, it was found that lack of esteem dimension of average points for language learning anxiety of foreign students was (t_{132}= .701, p>.05), Fear of making mistake and negative evaluation was (F_{130}= -1.716, p>.05) and there was no significant difference in total language learning anxiety in terms of age. (F_{130}= .701, p>.05)   As a consequence of this finding, we can say that age is not a significant factor in language learning anxiety of foreign students.

Problem 3. "Is there a relationship between lack of confidence, communication comprehension, and fear of making mistake and negative evaluation in terms of native alphabet of foreign students?

In order to determine as to whether there is a significant difference between language Learning Anxiety points of Foreign Students in terms of native alphabets, single factor Variance Analysis ANOVA was applied and the findings obtained are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Findings for Native Alphabet

Factors	Native Alphabet	N	X	Ss	F	P
Lack of esteem	Latin	30	24,8000	5,24174		
	Arabic/Persian	67	27,0145	3,84055		
	Kiril/Georgian	33	24,6286	4,05902	3.781	.012
	Çin/Kanji	4	23,2500	4,85627		
Fear of making mistake and negative evaluation	Latin	30	25,0667	5,68078		
	Arabic/Persian	67	26,2609	3,56722		
	Kiril/Georgian	33	24,0571	4,91063	2.742	.046
	Chinese/Kanji	4	21,7500	6,94622		
Total Language Learning Anxiety	Latin	30	49,8667	10,23764		
	Arabic/Persian	67	53,2754	6,62856		
	Kiril/Georgian	33	48,6857	8,33762	3.735	.013
	Chinese/Kanji	4	45,0000	9,62635		

In Table 3, it was found that lack of esteem dimension of average points for language learning anxiety of foreign students was (F_{130}= 3.781, p<.05), Fear of making mistake and negative evaluation was (F_{130}= 2.742, p<.05) and there was statistically significant difference in total language learning anxiety in terms of native alphabets. (F_{130}= 3.735, p<.05) As a consequence of this finding, we can say that native alphabet is a significant factor in language learning anxiety of foreign students.

To determine the source of the difference, Post Hoc Tukey test was done and in sub dimension of lack of esteem, anxiety points of those with Arabic and Persian languages were found to be higher than those with Kiril and Georgian Alphabets and Chinese and Kanji.
This finding can be appreciated as a variable that affects language learning anxiety of foreign students studying in Turkey.

Problem 4. "Is there a relationship between lack of confidence and communication comprehension, fear of making mistake and negative evaluation in terms of Native Country of Foreign Students?

In order to determine as to whether there is a significant difference between language Learning Anxiety points of Foreign Students in terms of native country, single factor Variance Analysis ANOVA was applied and the findings obtained are shown in Table 4

Table 4. Findings Regarding Native Country of Participants

	Native Country	N	X	Ss	t	p
Lack of esteem	Asia	61	26,0476	4,27079	.588	.672
	Africa	25	24,6923	5,03404		
	Middle East	25	25,8846	4,64178		
	Soviet Republics	12	26,6667	2,67423		
	Europe	11	26,0909	4,57066		
Fear of making mistake and negative evaluation	Asia	61	25,3175	4,74452	.531	.713
	Africa	25	24,5769	4,58845		
	Middle East	25	25,0769	4,99538		
	Soviet Republics	12	26,0000	4,08990		
	Europe	11	26,8182	3,99545		
Total Language Learning Anxiety	Asia	61	51,3651	8,44966	.567	.687
	Africa	25	49,2692	8,57698		
	Middle East	25	50,9615	9,09277		
	Soviet Republics	12	52,6667	5,56504		
	Europe	11	52,9091	7,50273		

In Table 4, it was found that lack of esteem dimension of average points for language learning anxiety of foreign students was (F_{130}= .588, p>.05), Fear of making mistake and negative evaluation was (F_{130}= .531, p>.05) and there was no significant difference in total language learning anxiety in terms of native country. (F_{130}= .567, p>.05) As a consequence of this finding, we can say that native country is not a significant factor in language learning anxiety of foreign students

Problem 5. "Is there a relationship between lack of confidence and communication comprehension, and fear of making mistake and negative evaluation in terms of Academic Field of foreign students?"

In order to determine as to whether there is a significant difference between language Learning Anxiety points of Foreign Students in terms of academic fields, Kruscal Wallis test was applied and the findings obtained are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Findings Regarding Academic Fields of Participants

	Field	N	mean	X^2	P
Lack of esteem	Social Sciences	71	69,93	4.475	.483
	Applied Sciences	15	75,83		
	Health Sciences	12	64,79		
	Educational Sciences	2	37,25		
	Foreign Languages	22	67,25		
	Technical Languages	12	50,92		
	Fine Arts	4	69,93		
Fear of making mistake and negative evaluation	Social Sciences	71	73,16	7.650	.177
	Applied Sciences	15	64,43		
	Health Sciences	12	50,63		
	Educational Sciences	2	60,00		
	Foreign Languages	22	72,32		
	Technical Languages	12	47,13		
Total Language Learning Anxiety	Social Sciences	71	71,87	7.239	.203
	Applied Sciences	15	74,53		
	Health Sciences	12	55,42		
	Educational Sciences	2	39,50		
	Foreign Languages	22	69,30		
	Technical Languages	12	46,33		

In Table 5, it was found that lack of esteem dimension of average points for language learning anxiety of foreign students was (X^2= 4.475, p>.05), Fear of making mistake and negative evaluation was (X^2 7.650, p>.05) and there was no significant difference in total language learning anxiety in terms of native country. (X^2= 7.239, p>.05)   As a consequence of this finding, we can say that native country is not a significant factor in language learning anxiety of foreign students

5. RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS

It should be noted that the foreign students whose native alphabet is different from respective language, and who try to learn Turkish at Language Centres should practice in Latin alphabet, and notice the different sounds from their own languages. The teachers of foreign language courses should motivate and encourage the foreign students with different alphabets such as Arabian, Persian and Kirill to achieve good writing and reading skills. They should be made to practice writing in Latin alphabet and read as many books and magazines as possible. Even if the student's focus on achievement is very important, attitudes and behaviours of the principals and teachers towards foreign adult students are more important (Taştekin, 2015:127). Thus, the principals and teachers at Turkish Language Teaching

Centres should try to find out what the sources of anxiety are to help foreign learners overcome their language anxiety.

The first step in reducing anxiety is to actually have students participate in speaking tasks (Tsiplakides and Keramida, 2009: 43). The learners from different countries should be encouraged and motivated to speak in classroom environment and helped recover anxiety resulting from shyness in the courses. Rapidly evolving information technology enables new methods and equipment to be used in foreign language learning and teaching, and provides significant contributions for this field. Today, language learners can reach every kind of source through common usage of internet (Güven, 2015: 312). The teachers who teach through Intercultural Communicative-based Approach should have the understanding and knowledge of multi-culturalism and inter-culturalism in teaching Turkish as a foreign language (Sarıtaş and Akkaya, 2015:1330). The teacher who gives the students the feeling of self-confidence and helps them will certainly achieve success. The more confident the students feel, the faster they develop themselves in foreign language learning (Parlak, 2015:1416).

Speaking, listening and comprehension, the main functions of the verbal communication should be paid importance in teaching Turkish to foreigners, and communicative approach should be employed so that oral communication skills can be developed through the activities to be created for these fields (Şeref, 2013:46). Even if the language that Turkic peoples living in Central Asian region speak is a kind of Turkish dialect, they have difficulty in pronunciation due to differences in their grammatical structures and almost half of the foreign origin words in Turkish belonging to western origin (Savaş, 2015:2384). To make them familiar with the western-origin Turkish words, the students from Turkic Republics should be provided necessary documents and textbooks so as to promote their vocabulary capacities.

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