

Exploring the Perceptions of EFL Learners on Ambiguity Tolerance: Sakarya University Sample

YDİ Öğrenenlerin Belirsizlik Toleransı Üzerine olan Algılarını Keşfetme: Sakarya Üniversitesi Örneği

Orhan KOCAMAN*

Melek PAMUKOĞLU**

Abstract. This study aims to investigate the perceptions of learners' tolerance of ambiguity in the process of learning a foreign language. One of the language learning variables is ambiguity tolerance (AT) which can be defined as an attitude to understand the target structure with insufficient knowledge and to what extent learners tolerate the unknown items in the target language. Reacting the "ambiguous" structure shows whether a language learner is tolerant or intolerant; or to what extent learner tolerates the structure and how the feelings of the learners affect and shape their achievement on the degree of tolerance. A total of 109 students (43 preparatory class and 66 first-year) in English Language Teaching (ELT) department have responded to a 12-item questionnaire of Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale (SLTAS) which was modified by Erten and Topkaya (2009) for the purpose of shedding light on this issue. In order to highlight a more detailed perception, the scale was implemented on different levels of students to see their levels of avoiding ambiguity tolerance. The results indicated that students do not appear to tolerate ambiguous language structures well because of their high level of ambiguity tolerance. In addition, results have revealed that there is no significant difference between preparatory classes and first-year students' levels of ambiguity tolerance. An open-ended questionnaire consisting of four open-ended questions was carried out with six preparatory class and five first-year students with the aim of measuring the consistency between the statistical results and the results of the content analysis. The data obtained from the open-ended questions on tolerance of ambiguity revealed parallel results with some of the studies reviewed in the current study.

Keywords: Tolerance, ambiguity, language learning, perception, foreign language.

Öz. Bu çalışma, yabancı dil öğrenim sürecinde öğrenenlerin belirsizlik tolerans algılarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Dil öğrenme değişkenlerinden biri, hedef yapıyı yetersiz bilgi ile anlamaya yönelik bir tutum ve öğrenenlerin hedef dilde bilinmeyen maddelere ne ölçüde tolerans gösterdiğini belirleyen belirsizlik toleransıdır (AT). "Belirsiz" yapıya tepki vermek, bir dil öğrencisinin bu yapıyı tolere edemediğini gösterir; ya da öğrencinin yapıya ne derece hoşgörlü davrandığı ve öğrenenlerin duygularının başarıya etkilerini ve tolerans derecesine göre nasıl şekillendiklerini şekillendirir. İngilizce Öğretmenliği bölümünde (İÖ) öğrenim gören toplam 109 öğrenci (43 hazırlık sınıfı ve 66 birinci sınıf) çalışma konusuna ışık tutmak amacı ile Erten ve Topkaya (2009) tarafından adapte edilen İkinci Dil Tolerans Değeri Ölçeği (SLTAS) 12 maddelik bir anket doldurmuştur. Belirsizlikten kaçınma ölçeği farklı seviyelerde öğrenciler üzerinde algı seviyelerini ayrıntılı görmek için uygulanmıştır. Sonuçlar, öğrenenlerin yüksek düzeyde belirsizlik toleransı nedeniyle belirsiz dil yapılarını iyi tolere etmediklerini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, sonuçlar, hazırlık sınıfları ile birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin belirsizlik tolerans düzeyleri arasında anlamlı bir fark olmadığını ortaya koymuştur. İstatistiksel sonuçlarla içerik analizi sonuçları arasındaki tutarlılığı ölçmek amacıyla altı hazırlık sınıfı ve beş birinci sınıf öğrencisi ile dört açık uçlu sorudan oluşan yapılandırılmış bir görüşme gerçekleştirilmiştir. Belirsizlik toleransı üzerine yapılan görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler, mevcut çalışmada belirtilen bazı çalışmalarla paralel sonuçlar ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tolerans, belirsizlik, dil öğrenme, algı, yabancı dil.

Public Interest Statement.

This study aims to investigate the perceptions of learners' tolerance of ambiguity in the process of learning a foreign language. Both students and teachers should be aware of the strategies to cope with the structures they come across for the first time. Being able to use compensation strategies like guessing, overcoming limitations in speaking and writing has crucial importance in the process of language learning. The results revealed that when the first-year students are compared to the preparatory class students, they do not appear to tolerate ambiguous language structures because of their high level of ambiguity tolerance.

Toplumsal Mesaj.

Bu çalışma, yabancı dil öğrenim sürecindeki öğrencilerin belirsizlik toleransı algılarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Hem öğrenciler hem de öğretmenler, ilk defa karşılaştıkları yapılarla başa çıkma stratejilerinin farkında olmalıdırlar. Tahmin etme, konuşma ve yazmadaki sınırlamaların üstesinden gelme gibi telafi stratejilerini kullanabilmek dil öğrenim sürecinde çok önemlidir. Sonuçlar 1. sınıf öğrencileri hazırlık sınıfı öğrencileri ile kıyaslandığında belirsizlik düzeylerinin yüksek olması nedeniyle belirsiz dil yapılarına tolerans göstermediklerini ortaya koymuştur.

* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Sakarya Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, okocaman@sakarya.edu.tr

** Öğretmen, MEB, melekpamukoğlu@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The process of teaching / learning a language requires from top to bottom that teachers use different methods depending on the needs of learners. However, in recent years, discussions on methods of language teaching started to be outdated, so individual differences and language learning variables are much more highlighted since figuring out the particular learning problems are more helpful for learners to be more successful in language learning.

As a concept, ambiguity in a language refers to the obscurity and uncertain or inexact situations; also, tolerance concerns about 'handling' with the new situations. Chappelle and Roberts (1986) define ambiguity tolerance (AT) as "*a person's ability to function rationally and calmly in a situation in which interpretation of all stimuli is not clear*". In second language (L2) learning, one of the first scholars mentioning AT is Ely (1989) who stated that it is rare to know the exact meaning of every new lexical item, comprehend the correct reference of it and pronounce its sound precisely. Furthermore, he indicated the issue of considering personality or cognitive styles of learners in the specific context of the second language learning and the need to decide which personality traits or cognitive style variables influence language learning.

1.1 Literature Review

Learning a foreign language is the process of acknowledging new written and oral forms performed mostly with a group of learners or individually. Chiang (2016) stated that learners differ in their choices of learning styles or strategies, and they have different levels of English proficiency, which hinders the correspondence between ambiguity tolerance and classroom work styles since every individual learner deals with ambiguous structures with the help of their English knowledge. Therefore, except ambiguity of tolerance as a variable, class-work dynamics should be obtained. Although classroom styles cannot always be observed in online courses as touched in the study by Tayebnik and Puteh (2013), students' perceptions can still be obtained through a scale. The researchers applied Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale (SLTAS) to a group of students studying English at online English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses to differentiate tolerant and intolerant students, and they found that tolerant students are more likely to participate in online courses whereas intolerant students are less likely to take part in these courses.

Ambiguity tolerance is mostly correlated with other variables like language proficiency level, reading skills, cloze test scores or learning strategies. Thus, observing the effects of different levels of ambiguity tolerance to language proficiency may be distinctive. As Chu et al. (2015) stated "ambiguity tolerance, language learning strategies, and L2 proficiency level are inextricably linked to one another" (p.12). Besides, although L2-oriented learning strategies contribute to the comprehension of communication, students with low ambiguity tolerance need assistance while students with high ambiguity tolerance are presupposed to survive with less dependence on their native language (Chu et al., 2015). Developing reading strategies and making tolerance level as high as possible depend on teaching students well by integrating contextual guessing, skipping unknown or ambiguous words as traditional reading skills (Sarıçoban, 2017) so that students can overcome the anxiety of reading and they can be aware of their tolerance levels.

The level of ambiguity tolerance prevails the level of the second language proficiency or vice versa. Vahid et al. (2011) conducted a research and used cloze test as another variable to correlate with ambiguity tolerance. Cloze test is a kind of prose text from which some parts are omitted, and learners were expected to fill in these missing parts with accurate and content-based words. If the scores of two variables were compared, it was found that the students with high ambiguity tolerance get high marks from cloze test or vice versa, since students succeeded in getting high scores of the test by tolerating obscure, new or inexact lexical items.

Ambiguity tolerance is one of the factors affecting language-learning achievement in various grammar tests and some speaking tests, Chappelle and Roberts (1986) suggested that another skill type affected by ambiguity tolerance is reading. El-Koumy (2000) identified a positive relationship

between reading comprehension and ambiguity tolerance; additionally, Norton (1975) explored that students with middle ambiguity tolerance succeeded better than the ones with low and high ambiguity levels in reading comprehension test (As cited in Erten & Topkaya, 2009). It is safe to say there is a significant relation between ambiguity tolerance and learners' proficiency levels, and if language learners are trained about reading strategies, they will have a higher tolerance level (Erten & Topkaya, 2009). There are some replications indicating meaningful correlations between reading and ambiguity tolerance.

Haghani and Bahmannejad (2017) studied with German foreign language learners, ambiguity tolerance level of the participants and their scores in the reading comprehension test are not significantly correlated.

Language learning process can be affected by different factors, which can predict the possible effects of the others. In her study, Genç (2016) investigated the foreign language reading anxiety with SLTAS and parallel findings appeared with Erten and Topkaya (2009). Students cannot tolerate the ambiguous language structures, and they feel more anxious than usual in reading tasks.

Another study to clarify the relation between ambiguity tolerance and gender is from Marzban, Barati and Moinzadeh (2011) who revealed that female participants were observed as less tolerant than their male peers. Erten and Topkaya (2009) observed the same results that female language learners are less tolerant than male learners.

Başöz (2015) also investigated gender difference in ambiguity tolerance and found that gender does not have any significant effect on ambiguity tolerance; besides the relation between vocabulary knowledge of EFL learners and ambiguity tolerance is not significant. However, the interaction between learners' self-received achievement of foreign language vocabulary and ambiguity tolerance is significant that as in previous studies, learners with a moderate level of ambiguity believe that they are more successful in learning foreign language vocabulary.

Like most of the studies above, Ehrman and Oxford (1990) highlighted the personality traits of language learning by examining the styles and strategies used in an intensive training setting. In addition, style is defined, in their study, as "preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning dealing with new information" (p.311). Ambiguity tolerance is one of the style dimensions that Chappelle (1983) found the ones who have more tolerance ambiguity mostly show better language learning performance than the ones with less tolerance. Köksal (2017) also mentioned in his study that while personality traits are effective, learners' beliefs are regarded as a part of individual learner differences, which naturally affect the processes of language learning and learners' levels or perceptions of ambiguous structures of language.

Ambiguity tolerance has been related to some dimensions such as reading ability, cloze test achievement, language learning strategies, etc. One of the most effective parts of ambiguity is also anxiety since any ambiguous situation whether in language learning or real life may cause anxiety that people question how this ambiguous situation can be handled. Dewaele & Shan (2013) aimed to fill the gap in Second Language Learning (SLA) by examining the relation between ambiguity tolerance and foreign language classroom anxiety. The researchers come to an underlining result; the students, who are Chinese learners, with high tolerance of the second language have less anxiety in their foreign language classes. In other words, if students highly tolerate ambiguous structures in language learning, they feel less anxious since they can cope up with uncertain language structure, which makes them feel more comfortable and more proficient.

Investigating the effect of different variables on ambiguity tolerance from one perspective has been specified in language learning process. Varasteh et al. (2016) incorporated the relational pattern of (motivational, cognitive, metacognitive strategies and language achievement) variables among EFL learners. Ambiguity tolerance and learning strategies are also categorized in cognitive strategies. Varasteh et al. (2016) claimed that students with more tolerance of ambiguities are more inclined to use deep language strategies to deal with uncertainties. Additionally, ambiguity

tolerance demonstrated positive direct impact on self-regulation. In other words, it seems the more tolerant the students were of the ambiguity, the higher their level of self-regulation and language achievement would be.

Unlike Varasteh et al., Rastegar and Kermani (2015) ascertained, ambiguity tolerance had no significant relation with the use of metacognitive and affective strategies. Nevertheless, the researchers' core point was emotional intelligence, which might have had an effect on ambiguity tolerance, but no significant relation was detected between emotional intelligence and ambiguity tolerance. Vahedi and Fatemi (2016) also detected the relation between emotional intelligence and ambiguity tolerance, but their results are not meaningful like Rastegar and Kermani's study.

One of the multidimensional studies belongs to Alahdadi and Ghanizadeh (2017) who investigated the cognitive, metacognitive, cultural and emotional factors with ambiguity tolerance. According to their study, deep learning approach and cultural intelligence have positive relations with ambiguity tolerance, so the more tolerant the learners are/ become, the higher level of CQ they have. Additionally, these learners are more likely to adopt their deep learning, and they are more successful.

The correspondence of ambiguity tolerance and language studies are researched mostly in the context of EFL/ESL where investigating whether the general language proficiency of learners is affected by other variables like motivation, attitude, personality, etc.

The aim of this study is to see how Turkish EFL learners perceive ambiguity and how they figure out the ambiguous situations with the help of their general English language knowledge as well as involving any difference among grades. For this purpose, the research focused on the following research questions:

- How much are Turkish university-level EFL learners tolerant of ambiguity?
- Do their grades (preparatory class or first-year university students) affect their levels of ambiguity tolerance?

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

The study was carried out at Sakarya University, English Language Teaching Department, where the data were collected in the spring term of the 2017-2018 academic year. 43 preparatory classes and 66 first-year students (109) participated in the study in the last week of the academic year. Convenience sampling method was utilised in the selection of participants. The age range varied from 18 to 20, and the gender issue was not taken into account because of the focus of the study.

2.2 Instruments

The data were collected through Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale (SLTAS) modified by Erten and Topkaya (2009). The researchers (2009) modified the (SLTAS) to have a 5-point Likert scale, embedding a new anchor (3-not sure/undecided). The modified scale was also translated into Turkish and Cronbach's alpha internal consistency reliability for the Turkish version of the SLTAS with the 5-point Likert scale was found to be .75. For the current study, there was no need to translate the scale into Turkish since the participants were from English Language Teaching (ELT) department.

An open-ended questionnaire consisting of four open-ended questions was carried out with six preparatory class and five first-year students with the aim of measuring the consistency between the statistical results and the results of the content analysis.

2.3 Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected through the modified SLTAS, and the regular classroom teacher explained how to fill in the 5 Likert scale questionnaire in each classroom since the questionnaire could not be applied to all participants in one session. The questionnaire are filled out with pen-and-paper during the class hour. Also, six preparatory class and five first-year students randomly selected

from both groups were given an open-ended questionnaire to reply in English in order to clarify the reasons or perceptions of their language ambiguity.

2.4 Data Analysis

The current study was designed as a mixed-method with both quantitative and qualitative research design. First, a quantitative research method was conducted. After collecting the filled-out questionnaire, all the data were analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS22.0). For descriptive analyses, each research question was analyzed separately and shown in one table and each statement in scale was obtained according to mean and standard deviations. As to inferential statistics, the raw data were found normally distributed, thus leading the researchers to choose to run parametric tests, namely independent sample t-test to reveal any difference in the way of ambiguity tolerance levels of preparatory class and first-year students. As for the qualitative part of the study, the content of the data gained through open ended questions was analyzed, and the student responses were noted down and summarised as student perceptions of tolerance of ambiguity.

3. BULGULAR

The results of the research have been analysed in accordance with the research questions.

How much are Turkish university-level EFL learners tolerant of ambiguity?

The first research question was analysed by means and standard deviations. Besides, the mean of overall scores of subjects in the second language ambiguity tolerance scale (SLTAS) was found to be 39.68 (M=1.39 and SD= .49). The score obtained through the SLTAS ranges from 15 to 55 and since 1 means "strongly disagree", 2 means "disagree", 3 means "undecided", 4 means "agree" and 5 means "strongly agree" in the scale, the higher the score is the more intolerant learners become regarding English Language ambiguities.

Tablo 1. Means and Standard deviations for the items of the SLTAS

Item no	Items	N	Mean	Sd
1	When I'm reading something in English, I feel impatient when I don't totally understand the meaning	109	3,23	1,26
2	It bothers me that I don't understand everything the teacher says in English.	109	2,98	1,19
3	When I write English compositions, I don't like it when I can't express my ideas exactly	109	4,04	0,96
4	It is frustrating that sometimes I don't understand completely some English grammar.	109	3,30	1,22
5	I don't like the feeling that my English pronunciation is not quite correct.	106	3,43	1,30
6	I don't enjoy reading something in English that takes a while to figure out completely.	109	3,22	1,10
7	It bothers me that even though I study English grammar some of it is hard to use in speaking and writing.	109	3,29	1,17
8	When I'm writing in English, I don't like the fact that I can't say exactly what I want.	108	3,57	1,14
9	It bothers me when the teacher uses an English word I don't know.	107	3,01	1,09

10	When I'm speaking in English, I feel uncomfortable if I can't communicate my idea clearly.	109	3,93	0,95
11	I don't like the fact that sometimes I can't find English words that mean the same as some words in my own language.	109	3,50	1,19
12	One thing I don't like about reading in English is having to guess what the meaning is.	109	2,37	1,14

As can be seen in Table 1, the SLTAS scores of the subjects vary between 4.04 and 2.37. The participants scored the lowest in items 12 and 2 both of which focus on tolerating the ambiguities related to receptive skills such as reading and listening; which means that Turkish university-level EFL learners are more tolerant of ambiguous structures that they read or listen to. On the contrary, the participants have the highest scores in the items 3 and 10 related to productive skills (writing and speaking) which indicate that Turkish university-level EFL learners are not tolerant or are less tolerant of ambiguous structures. It can be identified that participants have difficulty or language ambiguity when they try to produce outcomes in the target language; therefore, they are not tolerant of the ambiguous language items they encounter.

The second research question, *Do their (students') grades (preparatory class or first-year students) affect their levels of ambiguity tolerance?*, was also analyzed with independent t-test in order to see the difference in the ambiguity tolerance levels of preparatory class and first-year students.

Table 2. Independent Sample T-Test of Different Grades

	Grade	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
SLTAS	First- Year	66	40.16	7,01	107	.797	.255
	Preparatory class	43	38.95	8,81			

According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances Sig= .255, $p > .05$, variances were equal so Equal variances assumed line's (t / df) measured added to the table.

Table 2 reveals that when ambiguity tolerance levels and students' grades are compared, the means of first-year students are slightly higher than preparatory class students. It means that first-year students are less tolerant of ambiguous structures than preparatory class students. Additionally, no significant difference was found between ambiguity tolerance levels and students' grades ($p > .05$). According to quantitative results, students were less tolerant in productive skills (speaking and writing), so their ambiguity tolerance is higher in receptive skills (reading and listening).

In addition to quantitative results, the study was reinforced by means of an open-ended questionnaire consisting of four open-ended questions, which might be supportive to have a clearer idea about the perceptions of participants' tolerance of ambiguity. After an open-ended questionnaire were prepared, they were sent to 2 experts to validate the applicability of the questions. After the questions were approved, they were applied to the participants. The questions were:

1. How do you cope with the situation when you encounter something unknown while you are reading or listening in English?
2. How do you cope with the situation when you encounter something unknown while you are writing or speaking in English?
3. Do you feel competent enough to cope with ambiguous/unknown items in English?
4. Have you received any training on how to cope with ambiguous/unknown items in English?

() Yes. What were they? _____

() No. Would you like to receive training?

For the first question -reading and listening skills-, all students in both groups used the word “try”, which means that they try to catch the meaning from the written or oral context. If they still feel unsure, they use sources such as internet, dictionary or an expert.

A preparatory class student pointed out *“Firstly, I always try to understand something unknown from the context. If I get the meaning, there is no problem. But, if I still don't know the meaning, looking up this word in a dictionary is good for me”*.

Another preparatory class student stated *“I try to guess the meaning. If it is not possible, I search unknown vocabulary on the internet”*.

A first-year student stated, *“Usually when I read something new or difficult for me in English I try to concentrate on the whole idea of the text or speech. In that way, to some extent, I can guess the message of it and figure out the meaning of unknown words and phrases”*.

The second question is about productive skills, speaking and writing. All students stated that they look for different ways of expressing their ideas or they use the synonym of a word to express their ideas or feelings. Although first-year students were found to be less tolerant to ambiguous or unknown structures, their answers to first two interview questions are more satisfactory and exploratory than preparatory class students.

A preparatory class student stated, *“I try to explain the condition in different ways. For example, I try to use different words or give the different examples to define or tell the condition”*.

Another preparatory student stated, *“I make brainstorming and outline. Also, I try to be creative. Then, I start speaking or writing”*.

A first-year student explained *“While writing I try to find similar ideas or ways to express the unknown information but while speaking, as I don't have much time to think I try to demonstrate the situation with a monologue or by acting the situation, improvising”*.

The third question is about students' self-evaluation indicating whether they have competence or not in unknown/ambiguous structures. The three of preparatory class students responded as *yes* and the other three responded as *no*. Nevertheless, first-year students' answers might be helpful for the research that except one, the other four students do not feel competent enough to cope with unknown/ambiguous structures. Clearly, for this question, results are parallel to the results of the current research that first-year students do not tolerate ambiguous structures and they feel incompetent to cope with unknown language structures.

The fourth question is about whether the students received any training on how to cope with ambiguous/unknown items in English. All students except one stated that they did not have any training on how to cope with ambiguous/unknown items in English.

A preparatory class student stated that he did not have any training but he might have if possible.

A first-year student suggested, *“Yes, there might be some lessons about how to overcome barriers and think faster out of comfort zone”*.

Another first-year student pointed out *“Yes, I would if I had any free time”*.

4. DISCUSSION

The present study aims to investigate how much language learners are tolerant to ambiguous structures and whether there is a difference between grades (preparatory class and first year). The participants were university EFL learners of English. The findings of the study are discussed considering the available studies of other researchers in this area.

The results reached regarding the first research question indicated that students' levels of tolerances differ in terms of different language structures and skills (receptive or productive).

There is no other scale to compare with SLTAS that only students' perceptions are underlined but generally, the difference between the lowest and the highest means of items is significant. Researchers like Chiang (2016) and Tayebinik and Puteh (2013) revealed ambiguity tolerance in language with the help of students' English knowledge and their choices of language.

With regard to the second research question, it was found that first-year students are less tolerant than preparatory class, means of different levels of students – first year students (N=40.16) and preparatory class students (N=38.95). Erten and Topkaya (2009) indicated that there is a significant relation between ambiguity tolerance and learners' proficiency levels, and if language learners are trained about reading strategies, they will have a higher tolerance level. In the current study, first-year classes might have had more reading and language courses than preparatory class so our results are different.

As Chu et al. (2015) stated that tolerating ambiguous structures, language proficiency and language learning strategies are all linked to one another. Therefore, the answers of open ended questions showed that all students replied the questions expressed their efforts to "try" to figure out ambiguous structures. Additionally, for tolerating ambiguous structures, language learning strategies of students differ in terms of their levels (first-year and preparatory classes) that first-year students felt less incompetent than preparatory classes.

Studies (Varasteh et al. (2016), Alahdadi and Ghanizadeh (2017) investigating the multidimensional variables like metacognitive, cognitive or motivational strategies revealed positive bounds with ambiguity tolerance as in the current study. Preparatory classes were found more tolerant to ambiguous structures and when analysed the structured open-ended questions, it can be stated that these students express themselves more competent in dealing with vague language structures by applying deep learning strategies so current study has parallel findings with some studies aforementioned in the current study.

5. LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of this study was that the sample size was not big enough to have more general or vivid results. Therefore, it is assumed that the relation between perceptions and tolerance of ambiguity levels may reveal different results in a more comprehensible study.

Another limitation was that the questionnaire was applied in the last weeks of the term so equal size in both groups (first-year students and preparatory classes), could not be reached. Thus, this might have resulted in an imbalanced result in terms of their levels of ambiguity tolerances.

The current study focused on the student perceptions of ambiguity of tolerance in language learning but some other variables like gender, language background and proficiency levels could have been included in the study.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has sought to gain a deep insight into second language ambiguity tolerance levels of Turkish university-level EFL learners and how the levels of ambiguity tolerance differ regarding the grades. Firstly, students do not appear to tolerate ambiguous language structures because of their high level of ambiguity tolerance. The results of overall scores are close to the maximum level (maximum score 55); one group mean is 40.16 and the other is 38.95 both of which are in the 3rd quarter of high continuum scores. It can be concluded that Turkish university-level EFL learners are more dependent on the familiar structures they have been exposed to during their tertiary or high school years. In terms of students' levels of ambiguity tolerance, they revealed different mean scores. They had the lowest scores in reading and listening skills, which means students can tolerate what they read or listen; moreover, they can overcome ambiguities in receptive sources. Their highest scores are related to writing and speaking skills, which means students cannot

tolerate ambiguous language structures when they are writing or speaking. They need further exercises such as writing strategies and oral practices for producing a better language.

In this study, students' knowledge of language hinders them to feel more relaxed and tolerant with unclear structures. As for the recommendations for the future studies, the study can be reinforced by variables such as anxiety levels or more specific language skills. The study on the effect of ambiguity tolerance with a larger group of participants can reveal more reliable and generalizable results. In addition, for further implications in teaching, longitudinal studies can be implemented to have language learners observe their progress of tolerance ambiguity in the process of language learning.

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