

THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS AND PEERS ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY

(ÖĞRETMEN VE SINIF ARKADAŞLARININ YABANCI DİL SINIF KAYGISI ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİLERİ)

Nilüfer Bekleyen

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı öğretmen ve sınıf arkadaşlarının davranışlarının öğrencilerin yabancı dil sınıf kaygıları üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektir. Çalışma, Dicle Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı'nda yürütülmüştür. Veriler, öğrencilerin yabancı dil sınıf kaygısını ölçmek için düzenlenmiş bir anket ve farklı kaygı seviyelerine sahip öğrenciler üzerinde öğretmen ve sınıf arkadaşlarının davranışlarının etkisi ilgili bilgi sağlamayı amaçlayan bir mülakat yoluyla toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, bir dil sınıfında, kaygı düzeyinin öğretmen ve sınıf arkadaşlarının etkisiyle arttığını göstermiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kaygı, Dil Kaygısı, Yabancı Dil Sınıf Kaygısı.

Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the influences of teachers' and peers' attitudes on the foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) levels of the students. The study has been carried out at the ELT Department of Dicle University, Faculty of Education. The data have been collected by means of a questionnaire, designed to measure the FLCA levels of the students and an interview, the aim of which is to obtain information about the effects of teachers' and peers' attitudes on students with different anxiety levels. The results of the study have revealed that, in a language class, the level of anxiety increases with the influence of teachers and peers.

Keywords: Anxiety, Language Anxiety, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety.

Introduction

Anxiety is defined as the “subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (Spielberger, 1983; p. 15). It has also been called as an emotional response to “a threat to some value that the individual holds essential to his existence as a personality” (May, 1977; p. 205).

For many students, foreign language classes can be more anxiety provoking than the other courses they take (Horwitz et al., 1986). Although it may sometimes be facilitating (e.g. Kleinmann, 1977), recent investigations on language anxiety have found the effects to be debilitating with a greater frequency (e.g. Phillips, 1992; Aida, 1994; Donley, 1997; Von Wörde, 1998; Ando, 1999).

As suggested by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a), anxiety causes many potential problems for the foreign language students because it can interfere with the “acquisition, retention and production of the new language”. It negatively affects language learning and production, which finally causes a disadvantage for the anxious students in the language classroom when compared to their more relaxed classmates. However, the FLCA has only recently been identified as distinguished from other forms of anxiety by Horwitz et al. (1986), who developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a standard instrument for the purpose of testing an individual's response to the specific stimulus of language learning.

FLCA may have different causes such as conspicuousness, lack of knowledge, lack of self-confidence, shyness or high expectations of others (Bekleyen, 2001). However, the beliefs and behaviors of language teachers and peers can also be direct causes of students' anxiety. Brandl (1987, cited in Yan, 1998) has found that the majority of the teachers believed that teachers should keep a distance from their students. Young (1991) has noted that some teachers believe the teachers' role is that of a "drill sergeant" instead of a “facilitator” and that there is a need to correct students' errors constantly (p.428). Studies by a number of researchers (Young, 1990; Horwitz, 1988; Koch and Terrell, 1991) show that the interaction between teachers and learners is important in the increase or decrease of the students' anxiety levels. In error correction, for instance, the critical point for the student is not necessarily error correction but the manner -when, how often and how errors are corrected. In her study in a Japanese school, Aida (1994) has investigated the effect of teachers' personalities and teaching styles on students' anxiety levels. She found that a teacher's harsh manner of teaching created an atmosphere of terror and caused the students to feel anxious and afraid in the classroom.

Peer influence is another factor that increases anxiety. In her study in 1990, Young investigated the students' perspectives on anxiety and speaking. The results of her study revealed that, in a language class, the students feel most anxious when they have to speak in front of their peers. Horwitz et al. (1986) suggest that language classrooms are threatening in part because students are often required to communicate in front of their peers in an unfamiliar language and are often publicly evaluated while doing so.

The purpose of the present study is to identify the influences that the students get from their teachers and peers. The study also aims to find the strategies used by the students to cope with the negative influences originated from the teachers and the other students in the language class. Another purpose of the study is to help the foreign language teachers understand more fully the impact and significance that their attitudes have in the language learning process.

Method

Because of the fact that anxiety is an abstract psychological phenomenon, data in this field are generally collected through questionnaires, self-reports and interviews (MacIntyre, 1991). Similarly, in this study, the researcher collected the quantitative data by the administration of a questionnaire, the FLCAS. The qualitative data, on the other hand, were collected through an interview protocol.

Subjects and Instrumentation

The sample of the study consisted of 126 students at the freshman class of the ELT Department of Dicle University, Education Faculty. Since 11 students did not want to participate in the study, the total number of the subjects was 115 (41 males and 74 females).

The anxiety levels of the freshman students were measured by the FLCAS, which was developed by Horwitz et al. in 1986. The internal consistency measure of FLCAS showed an alpha coefficient of .93, test-retest reliability over eight weeks showed an $r=.83$ ($p<.001$), and the predictive validity coefficient for final grade was .49 ($p<.003$) in two beginning Spanish classes and -.54 ($p<.001$) in two beginning French classes (Horwitz, 1986). Other studies using the FLCAS also yielded high reliability scores. For example, in a study by Aida (1994), the FLCAS showed an internal reliability of .94. As for the present study, the internal reliability score of the translated version of the FLCAS was computed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The internal reliability measure of the instrument was .90. The scores of the items ranged between .89 and .91, which showed that all the items in the instrument maintained high internal reliabilities.

The items in the FLCAS were examined by two lecturers working at the Department of Educational Sciences of Dicle University concerning their adequacy for Turkish students. As a result of this examination, it was found that no changes were necessary on the FLCAS. In addition, the literature review suggested that the scale was administered to subjects from many different nationalities such as Chinese and Korean students learning English as a foreign or second language (Yan, 1998; Truitt, 1995 cited in Yan, 1998) and American students learning Spanish, Japanese, French and German (Horwitz, 1986; Aida, 1994; Donley, 1997; von Wörde, 1998 respectively).

The FLCAS contains 33 items, scored on a five-point Likert scale. Responses range from (a) "strongly disagree" to (e) "strongly agree". For each item, the highest degree of anxiety receives five points and the lowest, one point. For example, when statements of the FLCAS are positively worded, choice (e) "strongly agree" receives five points; when statements are negatively worded, the points are reversed, and choice (e) "strongly agree" receives one point. Therefore, anxiety scores for this scale range from 33 to 165. The qualitative results of the study obtained by the administration of the FLCAS were evaluated by the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The second source of data was an interview protocol, generated from a pilot study, during which the students were asked questions about their FLCA. The researcher prepared an interview protocol based on the answers given by the students. During the interview, the protocol was used only as a general guide; the order of the questions was sometimes changed, some questions were omitted, and new questions were added depending on the flow of the responses. Each interview was recorded with the consent of the participant and transcribed by the researcher. Since this is part of a much larger study, only the answers of the questions related to teachers' role on students' FLCA levels will be presented here.

Results

The students' anxiety scores were measured by the administration of the FLCAS. The possible scores for the scale range from 33 to 165 (Horwitz et al., 1986). After the quantitative data were analyzed, it was found that the anxiety scores ranged between 55 and 145 for the subjects of the present study. The means and standard deviations of the answers given by the subjects to the 33 items in the FLCAS are presented in the Appendix.

The scores obtained by the students were classified in different groups. As can be seen in the Table 1 below, students with scores between 33 and 66 were

considered as having a low level of anxiety whereas the students with scores between 133 and 165 were accepted as quite anxious.

Table 1.

The Levels of Anxiety

<u>Levels</u>	<u>Scores</u>
Low Anxiety	33-66
Middle Anxiety	67-132
High Anxiety	133-165

The high, moderate and low anxiety groups of students were determined according to their scores obtained from the administration of the FLCAS and six students were chosen randomly from each group. The selected students, who agreed to participate in the study, were interviewed according to the interview protocol. The qualitative data about the influences of teachers and peers will be presented in two parts.

Teachers' Influences

The participants of the study were offered four different English courses: reading writing, speaking and grammar. Since this study is related to the effect of teachers in general, the questions asked to the students did not focus on individual teachers. Four questions were asked to the interviewees about the influence of the teachers. The answers given by high, moderate and low anxiety (HA, MA, LA) groups were evaluated separately.

Question 1-What kind of influences have you got from your teachers in English lessons? (when they are asking questions, correcting errors, giving turns etc.) 2- What are the effects?

The students were asked to report both the negative and positive aspects of the teachers' influences. Some of the students (four students from the LA and one student from MA group) stated that the teachers' attitudes were quite positive towards the students and they reacted positively even if the students made mistakes. However, all of the students in the HA group complained about the teachers' attitudes and described their behaviors as "disturbing" or "discouraging". According to the answers given to the first question, three factors were revealed (Table 2). These factors and their effects on students' anxiety levels will be presented under the same title since they are quite interrelated.

Table 2.
Influences of Teachers on Students' Anxiety Levels.

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>LA</u> <u>Group</u>	<u>MA</u> <u>Group</u>	<u>HA</u> <u>Group</u>	
Teachers' personality	2	1	3	6
Teacher-student relationship	1	-	3	4
Academic quality of the teacher	1	2	-	3
Total	4	3	6	13

Teachers' personality: The students that were interviewed usually evaluated the teachers according to their personalities. They stated that factors such as kindness, being energetic, and listening with patience were quite important in providing a relaxed classroom atmosphere. Most of the interviewees felt more comfortable if the lesson was taught by kind and energetic teachers. Almost all of the students thought that the main role of the teacher was to provide a comfortable atmosphere in class. When they were asked about their opinions related to their own teachers, the students from the HA and LA groups stated different opinions although they were talking about the same instructors. Students from the LA group generally thought that their teachers' behaviors made them feel comfortable in class. As the following interviewee reported:

Interviewee 4 (LA Group): The teachers are really supportive and tolerant. Even if I make a pronunciation or grammar error, they don't get angry.

On the other hand, the students from the HA group described the attitudes of some teachers towards the students as rather "annoying". These students observed the teachers' attitudes quite carefully. Even if the negative attitude of the teacher was towards another student, this affected their contribution to the lesson.

Interviewee 16 (HA Group): Last week, the teacher asked a question to one of my classmates. When she gave an incorrect answer, he became very angry and behaved rather scornfully. Now, I'm afraid of raising my hand even if I know the answers of the questions.

Being a good listener was another personality trait that was considered as important by the students, who reported that some teachers did not listen to their answers carefully. They wanted to see the signs of positive reinforcement such as nodding and smiling or expressions like "good" or "O.K.". If the teacher remained silent and motionless, they felt that their answers were wrong.

Interviewee 12 (MA Group): If the teacher doesn't say or do anything when I speak, I think that I'm doing something wrong and I begin stuttering. The worst of it is when I complete my answer and the teacher does not say anything. He just turns to another student as if he doesn't pay attention to me at all.

Some teachers listened to the students with a discouraging look on their faces. This attitude had a negative impact on the students' self-confidence. As two interviewees from the HA group noted:

Interviewee 15 (HA Group): I think some teachers classify the students into two groups: successful and unsuccessful. If they think you are unsuccessful, they look at you rather scornfully.

Interviewee 13 (HA Group): If the teacher thinks that I cannot give the correct answer, I understand this from the way he behaves. This makes me much more nervous.

Teacher-Student Relationship: Since the teachers' personality strongly affects the relationship between the teacher and the students, this item is closely related to the previous one. Many of the participants pointed out that they wished to have a closer relationship with their teachers. Interviewee 16, for example, stated that his attitude towards the lesson became more positive when the teachers addressed him by his name.

Interviewee 16 (HA Group): Most of the teachers know only the names of a few students who are their favorites. If a teacher addresses me by my name, I give answers more willingly.

The students also expressed their opinions about a number of factors such as the teachers' way of calling on the students, correcting errors and giving turns.

Interviewee 14 (HA Group): Sometimes the teacher asks a question and then chooses a name from the attendance list. I feel very anxious in a situation like this especially if I'm unprepared for the lesson.

As can be seen in the example above, the fear of being called on was a factor that highly affected the students. Especially the students from the HA group believed that the teachers should not force the students to speak unless they wanted to do so. As one of the informants stated:

Interviewee 13 (HA Group): If I can't understand what the teacher is saying in English, I fear that the teacher will ask a question to me and I won't be able to give an answer. Sometimes I cannot give an answer and the teacher insists that I should. In situations like this, I feel so nervous that I cannot utter a word.

Some students said they did not feel anxious in English lessons until they started their university education. They found that, at university, the relationship between the teachers and students was very different from the one they had had in high school. Some of the students in the HA group felt that they could not find the motivation provided by their high school teachers. When asked more detailed questions by the interviewer, those students revealed that they had been among the best students in their high schools, most of which were in small cities. Their teachers had always made it clear that they were successful and given them confidence. Yet, at university there were many students, some of which were from the best schools of the country. Because of the fact that they were not among the best students any more, they had a feeling of inferiority.

The Academic Quality of the Teacher: The academic quality of the teacher was an important factor for the subjects of this study owing to a number of factors. First of all, they were students of an Education Faculty, which meant that they would be English teachers. The academic quality of the teacher influenced the students' anxiety levels because they wanted to learn English perfectly. They thought it would be impossible for them to pronounce the words correctly with a teacher who did not have a native-like pronunciation. As one of the students noted:

Interviewee 10 (MA Group): I don't want to be an English teacher who cannot speak English fluently and accurately.... I worry a lot when I think of the future.

The teachers' pronunciation and fluency in English was a factor that influenced the students' opinions about him/her. If the students believed that a teacher was proficient enough, they studied more for the courses offered by them. One of the students reported:

Interviewee 8 (MA Group): Some teachers pronounce the words incorrectly.... If the teacher's pronunciation is correct, I listen to him eagerly.

The remarks of a student from the LA group indicated that the students might also feel anxious even if the teachers' academic quality was high. He commented:

Interviewee 3 (LA Group): Some of our teachers are highly qualified and they want us to be like them. They give a lot of course materials. We have to read many books in a short time. Sometimes, this makes me really anxious.

Question 3- (if there is a negative influence) What do you do to cope with this influence?

Since some of the students from the low and moderate anxiety groups did not generally find the teachers' behaviors as anxiety-provoking, only eight students

answered the question about the coping strategies. The categories and the number of the students are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Strategies to Cope with Anxiety.

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>LA</u> <u>Group</u>	<u>MA</u> <u>Group</u>	<u>HA</u> <u>Group</u>	
Doing nothing	-	1	2	3
Positive self-talk	1	1	-	2
Getting help from peers	1	1	1	3
Total	2	3	3	8

Doing nothing: Three students from the moderate and HA groups said they did not do anything to cope with anxiety. They were aware of the fact that they should do something to cope with their negative feelings. As the following student stated:

Interviewee 13 (HA Group): I know that I should do something but I don't know what to do.

Positive Self-Talk: This strategy was mostly used by two students, one from the LA and one from the moderate anxiety groups. These students stated that they tried to think positively even if the teachers' attitudes towards them and the other students were somewhat negative. One student, for example, stated:

Interviewee 7 (MA Group): I think that I'm not the only person that is subjected to the negative attitude of the teacher. This thought makes me feel better.

Getting Help from Peers: Three students noted that they got help from their classmates or the students that had taken the same course the previous year. They asked about the personality of each teacher and then, they tried to prepare for the lesson beforehand, according to the strategy they learnt from the former students.

Question 4- In your opinion, how can your teachers help the students feel less anxious?

The last question about the teachers' effect on students' anxiety levels inquired the students' opinions about what the teachers could do in order to create a relaxed atmosphere in the language class. The answers were classified in three different categories, which can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4.
Students' Suggestions for Teachers.

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>LA</u> <u>Group</u>	<u>MA</u> <u>Group</u>	<u>HA</u> <u>Group</u>	
Attitude towards Students				
a) Encouragement	1	1	1	3
b) Kindness	-	1	1	2
c) Honesty	-	1	1	2
Preparation	1	1	1	3
Total	2	4	4	10

Teachers' attitude towards the students: Seven students reported that the attitude of the teachers towards the students played a critical role in providing a relaxed atmosphere in class. If the teacher behaved in an encouraging way, the students claimed, they would volunteer answers more willingly. As one of the interviewees stated:

Interviewee 9 (MA Group): The teachers probably think that we are adults and don't need encouragement. They just come in, talk during the lesson and then leave the class. It may help if they try to say a few encouraging words.

On the other hand, the students wished to be treated like an adult since most of them were over eighteen. For that reason, the teachers' disrespectful behaviors made them feel nervous. As the following interviewee pointed out:

Interviewee 11 (MA Group): We are adults and we want to be treated like adults. The teachers should bear this in mind and should treat us kindly. Some teachers become very angry and shout at us when we make mistakes. No one wants to talk in their lessons.

Honesty was another factor mentioned by the students. Some teachers tried to reduce the students' anxiety levels by saying that they should try to speak and that their errors were not important. However, the students generally believed that the mistakes made in classroom would affect their final grades although the teachers promised that they wouldn't. For example, Interviewee 14 stated that some of the teachers told them that fluency was more important but then evaluated the students according to the accuracy of their speech or writing. Because of the inconsistency of their behaviors, some students did not trust the teachers any more.

Preparation: Three students noted that the teachers should always prepare for the lesson beforehand. When asked about the cause of their remarks, they said that some of their teachers did not follow a plan in the lesson and this caused ambiguity which later led to anxiety. Oxford (1999) defined this kind of students as closure oriented, a term signifies the types of learners that are serious, concerned about finishing tasks, goal-directed and intolerant of ambiguity. The anxiety levels of these students increase if they are forced to deal with situations in which decisions are not made.

Peer Influence

Three questions were asked to the students related to the influence of their classmates on their anxiety levels. These questions and the answers given by the interviewees are presented below.

Question 1- How do you assess your performance in English compared to other students in the class? (What makes you think so?)

This question was asked to the students to get information about how the students evaluate their proficiency levels compared to those of their classmates. The students in the LA group generally considered themselves more successful than the other students in class. Three students in this group said they were more successful than the other students in class while two students reported that their proficiency levels were not worse than the others. Similarly, five students in the moderate anxiety level reported that they were more proficient than the others. As for the HA group, three students indicated that their level of proficiency was lower than the other students in the class. Although three other students in this group said they had the same level of proficiency with the other students, their contribution to the classroom activities was still less than the others because of their low level of self-confidence.

Question 2- Do you think peer pressure affects your anxiety level? (In what way?)

A total of nine students reported that their anxiety levels were affected negatively by the behaviors of their classmates. Six students, on the other hand, indicated that the attitudes of their classmates had no effects on their anxiety levels. Only two students mentioned a positive effect of their peers. Table 5 gives the numbers of the answers given by the students.

Table 5.
Effects of Peer Pressure

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>LA</u> <u>Group</u>	<u>MA</u> <u>Group</u>	<u>HA</u> <u>Group</u>	
Negative effect				
a) Competitiveness	1	2	1	4
b) Low self esteem	1	1	2	4
c) Speaking in front of peers		1	2	3
d) Negative attitudes of peers		2	1	3
Positive effect (peer support)	2	-	-	2
No effects	2	3	1	6
Total	6	9	7	22

Negative effects: The negative effects of peers on the anxiety levels of the students were categorized in three different groups. Competitiveness, the first item in the categorization, had been emphasized by different researchers as a source of language anxiety. For instance, Bailey (1983) proposed that competitiveness could lead to anxiety when language learners compare themselves to others or to an idealized self-image. Four students that participated in this study mentioned the effect of competitiveness on their anxiety levels. As noted by the following informant:

Interviewee 6 (MA Group): There is always a kind of competition among us. Some of my classmates always try to be the best.

Low self-esteem was another category obtained from the analysis of the interview data. People with low self-esteem often worry about the thoughts of their peers. All the students agreed that there was a group in class consisting of the best students and they believed that the members of this group spoke quite fluently. The presence of these students affected the self-confidence level of some students.

Interviewee 15 (HA Group): Some students speak almost perfectly. I'm ashamed of speaking, because my speech is not as fluent as theirs.

Interviewee 9 (MA Group): The proficiency levels of some students are better than mine. Because they come from better high schools and they study all the time.

Speaking in front of the other students was another category obtained from the analysis of the answers given to the interviews. For instance, Interviewee 4 from

the LA group said that she felt nervous when she thought that the other students might notice her mistakes. She did not have a negative experience in class caused by her peers but even the thought of such a possibility was enough to make her nervous. She noted:

Interviewee 4 (LA Group): I feel nervous when I talk in class. I am disturbed by the thought that my friends may notice my mistakes even if they don't say or do anything. This thought affects my contribution to the lessons. In fact, the same students talk in every lesson and the others just listen.

The negative attitudes of some students towards their classmates could be an anxiety-provoking factor for the other students in class. Interviewee 3 reported that some of his classmates behaved quite negatively towards the other students. The following remarks of this interviewee can be a good example for the negative influence of peers:

Interviewee 3 (LA Group): Sometimes the other students behave in a childish way. For example, they laugh when a student pronounces a word incorrectly. Because of this, I am always timid and just listen to the others. In fact, I can pronounce the words like a native speaker of English but I don't do this, because, the other students always laugh when someone is trying to pronounce a word like a native speaker. They think he's funny.

Two students from the moderate anxiety group had not experienced any negative attitudes coming from their peers but they said they would feel anxious if their friends made fun of their answers.

Interviewee 9 (MA Group): Sometimes I don't answer the questions asked by the teacher with the fear that the other students will laugh.

Interviewee 11 (MA Group): All of my classmates are really nice, but if they said or did anything negative in class, it would certainly affect my behaviors.

Four students in the HA group mentioned their fears about the behaviors of the other students in class. One of the students from this group reported his experiences related to the effect of their peers:

Interviewee 14 (HA Group): Some of my classmates hate the students who talk too much in class. I don't speak too much in class because I don't want to be called arrogant.

Positive Effects: Although most of the students talked only about the negative effects of their peers, some students indicated that the support of their classmates affected them quite positively. Not surprisingly, these students were from the LA group. They said their classmates always encouraged them and that without their support it would be impossible for them to cope with the difficulties they faced

when trying to learn a new language. Those students sometimes studied with their classmates or made rehearsals before the spoken exams.

No effects: Six students reported that they did not think the behaviors of their classmates might be anxiety-provoking. For these students, the other students in the class were not rivals. Their presence was not very important for them. As Interviewee 10 (MA) suggested:

Interviewee 11 (MA Group): What they think is important, but not so important as to affect my contribution to the lesson.

Another student noted that the influences of the classmates were not important for him but he noticed that some students felt overwhelmed by these behaviors.

Interviewee 2 (LA Group): Some of my friends say they are afraid of talking in class because of the other students but I'm not a coward. If some students make fun of the other students in the class, I try to speak more. I am self-confident and have nothing to be afraid of.

Question 3- (if there is a negative effect) What do you do to cope with this pressure?

The strategies used by the students were outlined in two different categories. The first way of coping with anxiety was making practice before the lesson. Since making errors when talking in front of the other students was an important source of anxiety, the students tried to reduce the amount of their errors by making practice before the lesson. As the following student suggested:

Interviewee 3 (LA Group): I try to make practice by listening to English radio stations or by talking to native speakers of English.

The second strategy used to cope with language anxiety was trying to improve self-esteem. Some students managed to do this by talking to their friends about the discomfort they felt during the lessons. Their dialogues with the other students in class were quite helpful to reduce the anxiety they felt during the lessons. Some students said they were quite surprised when they found out that the other students in class also had a certain degree of discomfort. As one of the informants stated:

Interviewee 9 (MA Group): We sometimes talk about our class, the teachers, the other students, and our feelings in class. In one of our conversations, I found that some of the students who looked quite comfortable in class also felt nervous. Before this event, I thought I was the only one.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that the behaviors of teachers and peers might increase the level of anxiety in a language classroom. The students with HA

levels felt more discomfort and nervousness compared to the students with low levels of anxiety. The same situation might sometimes be interpreted differently by the students; thus, anxious students sometimes found the behaviors of the teachers and peers threatening while less anxious students felt quite comfortable in the same situations.

The results are consistent with the literature related to the FLCA. The present study indicated teacher-student relationship was an important factor which affected the students' anxiety levels. Studies by a number of researchers (Horwitz, 1988; Young, 1990; Koch and Terrell, 1991) also showed that the interaction between teachers and learners was effective in the increase or decrease of the students' anxiety levels. In her study in a Japanese school, Aida (1994) found that there was a relationship between the students' anxiety levels and the teachers' personalities and behaviors. In the present study, a similar result was obtained. For instance, the students stated that kind and energetic teachers who listened to them with patience were quite important in providing a relaxed classroom atmosphere.

Bailey (1983) proposed that competitiveness could lead to anxiety when language learners compared themselves to others or to an idealized self-image. In his study, the diaries of eleven learners showed that they tended to become anxious when they compared themselves to other learners. The subjects of the present study also mentioned a kind of competitive atmosphere in class. Some of the students did not speak in class because they thought their speaking skills were not as good as their peers.

In her study, Young (1990) investigated the students' perspectives on anxiety and speaking. She found that, in a language class, the students felt most anxious when they had to speak in front of their peers. Although peer influence was not reported to be so effective on the anxiety levels of the subjects of the present study, speaking in front of peers was an anxiety provoking factor for the students. The negative attitudes of some students towards their classmates were also found to be another factor augmenting anxiety.

Implications of the Study

The results of this study point to several practical ways instructors and schools can help students cope with their anxieties. First of all, there is a need to make the students, instructors and administrators aware of the fact that anxiety is a problem that may affect the students' performance negatively. Although some instructors are cognizant of the fact that some students are suffering from the debilitating effects of anxiety, they do not think it is essential to deal with the problem in depth. However, they can reduce the level of anxiety by showing an understanding for the

anxious students and assuring them that making mistakes is a natural part of language learning. It can also be useful to give the topic of the lesson beforehand so that the students who want to prepare for the subject can study before the lesson. The personality differences should always be taken into consideration in the arrangement of classroom activities. The activities should be organized carefully to encourage peer support instead of competition since a competitive atmosphere might increase anxiety.

Some of the interviewees reported that they felt anxious in foreign language classes but did nothing to reduce the effects of anxiety on their learning. Seminars could be organized to teach the students the ways of coping with anxiety. The students should be informed that even the students who are successful contributors of the classroom activities have some degrees of anxiety but they use some strategies to cope with their feelings.

Appendix

Means and Standard Deviations for the Items in the FLCAS

Items	M	SD
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	3.06	1.24
2. I don't worry about making a mistake in language class.	3.43	1.12
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	3	1.26
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	2.69	1.22
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	2.33	1.28
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	2.54	1.23
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	2.44	1.15
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	3.06	1.19
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	3.64	1.10
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	3.80	1.15
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	2.86	1.18
12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	3.11	1.28
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	2.36	1.23
14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	2.10	1.05
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	3.40	1.22
16. Even if I'm well-prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	2.73	1.28
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.	2.25	1.02

18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	2.83	1.09
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	2.45	1.15
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language classes.	3.17	1.27
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	2.28	1.16
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	3.15	1.38
23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	2.59	1.29
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	2.60	1.24
25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	2.51	1.23
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	2.26	1.14
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	2.98	1.17
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	3	0.98
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	3.06	1.15
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	2.55	1.04
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	2.18	1.03
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	2.48	1.11
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	2.40	1.04

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