

**THE ROLE OF ANXIETY IN FOREIGN
LANGUAGE CLASSES: A FOCUS ON
GENDER¹**

**Yabancı Dil Sınıflarındaki Kaygının Rolünün Cinsiyet
Açısından İncelenmesi**

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the role of anxiety in foreign language classes. It specifically focuses on students' gender in order to see if there is a significant difference between male and females in terms of foreign language classroom anxiety. Speaking skill is also under investigation as a source of foreign language classroom anxiety. The participants are 4th grade primary school students who have just been exposed to English for the first time. To collect the data, a questionnaire has been used in order to see if there is a difference between females and males regarding their anxiety levels in the class; an interview has also been conducted with highly anxious students and students with lowest anxiety level. Results show that there is not much difference between female and male students in terms of foreign language anxiety; however, males are found to be slightly more anxious than females. Communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are found to be the main reasons of foreign language classroom anxiety. In addition, speaking is found to be an anxiety provoking situation in foreign language classrooms .

Key Words: *Foreign language classroom anxiety, gender, speaking.*

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı yabancı dil sınıflarındaki kaygının rolünün incelenmesidir. Çalışma özellikle yabancı dil sınıflarındaki kaygının kız ve erkek öğrenciler arasında bir farklılık gösterip göstermediğini araştırmaktadır. Konuşma becerisi de yabancı dil sınıflarındaki kaygının bir kaynağı olarak inceleme altındadır. Katılımcılar İngilizce dersi ile ilk kez karşılaşan 4. Sınıf ilkököl öğrencileridir. Veriyi toplarken sınıftaki kaygı düzeyleri göz önüne alınarak kız ve erkek öğrenciler arasında bir farklılık olup olmadığını bulmak için anket kullanılmıştır, ayrıca en kaygılı ve kaygı derecesi en düşük öğrencilerle görüşme de yapılmıştır. Sonuçlara göre kız ve erkek öğrenciler arasında yabancı dil sınıfındaki kaygı açısından önemli bir fark olmadığı, fakat erkek öğrencilerin kızlara kıyasla biraz daha kaygılı olduğu bulunmuştur. Yabancı dil sınıflarındaki kaygının temel sebeplerinin iletişim korkusu, test kaygısı ve negatif değerlendirilme korkusu olduğu bulunmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra, konuşma etkinliklerinin de yabancı dil sınıflarındaki kaygı arttırıcı faktörlerden biri olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yabancı dil sınıflarında kaygı, cinsiyet, konuşma.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

There are many factors which affect language learning such as language learning environment, gender, personality, affective factors, etc. Among the affective factors, anxiety is considered to be an important barrier against the language learning progress. In Turkey, language teachers face with various kinds of anxious students, especially in speaking part of the lesson. Some of them do not want to speak in front of their friends; some are afraid of making errors. These situations pose important problems in the field. In this study, the focus is be on the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and gender factor.

Anxiety has long been a problematic issue in foreign language learning context. Much research has investigated different factors about anxiety (Young, 1990-1991; Chan & Wu, 2004; Horwitz, 2001; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Piniel, 2006). It has been described by many authors, according to Spielberg (1983, p.1) "Anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system."; however, Horwitz et al. (1986) suggest that foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) is different from other anxieties and they state foreign language classroom anxiety is "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process", in addition, they (1986) think anxiety is an important barrier for foreign language learners.

As stated before in this study the focus is on the relationship between anxiety and gender factor; in addition, it also gives emphasis on the effect of anxiety on speaking skill. Many studies (Week & Ferraro, 2011; Mahmoodzadeh, 2013; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2012; Mesri, 2012) have been conducted about gender factor in foreign language learning. According to these research studies, gender has an important role in foreign language classes. Even if female students are generally found more anxious, they are found to be more motivated and successful than male students in foreign language classes (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2012; Park & French, 2013; Mesri, 2012).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Foreign language learners commonly encounter some affective factors during the process of foreign language learning such as anxiety, lack of motivation and self-confidence. Among these, foreign language classroom anxiety is seen as one of the major barriers for learners (Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1990; MacIntrye & Gardner, 1994). In the literature, it has been shown that gender is an important factor in terms of FLCA, and that female students are generally more anxious than male students (Mesri 2012; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2012); however, there are also opposing studies indicating higher anxiety levels among males (Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Week&Ferraro, 2011). Students feel more anxious in speaking activities than other skills; they get more anxious in the language classes when they are expected to talk in front of other students because they are afraid of getting negative evaluation from others. Obviously, it appears that speaking is making them more anxious (Young, 1990).

As it is stated previously FLCA is an obstacle for foreign language learners to overcome. In the literature it is a common assumption that female students are more anxious in foreign language classes, and also in speaking activities all the students feel more

anxious. In this study, the relation between gender and FLCA is investigated and also speaking skill is under investigation.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

Foreign language classroom anxiety is among the most common affective barriers in the field of foreign language teaching; as a result, it is of vital importance to find the reasons of that situation. This study focuses on gender factor while searching for the underlying reasons of FLCA i.e. it investigates whether gender has an impact on students' anxiety levels. In addition to gender, speaking anxiety has also been investigated in terms of FLCA as it is considered to be the most anxiety provoking skill in language classes.

1.3. Research Questions

In this study following questions are supposed to be answered with the data collected:

1. Is gender a factor which determines anxiety level of students in foreign languages classes?
2. Are male or female students more anxious in foreign language classes?
3. What are the underlying reasons of anxiety in foreign language classes?
4. Do speaking activities increase students' anxiety level in foreign language classes?

1.4. Limitations

The data has been collected from 62 students of 4th grades in a primary school in Adana, as a consequence the results cannot be generalized to larger groups. In addition, the teacher who conducts this study is the foreign language teacher in the same school. This may influence students' responses in both questionnaire and interview.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the field of foreign language learning, anxiety was seen as an important variable and researched deeply. Much research (Young, 1990-1991; Chan&Wu, 2004; Horwitz, 2001; Horwitz &Horwitz& Cope, 1991; Piniel,2006) was conducted about different factors related to anxiety. Anxiety is a broad term and psychologists defined different kinds of anxieties for different situations. These anxieties are namely:

1) *Trait anxiety* – which is a personality trait, 2) *State anxiety* – which is apprehension experienced at a particular moment in time, and 3) *Situational anxiety* – which is anxiety experienced in a well-defined situation (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

Foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) is accepted to be a situational anxiety which is displayed in a well-defined situation (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a, 1994). It is not a trait anxiety or state anxiety; instead there is a common concept for language learning situation. Also, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986; p.128) view FLCA as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process”. MacIntyre & Gardner (1994) also made a similar description of the language anxiety as they stated that “Language anxiety can be defined as the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning” (p. 284). As seen, foreign language anxiety is perceived as a type of anxiety distinct from others. Scovel (1978) states that “Before we begin to measure anxiety, we must become

more cognizant of the intricate hierarchy of learner variables that intervene: the intrinsic/extrinsic factors, the affective/cognitive variables, and then the various measures of anxiety and their relationship to these other factors.” (p. 140)

It has been proven that foreign language classroom anxiety has effect on different kinds of skills. Much research has been conducted about four skills, however, the skill students mostly feel anxious is found to be speaking (Young, 1990; Ammara, 2011; Keramida, 2009). According to Young (1990), foreign language students find speaking as the most anxiety-creating situation. Zhang (2004) has found that there is a reverse relationship between language anxiety and oral performance; the higher the anxiety level, the lower the oral performance. It has been found that speaking in public is also an important issue for many people; Darly (1991, cited in Wörde, 2003) stated that in some cases the fear of giving a speech in public is far beyond the phobias such as fear of snakes, elevators and height. An anonymous student Young’s study (1990, p. 539) states his fear of speaking in the foreign language as “I dread going to Spanish class. My teacher is kind of nice and it can be fun, but I hate when the teacher calls on me to speak. I freeze up and can’t think of what to say or how to say it. And my pronunciation is terrible. Sometimes I think people don’t even understand what I am saying.”

Besides its definition, the causes behind the FLCA were also researched. Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) identify three main underlying reasons for foreign language anxiety: a) communication apprehension, b) test anxiety, and c) fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension is a term created by McCroskey (1977) and it is a type of shyness that occurs when somebody communicates with others. Test-anxiety is a type of fear about being unsuccessful, and the last one fear of negative evaluation is the fear about other people’s criticism about them. Considering these subcategories Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) prepared a scale, FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale), in order to measure the level of anxiety related to foreign language classrooms. In the study of Wörde (2003) the participants were asked about the reasons of FLCA and students identify many reasons such as speaking activities, inability to comprehend, negative classroom experiences, and fear of negative evaluation, native speakers, methodology, pedagogical practices, and the teachers themselves.

And research has shown that foreign language anxiety has some effects on foreign language learning. There are two contradictory views that the first one says anxiety is debilitating, the second one says it is facilitating. In Young’s study (1991), she makes interviews with some important figures from the area. In these interviews, Krashen says there is something named facilitating anxiety. According to Krashen, there is need for facilitating anxiety for conscious learning. However, in the same study of Young (1991), Hadley does not find it appropriate to create anxiety-producing situations. Apart from those, Scovel (1978, p. 138) states that “A good performance, in music, in sports, or in language learning, especially the overt social act of speaking, depends on enough anxiety to arouse the neuromuscular system to optimal levels of performance, but, at the same time, not so much that the complex neuromuscular systems underlying these skills are disrupted.” And he adds that “Facilitating anxiety motivates the learner to “fight” the new learning task; it gears the learner emotionally for approach behavior. Debilitating anxiety, in contrast, motivates the learner to “flee” the new learning task; it stimulates the individual emotionally to adopt avoidance behavior.” (Scovel, 1978, p. 139)

Language use is affected by a plenty of variables such as age, ethnicity, regional locations, social classes, and gender (Tran, 2010). In the literature, the relationship between language and gender has been firstly investigated by Lakoff (1973). In Dörnyei &

Clement's study (2001), they state research has proved evidence that male and female students have different systematic tendencies towards language studies. In the study of Mesri (2012) he finds that there is a strong relationship between FLCA and female students and weaker in males. In that study, fear of negative evaluation is shown as a very important cause of anxiety in the class. Öztürk & Gürbüz (2013) state that female students have higher motivation than male students, however females got more anxious while speaking in the class. Park & French (2013) have noted in their study that females have higher anxiety and higher grades, males have lower anxiety and lower grades. This suggestion conflicted with other research which has found a negative relationship between anxiety and achievement in different languages (Horwitz, 1986; Aida, 1994). On the other hand, Matsuda & Gobel (2004) also have concluded that gender does not have an important effect on general anxiety. The study of Week & Ferraro (2011) also does not support the hypothesis that males have a more negative view and lower aptitude towards language than females. Apart from these studies, an Iranian study by Mahmoodzadeh (2013) who investigated the situation between mixed-gender and matched-gender classrooms suggests that gender-based heterogeneity in foreign language classes can arise foreign language anxiety in Iranian language learners and that can result in some failures.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This research was conducted in two phases both quantitative and qualitative. In the quantitative part, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986) was used to determine the anxiety levels of the students and to investigate whether that results from communication apprehension, test-anxiety or fear of negative evaluation; in addition, the answer was sought that whether male or female students are more anxious in foreign language classes. Besides, according to FLCAS results, the students who were highly anxious and the ones with low anxiety were interviewed to get information about their feelings and thoughts about foreign language, the anxiety about the language and speaking activities.

3.2. Participants

There were 62 participants in this study, 32 male participants and 30 female participants. They were all 4th grade students in a primary school in Adana. This is their first year of learning English as a foreign language. Previous research was generally conducted with high school or university students; as a consequence there were not sufficient studies about young learners. In this respect, this study as a new source in literature may give some information about young learners' FLCA level and gender's effect on FLCA. Cluster random sampling and convenience sampling were been used while choosing the participants. All of the participants completed the FLCAS, also 4 most anxious and 4 least anxious students were interviewed about the reasons of FLCA.

3.3. Instruments

In the quantitative phase of the study, FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986) was used to get data about students' anxiety level. The questionnaire was developed by Horwitz and colleagues in 1986 aiming to measure anxiety levels in foreign language classrooms. It is a 5-point likert-type scale ranging from from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) including 33 items in it, 24 items are positively worded but 9 items are worded negatively. The theoretical range of this scale is from 33 to 165. The higher the total points are, the more

anxious the student is. The questionnaire reflects communication apprehension, test-anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Turkish version which had been translated by Dalkılıç (2001) was used in the study because students were young learners who were unable to comprehend the original questionnaire in English.

In terms of qualitative data collection, interview was conducted with 4 students who were most anxious among the participants and 4 students who were found to be least anxious. With these interviews students expressed their own feelings and thoughts about their anxiety in foreign language classroom, its reasons, speaking anxiety, and some possible solutions in their views. The interview was in Turkish as they were not proficient in English. With the help of these tools, it was expected to find some underlying reasons of FLCA and speaking anxiety specifically.

3.4. Procedure

3.4.1. Data Collection

Data collection was organized in two phases. In the quantitative phase, the data were gathered via the FLCAS. All 62 students (30 females, 32 males) filled in the questionnaire, they wrote their names on the scale because the most and least anxious students were intended to be identified for interviews. They filled in the questionnaire with the presence of language teacher, which may be a drawback.

In the qualitative phase of the data collection 4 most anxious and 4 least anxious students were asked to make an interview about the possible reasons behind their FLCA. They were asked to write their names on the questionnaire so they could be identified easily. The interviews were also made in Turkish because of students' proficiency level in English. After the interviews were made, they were analyzed and common reasons were identified.

3.4.2. Data Analysis

FLCAS was administered firstly; it a likert type scale with 5 options and has 33 items with. They were scored from 1 point (strongly disagree) to 5 points (strongly agree). 9 items (2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28 and 32) were negatively worded consequently they were scored reversely. The scores which were higher than 99 were accepted as higher levels of anxiety; and lower than 50 were accepted as lower levels of anxiety.

The data were analyzed with the help of statistical program SPSS. Means, standard deviations and significance were found with descriptive statistics, besides, Independent Samples t-test was used to compare female and male students' scores.

In terms of interview analysis common patterns were sought. There was not a clear-cut criterion for analysis of the interviews; as a result previous studies were also used to analyze the interviews.

4. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

In results part, firstly FLCAS' results were summited. All of the subjects completed the scale and regarding the means of two different genders, there was no statistically significant difference about their foreign language classroom anxiety; however, the overall mean score of males were higher than females in this study. This result contradicted the previous studies claiming that females were more anxious than males (Öztürk & Gürbüz,

2013; Mesri, 2012). In Table 1 it is clearly seen that both female and males students' FLCA means are close:

Table 1. Means of female and male students FLCA according to FLCAS

GENDER	FEMALE	MALE
MEAN	73,61	74,57

Scores which were higher than 99 were accepted as highly anxious and lower than 50 were accepted as low anxiety. In the study, there were 62 students; 32 of them were male and 30 of them were female. 11 out of 62 students scored higher than 99 and found to be highly anxious students. Among these, it was found that only 4 out of 30 females (13,3 %) and 7 out of 32 male students (21,8 %) scored higher than 99. This meant that the number of highly anxious male students in foreign language classroom was higher than females in that population, however overall mean among females and males are close to each other. There was more variety in the scores of males than the scores of female students. In addition, there were 11 students whose scores were lower than 50 and found to be lowly anxious students. Among these students 6 were females and 5 were males, it mean that 20 % of females students were lowly anxious and 15, 6 % of male students were lowly anxious. These results also showed that in this population female students had lower levels of FLCA. However, as it was stated above when we looked at the overall mean scores of females and mean scores of males, we see that there was not a considerable difference in terms of FLCA. In Table 2 the scores which were higher than 99 and lower than 50 were listed:

Table 2. The Scores of Highly Anxious Students and Students with Low Anxiety Scores

SCORES HIGHER THAN 99 (4 Females and 7 males)				SCORES LOWER THAN 50 (6 Females and 5 Males)			
FEMALE		MALE		FEMALE		MALE	
Sub19	145	Sub5	121	Sub60	39	Sub59	33
Sub41	145	Sub28	119	Sub29	41	Sub57	36
Sub31	127	Sub30	116	Sub43	42	Sub46	37
Sub7	117	Sub17	113	Sub27	45	Sub23	40
		Sub21	107	Sub32	49	Sub16	46
		Sub58	105	Sub33	49		
		Sub42	100				

In Table 2 it is seen that the majority in highly anxious students were males in number; however, in lowest scores there was not an important difference in number. Another point is that the highest score 145 belonged to two female students and the lowest score 33 belonged to a male student. Also 33 was the lowest score which was taken from the questionnaire results.

As it was said before there were 33 items in the questionnaire and it consisted of items about communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. In Table 3 below there are means and standard deviations of both females and males. These results were gathered from Independent Samples t-test. There were 12 items which were scored above the average (2.5, since highest score is 5). Among these items female students scored higher in 9 items while male students scored higher in 3 items.

Table 3. Results of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale According to Genders

Items	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	(Levene test) Sig.	(t-test) Sig. (2-tailed)																																																																																																																																																						
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	F	3,0000	1,70193	,044	,206																																																																																																																																																						
	M	2,500	1,36783			2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	F	2,4000	1,63158	,977	,696	M	2,5625	1,62516	3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	F	2,5333	1,67607	,378	,336	M	2,1250	1,64120	4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	F	2,2000	1,47157	,225	,544	M	2,4375	1,58496	5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	F	1,5000	1,30648	,117	,330	M	1,8438	1,43930	6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	F	1,5333	,89955	,006	,089	M	2,0625	1,45774	7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	F	2,1667	1,55549	,746	,639	M	2,3438	1,40528	8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	F	2,0333	1,51960	,867	,399	M	2,3438	1,35859	9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	F	2,4333	1,45468	,309	,928	M	2,4688	1,62609	10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	F	3,3667	1,51960	,455	,002	M	2,1250	1,51870	11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	F	2,4333	1,73570	,219	,933	M	2,4688	1,56544	12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	F	2,7333	1,65952	,770	,523	M	2,4688	1,58591	13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	F	2,1000	1,58332	,189	,444	M	1,8125	1,8125	14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	F	1,7667	1,22287	,189	,051	M	2,4688	1,54470	15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	F	3,2000	1,58441	,843	,181	M	2,6563	1,57827	16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	F	2,3667	1,58622	,505	,199	M	2,8750	1,49731	17. I often feel like not going to my language class.	F	1,5000	1,25258	,345	,499	M	1,7188	1,27594	18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	F	2,2333	1,69550	,145	,454
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Items	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	(Levene test) Sig.	(t-test) Sig. (2-tailed)																																																																																																																											
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	F	2,1000	1,51658	1,000	,469																																																																																																																											
	M	2,3750	1,45358			20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	F	2,9333	1,76036	,703	,587	M	2,6875	1,78592	21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	F	2,1000	1,64736	,893	231	M	2,5938	1,56286	22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	F	2,8667	1,83328	,921	,879	M	2,9375	1,81281	23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	F	2,4667	1,59164	,117	,366	M	2,1250	1,36192	24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	F	2,3000	1,72507	,161	,726	M	2,1563	1,48344	25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	F	2,0333	1,54213	,295	,319	M	2,4375	1,62516	26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	F	1,8000	1,42393	,395	,343	M	2,1563	1,50503	27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	F	2,2333	1,56873	,467	,569	M	2,4688	1,66529	28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	F	1,6333	1,32570	,292	,193	M	2,0938	1,42239	29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	F	2,9333	1,79911	,051	,427	M	2,5938	1,54208	30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	F	1,8333	1,28877	,344	,458	M	2,0938	1,44489	31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	F	1,8000	1,54026	,622	,587	M	2,0000	1,34404	32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	F	2,8000	1,73006	,654	,977	M	2,8125	1,67404	33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	F	2,7333	1,65952	,326	,164
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In table 3, Levene test showed that of 33 items, there were only 2 items showing meaningful variance ($p < 0.05$) between female and male students. These items were item 1 and item 6. Item 1 was "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class." Sig. is 0,044 in that item, females' mean was 3 and males' mean was 2.5. They were both higher than average and there was a difference in their variances. The high scores in that item showed that both female and male students hesitated to speak in foreign language classroom. The other item in which there was

significant difference in variances between females and males was item 6. Item six was “During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.” In that item sig. is 0,006; this meant that there was a considerable difference in the variances of females and males. Females’ mean was 1, 5; however, males’ was 2. In the item males were found to be more anxious. Except for these two items, there was not a significant variance between female and male students’ means in the questionnaire.

Also we had to take sig. (2-tailed) into consideration to see the equality of the means. There was only one item showing a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$); it was item 10. Item 10 was “I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.” In that item, female students’ mean was 3.3667 and male students’ mean was 2.1250. There was an important difference in terms of means of two groups in that item. This item was about test anxiety and means in that item showed us that female students had more test anxiety in a foreign language classroom. There was an item which was very close to p-value level: item 14. P-value of this item is 0.51 and the item was “I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.” In item 14 females’ mean was 1.7 and males’ mean was 2.4. They were both under the average; however, there was a difference in terms of means of two groups. This item was about communication apprehension and males were found to be more anxious than females in that respect.

Of 33 items in the questionnaire, 13 of the items had higher means than average. In Table 4, there are items in which participants had means higher than 2.5 :

Table 4. Means Which Are Higher Than Average (2.5)

Females		Males		Both (Females and Males)	
Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Means
Item 3	2,5333	Item 2	2,5625	Item 1	3,0000 (females) 2,5000 (males)
Item 10	3,3667	Item 16	2,8750	Item 15	3,2000 (females) 2,6563 (males)
Item 12	2,7333	Item 21	2,5938	Item 20	2,9333 (females) 2,6875 (males)
Item 33	2,7333			Item 22	2,8667 (females) 2,9375 (males)
				Item 29	2,9333 (females) 2,5938 (males)
				Item 32	2,8000 (females) 2,8125 (males)

As it is seen in four items (3, 10, 12 and 33) females had higher means, in three items (2, 16 and 21) and in 6 items (1, 15, 20, 22, 29 and 32) both females and males had higher means than average. Among the items in which both male and female students had high means, females had higher means than males in items 1, 15 20 and 29; on the other hand, males have higher means in item 22 and 33. When we look at the means of females over the average, item 3 and 33 were about communication comprehension, item 10 was about test anxiety and item 12 was about general FLCA. When we analyze males’ means which were over the average, item 2 was about fear of negative evaluation, item 16 was about general FLCA and item 21 was about test anxiety. Finally, in items in which both female and male students had means over the average item 1 is about general FLCA, 15, 20, 29 and 32 were about communication apprehension, 22 was about test anxiety.

In the qualitative phase, interview with 4 highly anxious and 4 lowly anxious students was conducted, interviews were analyzed and similar patterns were investigated. All the 8 students had positive attitudes towards foreign language classroom; a main reason of that positive attitude seems that they liked their teacher and learning a language made them feel good. When they were asked about disturbing side of foreign language classroom, low anxious students said they were not disturbed by any situation; however, highly anxious students said that they were afraid of making mistakes and exams. They were also afraid of the idea that their friends might laugh at them or make fun of them when they made mistakes in the classroom. One of the highly anxious students stated that "I feel like a loser and I feel weird." Students with low anxiety level emphasized that they did not feel anxious when they spoke in the foreign language; however, highly anxious students felt anxious and fearful when they spoke in English.

In discussion part, firstly research questions were handled. First question was about whether gender had any effect on anxiety in foreign language classrooms or not. It has been found according to FLCAS that there is not a considerable difference in terms of FLCA among males and females. The mean scores were very close to each other, however males were found to be slightly more anxious than the males even though it was not a statistically significant difference. The results supported the previous research results which claimed there was not considerable difference between males and females (Matsuba & Gobel, 2004; MacIntrye et al., 2002; Ferraro & Week, 2011).

Second research question was investigating gender factor in terms of FLCA, as it was stated above there was not a significant difference between them; however, males were a bit more anxious than females. Nevertheless, among the most anxious 4 students 3 of them were females, also among 4 lowest anxious students all of them were males. This may show that some female students have considerably high anxiety which raised the mean scores of the female population. Yet, males did not show such high scores; they were found to be anxious, nevertheless.

In research questions, third question was about reasons of FLCA. When we consider FLCAS and interview results, we can see that communication apprehension is a remarkable reason of FLCA. Students generally hesitate to speak in the classroom; one of the main reasons for this is that they fear if their friends make fun of them, similarly they have fear of negative evaluation. Also, in the interviews it was found that test anxiety is also another reason of FLCA. These reasons are parallel with the study of Horwitz and her colleagues (1986). A different reason of FLCA was stated by one of the highly anxious students, she says physical conditions also make her anxious in the classroom.

Finally, fourth research question was whether anxiety was increased by speaking activities or not. In the interview, highly anxious students all answered that they get anxious when they were asked to talk; one of them says "It is weird to talk in English, and I get anxious when I see my friends looking at me." This showed that speaking is an important source of FLCA and peers' evaluation was also found to be an anxiety provoking act. The suggestion that speaking is an important source of FLCA has been made by many studies (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013; Young, 1990; Wörde, 2003), this study also supports that claim.

In conclusion, this study found that there is not much difference between female and male students in terms of FLCA. Also, the scores are generally under the cut-offline for high anxiety. The reason of this can be that the students were 4th grade students and it was the first time they were exposed to a foreign language in classroom environment.

Previous studies (Wörde, 2003; Dörnyei & Clement, 2001; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004) were generally about high school or university students and in those studies they were found to be anxious, especially female students. However, in this study there was not such a result; one possible reason for this can be the young age of the students.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the gender factor in terms of FLCA and reasons of speaking anxiety in foreign language classroom. It was found that there is not a significant difference between the foreign language classroom anxiety levels of female and male students. Generally scores showed that participants were neither highly anxious nor with low anxiety level. However, males were found to be slightly more anxious than females when general means are compared; on the contrary, among highly anxious students majority were females and among students with low anxiety level majority was males. Some reasons of FLCA were found to be communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety and physical conditions in the classroom. In that respect, there is a lot to do for language teachers. If they can manage to create a relaxing atmosphere in the classroom, then students may not have fear of negative evaluation or communication apprehension. In addition, testing should not be summative traditional sit down exams because generally students have test anxiety; instead, language teachers should observe the students in the classroom and check their portfolio at the end of the term by reviewing the process of progress, so students will feel more relax and their test anxiety will lessen. Furthermore, classroom environment should be controlled and adjusted for the favor of students to reduce the anxiety provoking situations.

According to the results, speaking activities were seen as a source of FLCA, especially by highly anxious students. They stated that they got really anxious when they spoke in foreign language classroom. The main reason was found to be fear of negative evaluation as this was a big problem for most of the students. In order to solve this problem the language teacher should cooperate with parents of the students to encourage them. Moreover, in the classroom he/she can make students empathize with their friends to understand them.

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