

ANXIETIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

TEACHING: THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH

EACH OTHER¹

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Abstract

Anxiety is a common problem faced in English language teaching (ELT) and has been studied a lot in the literature related to anxiety and ELT. Most of these studies focused on types of anxieties (reading, listening, speaking, writing, and classroom anxiety) separately or dealt with two of them like listening and speaking anxieties together, but the literature showed that the relationship among all types of anxieties in Turkish ELT context has not been studied. Therefore, the present study aimed to find out the relationship(s) among all types of anxieties. The study adopted quantitative research method. Seventy Turkish students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) joined the study. Data were collected through five scales prepared to measure different types of anxieties in a language classroom. As the data were not distributed normally, Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to analyze the data. The results of the data showed that there is not a correlational relationship between four skill-oriented anxieties; but there is a correlational relationship between speaking anxiety and classroom anxiety. The results were discussed in terms of their implications in English language classrooms.

Key Words: *Types of anxieties, the relationship among all types of anxieties, English Language Teaching.*

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Introduction

It is possible that as an English language teacher, you may see your students having some difficulties in learning English. If you check the situation closely, you may find out that while some students can speak English, some may have difficulty in writing, while some can comprehend what they listen in English, some can not understand what they read in English or vice versa. One of the reasons why EFL students experience such difficulties is anxiety.

According to Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (n.d.), anxiety is "the state of feeling nervous or worried that something bad is going to happen" (n.p.) or "a worry or fear about something" (n.p.). The definitions indicate that anxiety leads to negative feelings which may affect a person's desire to do something or take action. As known, negative feelings are associated with failure, lose, and discouragement.

Accordingly, foreign language anxiety is a unique type of anxiety. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) assumed that foreign language anxiety has its own sets of feelings, behaviors, beliefs, and perceptions related to language learning in a classroom. Foreign language anxiety has negative effects on EFL students' language learning in terms of their cognitive development and academic performance related to overall classroom, listening, speaking, reading, or writing evaluation (Krashen, 1981; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Aida, 1994; Sellers, 2000; Chen & Lin, 2009; Bekleyen, 2009).

In addition, foreign language anxiety can be categorized as classroom, listening, reading, speaking, and writing anxiety. In classroom anxiety, EFL students' anxiety is related to overall classroom language learning. Each of the other four types of anxiety deals only with a specific skill like listening and writing. Each type of anxiety has its own sources and effects on EFL students' language learning. For example, if a student feels anxiety in writing, he/she may have negative writing experiences or form negative attitudes towards writing, so he/she may try to avoid any writing situation (Çınar, 2014).

Although the causes and effects of different types of anxiety have been known, the relationship(s) among all types of foreign language anxiety has/have not been studied in Turkish EFL context. According to the literature, there are few studies that searched such a relationship by focusing on two types of anxiety in English language classrooms in Turkey. In one of these studies, Capan and Karaca (2013) found out that there is a positive correlation between reading and listening anxieties. The higher levels of reading anxiety are the indicators of the higher level listening anxiety (Capan & Karaca, 2013). Also, Karaca (2012) reveals that reading and listening anxieties are positively correlated, so there is a positive relationship between them. In another study, Ateş (2013) searched the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and writing anxiety. Her research showed that there is a positive correlation between them, so if one is high, it means that the other one is high. Besides them, Kuru Gönen (2005) studied the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and reading anxiety. Her study indicated that they are positively correlated. In addition, Kılıç (2007) focused on the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and listening anxiety. The result of his study showed that there is a positive correlation between them. Finally, Koroğlu (2010) dealt with the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and reading anxiety. He found out that reading anxiety causes classroom anxiety.

As a result of this reason, the present study aimed to find out whether there is a relationship among four skill-oriented anxieties and among all types of foreign language anxiety in Turkish EFL context and to explain the relationship(s) if there is/are. Therefore, the present study tried to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship among foreign language writing, listening, speaking, and reading anxieties? If so, what kind of relationship(s) is/are it/they?
2. Is there a relationship among foreign language classroom, writing, listening, speaking, and reading anxieties? If so, what kind of relationship(s) is/are it/they?

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory. According to him (1981, 1982), there are five hypotheses that form the general theory. Two of these hypotheses are comprehensible input and affective filter hypotheses. A student needs comprehensible input in order to trigger acquiring a second language, but if he/she can not comprehend the input, acquisition can not occur (Krashen, 1981, 1982). There are some barriers such as demotivation, lack of self-confidence, and anxiety that avoid comprehensible input. These barriers form the basis of affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1981, 1982). Affective filter also has an effect on the student's language development because if the challenging input is not comprehended, then the student can not move to the stage of knowledge (Richards & Rogers, 2014). That is, $i+1$ does not work. These hypothetical assumptions form the theoretical framework of this study.

Methodology

Research Design

Hohmann (2006) mentions that a quantitative research aims to describe variables in terms of distribution or to infer significant generalizable relationship between variables. It can be done through things such surveys and experiments (Hohmann, 2006). Accordingly, the present study has a similar aim. That is, it aims to find out and describe the relationship(s) among all types of foreign language anxiety if there is/are. Therefore, it adopted quantitative research design.

According to Balcı (2010), correlational research design is employed to reveal the relationship between variables. The correlational relationship is explained by correlation coefficient in such studies, so the possible relationship between variables are tried to find out (Balcı, 2010). As a result, the aim of the present study led to the adaptation of correlational research design as a sub-framework of quantitative research.

Participants

Seventy Turkish EFL students participated the research online. Twenty-four out of seventy participants were male, and the rest were female. They considered their level of English as intermediate, and their ages were between 18 and 30. Their levels of anxieties were shown as mean scores in Table 1 below:

Table 1

The mean scores of the participants in terms of their anxiety levels of all types of foreign language anxiety

Number of Participants	Types of Anxiety	M
70	Classroom anxiety	95.8857
	Listening anxiety	101.342
	Speaking anxiety	85.542
	Writing anxiety	65.416
	Reading anxiety	49.6571

As Table 1 shows, the participants experienced a high level of classroom anxiety (Gültekin Çakar, 2009). Their anxiety level was high in listening as it is mentioned in Kılıç (2007). In terms of speaking anxiety, the participants had a moderate level of anxiety (Balemir, 2009). They had moderate level of writing anxiety (Ateş, 2013). In addition, their level of reading anxiety was also moderate (Kuru Gönen, 2005).

Data Collection Instruments

To collect data, the Turkish version of five anxiety scales were used. All of these scales were designed to measure a different type of foreign language anxiety. They were introduced shortly below:

1. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale: It was developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and translated into Turkish by Gültekin Çakar (2009). Its translated version has 33 items. The reliability coefficient of the translated version is 0.87. In this study, it is 0.758.

2. Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale: It was developed by Soito, Garza, and Horwitz (1999) and translated during Kuru Gönen's study (2005). There are 18 items in the translated version. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale in this study is 0.85.

3. Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale: It was developed by Kim (2000) and translated into Turkish by Kılıç (2007). The translated scale has 33 items, and its reliability coefficient is 0.93. It is 0.837 in this study.

4. Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale: It was developed by Huang (2004) and translated into Turkish by Balemir (2009). There are 28 items in the Turkish version of the scale. Its Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is 0.718 while it is 0.751 in this study.

5. Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory: It was developed by Cheng (2004) and translated into Turkish by Ateş (2013). The Turkish version of the scale has 22 items. Its reliability coefficient is 0.7 in this study.

Data Collection Procedure

An online research page was formed through Google Documents in order to collect data. The online page included the five scales in the following order: Classroom, reading, listening, speaking, and writing anxiety scales. The researcher had contacted with the admin of a Facebook page that serves as an online platform where Turkish EFL learners

come together, talk and share their English language learning experiences with each other. After the admin of the page gave permission to publish the link on the page, the research started in April, 2015. It lasted 5 months and ended in September, 2015.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS 20 for Mac. In order to decide which data analysis method was used, the five anxiety scales were analyzed whether the data in each of them distributed normally or not. The result of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results of each item in each scale were significant ($p < 0.05$), so the data were not distributed normally. As a result, one non-parametric test was used. It was Spearman's rank-order correlation.

Results

To remember, the present study had two research questions. They were as follow:

1. Is there a relationship among foreign language writing, listening, speaking, and reading anxieties? If so, what kind of relationship(s) is/are it/they?
2. Is there a relationship among foreign language classroom, writing, listening, speaking, and reading anxieties? If so, what kind of relationship(s) is/are it/they?

The Relationship(s) among Four Skill-Oriented Types of Foreign Language Anxiety

As Table 2 shows below, there is not a significant correlation among four skill-oriented types of foreign language anxiety. It is because the relationships among them are not significant at $p < 0.01$.

Table 2

Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficients among four skill-oriented anxieties

Types of anxiety	1	2	3	4
1. Speaking anxiety	--	-.187	.160	-.163
2. Writing anxiety	-.187	--	.46	.112
3. Listening anxiety	.160	.46	--	-.211
4. Reading anxiety	-.163	.112	-.211	--

The Relationship(s) among All Types of Foreign Language Anxiety

According to Table 3, there is a significant correlation between speaking anxiety and classroom anxiety at $p < .01$ while there is not any significant correlation between the others. The correlation between speaking and classroom anxieties indicates that the relationship is moderately positive ($r = 0.499$). That is, if an EFL student has a high level of classroom anxiety, she/he may have a high level of speaking anxiety or vice versa.

Table 3

Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficients between skill-oriented anxieties and foreign language classroom anxiety

Types of Anxiety	1	2	3	4	5
1. Speaking anxiety	--	-.187	.160	-.163	.499**
2. Writing anxiety	-.187	--	.46	.112	.024
3. Listening anxiety	.160	.46	--	-.211	-.52
4. Reading anxiety	-.163	.112	-.211	--	-.011
5. Classroom anxiety	.499**	.024	-.52	-.011	--

Note: Correlation marked with the asterisk (*) is significant at $p < .01$.

Discussions

In their studies, Capan and Karaca (2013) and Karaca (2012) found out that there is a positive correlation between reading and listening anxieties. The higher levels of reading anxiety are the indicators of the higher level listening anxiety (Capan & Karaca, 2013; Karaca, 2012). However, the present study indicated that listening and reading anxieties were not correlated with each other. Similarly, there was not a correlation among other skill-oriented anxieties.

Ateş (2013) studied the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and writing anxiety. Her research indicated that there is a positive correlation between them, so if one is high, the other one is high. But the result of present study did not support this finding.

Kuru Gönen (2005) searched the relationship between classroom anxiety and reading anxiety. She found out that they are positively correlated, which means that if a student has a high level of reading anxiety, he/she may experience high level of classroom anxiety. Also, Köroğlu (2010) investigated the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and reading anxiety. His findings revealed that reading anxiety causes classroom anxiety. On the other hand, the present study found out that these two types of anxiety were not correlated.

Kılıç (2007) searched the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and listening anxiety. His study revealed that there is a positive correlation between them. Nevertheless, the result of the present did not support this finding because according to the present study, the relationship between classroom anxiety and listening anxiety was not significantly correlated.

The only relationship that the present study found out is the one between classroom anxiety and speaking anxiety. The relationship is $r=0.499$, and it is moderately positive. That is, if an EFL student has a high level of speaking anxiety, he/she may experience high level of speaking anxiety or vice versa.

Conclusion

Anxiety is a common problem which may be experienced by anyone who learns a language or teaches a language. It may create some negative consequences in language classroom. For example, a learner may be demotivated to learn a language, can not develop the necessary cognitive skills well to learn a language, or may not perform well on language tests. All of which are supported by the literature.

As a teacher, it is important to be familiar with the concept of anxiety and know its possible effects on language learners because it is one of the affective barriers that affect language learning negatively (Krashen, 1981 and 1982). According to Krashen (1981 and 1982), language learners may be under the effect of some affective variables (motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence). These affective variables can increase or decrease the success of a language learner while acquiring the language because if the learner is highly motivated and self-confident, he/she is not under the effect of a mental block which makes input incomprehensible; however, if he/she is less motivated and self-confident, and more anxious, this mental block works and makes input incomprehensible (Krashen, 1981 and 1982). According to him, success in language acquisition is a result

of the ability to comprehend the input. Therefore, being aware of this will enable an English language teacher to find out ways to reduce anxiety in English language classes.

The present study indicated that four skill-oriented types of foreign language anxiety did not have any relationship with each other. That is, each type has its own unique sources and effects on EFL students' language learning. Each of them should be dealt with individually and given special attention. In addition, the present study found out only one correlational relationship between classroom anxiety and speaking anxiety. As a result, an English language teacher should understand and find out the sources of these two anxieties, so he/she can develop ways to reduce anxiety in English language classroom. By following these ways, an English language teacher can trigger the i+1 principle for and Zone of Proximal Development of his/her EFL students.

Despite them, the present study is a small scale study. Its results can not be generalized for the whole Turkish EFL context. However, the way it searched foreign language anxiety and analyzed the relationship among them may enable an English language teacher to understand the underlying reasons for having demotivated and disengaged EFL students in his/her classroom or for having low-achieving EFL students.

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