



Speaking anxiety among Turkish EFL learners: The case at a state university¹

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Abstract

This study investigated the level, major causes, determining factors of foreign language speaking anxiety and students' perceptions of it in a Turkish EFL context. Pre-intermediate students (N=383) of an English preparatory program at a state university participated in the study. The data regarding the level of EFL speaking anxiety were collected through a questionnaire, and then, randomly selected participants (N=19) were interviewed to get in-depth data on speaking anxiety. The quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, and the qualitative data were analyzed via content analysis. Although the results of the quantitative data revealed that students experienced a low level of EFL speaking anxiety, the quantitative data demonstrated that most of the students perceive speaking skill as an anxiety provoking factor. It was also found that pronunciation, immediate questions, fears of making mistakes and negative evaluation are the major causes of EFL speaking anxiety. Finally, the present study puts forward that foreign language speaking anxiety is a separate phenomenon with its own sources, aspects, variables and effects on learners.

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1. Introduction

In every learning environment, human psychology plays a significant role. Foreign language learning is also one of the domains that is highly affected by human psychology. In the literature, several research studies (Chastain, 1975; Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1990; Samimy & Tabuse, 1992; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Schumann, 1999; Zhanibek, 2001) revealed that psychological factors play an important role in language learning process. All these studies put forward the remarkable influence of affective factors on language learning process. These affective factors include several features such as efficacy, empathy, and introversion (Brown, 1994).

Research on the relationship between foreign language learning and affective variables generally focuses on a number of personality factors such as self-esteem, risk-taking, extroversion, motivation and anxiety (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). In the process of language learning, these qualities may have positive or negative effects. One of those qualities is anxiety, which is an important part of the affective domain and has been a research area in foreign language teaching field for so long.

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2. Theoretical background

2.1. Foreign language anxiety

The current literature abounds with definitions of anxiety. One common definition is that it refers to an unpleasant emotional condition characterized feelings of tension and apprehension (Spielberger, 1983). With these negative connotations, anxiety is one of the prominent factors in all kinds of learning. For that reasons, it can be associated with foreign language learning which is a process highly dominated by affective variables. This association leads to a new term called foreign language anxiety.

Foreign language anxiety, which is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon (Young, 1990), can be defined as “the subjective feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening and learning” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1993, p. 284). Being the first to treat foreign language anxiety as a separate phenomenon, Horwitz et al. (1986) define foreign language anxiety as “a distinct complex of self perceptions, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p.127). Based on empirical data and anecdotal evidence, they proposed a theory on language learning anxiety. This foreign language anxiety theory has three interrelated components; communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Communication apprehension is defined by Horwitz et al. (1986) as “a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people” (p. 127). Fear of negative evaluation refers to the “apprehension about others’ evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (p. 128). Finally, test anxiety covers the tests and examinations of the language learning process and defined as “a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure” (p. 128).

The effect of this model led to a number of studies which have been carried out on the effects of foreign language anxiety on language learning. One of these studies was conducted by Horwitz (1991). The findings of this study carried out on Spanish and French students revealed that students with high levels of anxiety received lower course grades than the students with lower levels of anxiety. In a similar study which analyzed American students learning Japanese, Aida (1994) found that anxious students got lower grades than their calmer counterparts did.

Ying (1993) carried out a study to investigate the effects of foreign language anxiety on English learning with senior high school students in northern Taiwan. The results showed that a slightly difficult test in classroom atmosphere would increase the level of students’ anxiety and influence their language proficiency. In her study, it was also reported that facilitating anxiety did not much help to increase students’ language proficiency. In addition to this, Saito and Samimy (1996) found out that foreign language anxiety can have a negative impact on Japanese learners’ performance and the influence of foreign language anxiety becomes more important as learners’ instructional level increases.

A different study was carried out by Djigunovic (2006) on Croatian undergraduate EFL learners to investigate the effects of language anxiety on language processing. The findings of her study revealed that students with high levels of language anxiety produce smaller amounts of continuous speech in L2 and they make longer pauses while speaking compared to students with low levels of language anxiety.

Depending on the explanatory power of this foreign language anxiety model, researchers in this area became interested in conducting research studies on anxiety and language skills. Among language skills, speaking attracted the most attention and a new term, foreign language speaking anxiety, has emerged.

2.2. Foreign language speaking anxiety

Speaking is a productive one among four language skills. In today's language classrooms, students try to improve this productive skill in many ways. They perform orally in front of a group, and they make oral presentations or participate in group discussion. They are sometimes called on to speak by their teacher in the target language. All these challenging speaking tasks may sometimes influence the learners and cause such sentences uttered by the learners:

“I always feel nervous when speaking English”.

“I feel bad in my mind because I wonder why I can't speak English very well.”

“My English appear is not good enough; I can't express very well.”

“Sometimes I feel stupid, some people look at me, a strange man, cannot speak good.”

(Tanveer, 2007, p. 1)

Students in foreign language classrooms generally report that speaking in the target language is the most anxiety producing experience. According to Young (1990), speaking activities requiring in front of class and on spot performance produce the most anxiety from the students' perspective and learners experience more anxiety over speaking than other language skills.

Several research studies have been carried out related to students' foreign language speaking anxiety. In his study, Price (1991) found that speaking in front of their peers is a very anxiety provoking activity for the foreign language learners because the learners were concerned about making mistakes in pronunciation and being laughed at. Koch and Terrell (1991) found similar findings concerning students' speaking anxiety. They claimed that activities examined in the Natural Approach such as oral presentations, role-playing, defining words are the most anxiety producing ones.

Huang (2004) investigated speaking anxiety among EFL non-English university students in Taiwan, and found that students experience a high level of speaking anxiety. In their large scale research study that is carried out on 547 Chinese EFL students, Liu and Jackson (2008) concluded that students experience anxiety in speaking and foreign language anxiety is a powerful predictor for unwillingness to communicate in foreign language classes. In addition, in their qualitative study Tsiprakides and Keramida (2009) analyzed fifteen third-grade Greek students who ranged in age between from 13 to 14. They found that six students experience English language speaking anxiety due to the fear of negative evaluation from their peers and perception of low ability compared to their peers.

In her study, Dalkılıç (2001) investigated the correlation between students' foreign language anxiety levels and their achievement in speaking courses. She conducted her study on 126 Turkish freshman EFL learners and benefited from both qualitative and quantitative data. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between the students' anxiety levels and their success in speaking classes. In addition, Ay (2010) found that students reported anxiety in an advanced level in productive skills. The participants of the study reported that their anxiety occurs most when they are required to speak without being prepared in advance. Moreover, in his study which focuses on the relationship between proficiency level and degree of foreign language speaking anxiety in a Turkish EFL context, Balemir (2009) revealed that Turkish EFL university students experience a moderate level of speaking anxiety in their language classes. Furthermore, Saltan (2003) investigated the EFL speaking anxiety in terms of both students' and teachers' perspectives. The findings of her study indicated that students experience a certain degree of EFL speaking anxiety, but the intensity of it is not disturbingly high.

As stated above, though there are a substantial number of studies in literature carried out to reveal the level of EFL speaking anxiety experienced by learners, few of them provides an insight on the unique nature of it, and a deep understanding of this phenomena is missing in the literature. For that reason, the present study aims to present a broad understanding of EFL speaking anxiety. In the light of this theoretical background and the objectives, the current study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Do the Turkish university students in English preparatory program experience EFL speaking anxiety in language classrooms? If so, what is the level of it?
2. How do the students perceive EFL speaking anxiety and what are the major causes of it?

3. Methodology

3.1. Design and setting of the study

This study examines foreign language speaking anxiety in a Turkish EFL context. In this study, both qualitative and quantitative data were utilized by the researchers because they believe that having data which have been collected through different methods provide more reliable results and reduce potential biases. Qualitative data were gathered through face to face interviews, and quantitative data were collected by a questionnaire.

This study was conducted at an English preparatory program which is a compulsory one aiming to develop the English skills of students for their academic programs. There are 28 instructors working in this program and 650-700 students on average every year. Students have 25 hours of English every week. English is taught integratively in English preparatory program. They study 15 hours main course and 10 hours of writing and reading skills with a different instructor. Speaking activities are generally conducted in main course based on the guidance of the course book used in classes.

3.2. Participants

The participants of the study included 383 pre-intermediate students, 225 female and 158 male, of an English preparatory program at a state university. Their ages ranged between 17 and 22, and they were in their first year at university. Although they were all learning English in the preparatory program of the university, the students were from different departments such as business administration, economics, tourism management, chemistry, physics and biology.

3.3. Data collection instruments

3.3.1. Foreign language speaking anxiety questionnaire

Foreign language speaking anxiety questionnaire was designed by selecting 18 items from 33 items of FLCAS developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). After a detailed review of literature, these 18 items were decided to be directly related to foreign language speaking anxiety. This relationship was also proved by the study conducted by Saltan (2003). For that reason, these items written in foreign language speaking anxiety questionnaire (see Appendix) were used to investigate whether students experienced speaking anxiety and the degree of it.

In order to prevent any misunderstanding of the statements, translated version of the items were administered to the participants. The version translated by Saltan (2003) through back translation was also examined by the researchers and a research assistant having his PhD in translation. In the current

study, the internal consistency of foreign language speaking anxiety questionnaire (FLSAQ) was found as .91, which shows that the instrument has a high reliability coefficient.

3.3.2. Interview questions

After a detailed examination of literature, the researchers prepared an interview protocol in order to get in-depth data about EFL speaking anxiety experienced by the learners in language classrooms. The interview protocol consisted of five open-ended questions which were supposed to provide valuable information for this study in the sense that the questions gave an opportunity to students to express themselves freely. In addition to this, the researchers believed that these interview questions would provide qualitative support for the statistical analyses. The interviews were semi-structured and some prompts were prepared and asked to participants in order to encourage them to elaborate on their ideas. The questions were piloted with three students and their feedback was taken to make the questions more clear and understandable for the interviewees. Finally, the interviews were conducted in their mother tongue in order to prevent any bias and help students express themselves better.

3.4. Data analysis

In this study, a 5-graded Likert scale was used to collect quantitative data. The quantitative data were compiled and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 17.0 was used to analyze these data through descriptive statistics.

The qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews carried out with 19 students to get in-depth data and have a broad understanding about their potential EFL speaking anxiety. After the interviews were transcribed by the researchers and translated with the help of an expert on translation, the data were analyzed through content analysis. The common and significant points, themes and patterns were found in the data. The themes were cross-checked and coded by the researchers to ensure inter-rater reliability. Then, these coherent patterns were categorized, and the frequencies were presented for each question.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. The level of EFL speaking anxiety

The first research question of the study investigated the level of EFL speaking anxiety that the students experience. To measure the level of speaking anxiety, a questionnaire having 18 items was used. Since the questionnaire is a 5-graded Likert scale, the total score ranged from 18 to 90. A total score of more than 72 demonstrated a high level of speaking anxiety; a total score ranged from 54 to 72 presented a moderate level of speaking anxiety, and participants who had a total score less than 54 showed a low level of foreign language speaking anxiety.

To determine the level of foreign language speaking anxiety of the participants, the mean scores were computed through descriptive statistics. The statistical results presented in Table 1 and 2 reveal that the students at the program generally experience a low level of EFL speaking anxiety.

Table 1. The level of foreign language speaking anxiety

Foreign language Speaking Anxiety	
Mean	51.19

Table 2. Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

	Percentages	Frequencies
Low level of speaking anxiety	58	222
Moderate level of speaking anxiety	30.3	116
High level of speaking anxiety	11.7	45
Total	100	383

The reason behind this low level of speaking anxiety may be the awareness of the fact that being able to speak English in Turkey is a distinct advantage in most of the areas. For this reason, they try to improve their speaking ability eagerly in their language classes and so, experience a low level of anxiety.

4.2. Students' perceptions of EFL speaking anxiety

Question 1: Do you think speaking English is an anxiety provoking factor in language learning process?

The first question examined the students' perception of speaking English in terms of anxiety. The students were asked, during the interviews, whether speaking English was an anxiety provoking factor for them in this language learning process.

Table 3. Students' perception of speaking in terms of anxiety

	Frequency
An anxiety provoking factor	15
Not an anxiety provoking factor	4

On the contrary to the quantitative results which showed that students got anxious in a low level while speaking English, more than a third of students being interviewed reported that speaking English is an anxiety provoking factor in language classrooms. Interviewee 18, who regarded speaking as an anxiety provoking factor, stated that:

“In my opinion, definitely yes. Whenever I want to speak in the lesson, my heart starts to beat very fast and I feel as if I am going to faint. Because of this, I can't finish my sentences most of the time and I sit down.”

Another student, Interviewee 15, told that:

“I think speaking is the most anxiety provoking activity in the lessons. While I am speaking, I get anxious and make a lot of mistakes. As I make mistakes, I lose my enthusiasm and do not want speak again.”

As the sentences uttered by the students illustrate, speaking is perceived as an anxiety provoking factor by most of the students in language learning process. This finding shows parallelism with several studies which reveal that speaking is a source of anxiety. In her study investigating the students' perspectives on speaking and anxiety, Young (1990) maintains that activities requiring speaking performances are the most anxiety provoking ones for students. Moreover, Price (1991) revealed that speaking in front of their peers in the class is anxiety provoking factor for students because they are afraid of making mistakes or being laughed at. Moreover, in their study, Horwitz et. al. (1986) who studied foreign language anxiety as a separate phenomenon found that speaking was perceived by students as the most threatening aspect of language learning. Regarding the findings of these studies which are supported by the finding of this study, it can be said that speaking English is an anxiety provoking factor in this learning process for the Turkish university students.

On the other hand, four students reported that speaking is not an anxiety provoking factor in language learning process. Among these students, Interviewee 1 stated that:

“I do not think that speaking is an anxiety provoking factor but it may affect the motivation. I mean, if you get anxious while speaking, your motivational level may decrease.”

The sentences uttered by this student may serve as an illustration of the negative correlation between speaking anxiety and motivation demonstrated by the findings of this study. It can also be concluded that some students may be aware of this negative correlation between these two affective variables.

Another sentence uttered by one of the students who thought that speaking is not an anxiety provoking factor illustrates another aspect of speaking anxiety:

“I am not sure whether it is anxiety or not, but what I feel makes me more careful while I am speaking. I speak more carefully to make correct sentences. In a short time, as much as I speak, this feeling begins to decrease.”

The feeling that the student is talking about may be a proof of facilitating anxiety. Facilitating anxiety influences the learner in a positive, motivating way. It may also help students do better than they might and it might keep the students poised and alert. For this reason, it can be concluded that speaking anxiety may have a facilitating effect on students which make them more careful and alert while speaking English.

Question 2: What kinds of situations cause stress or anxiety on you while speaking English?

This question aimed to identify the situations in which students experience stress and anxiety while speaking English. Several situations and reasons were uttered by the students and most of the students reported more than one situation and reason that cause stress and anxiety while they are speaking English. The situations reported by the students are: forgetting or not remembering appropriate words, not being prepared in advance for speaking, pronouncing the words incorrectly, being exposed to immediate questions, speaking in front of the class, knowing the turn is coming, not managing to make sentences. The frequencies of these situations are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Situations causing anxiety for students while they are speaking English

Codes	Frequency
When I forget or cannot remember appropriate words	7
When I am not prepared in advance for speaking	9
When I cannot pronounce the words correctly	6
When I am exposed to immediate questions	7
When I have to speak in front of the class	4
When I cannot make sentences	5
When I know that my turn is coming	5

The results revealed that there are several situations that cause anxiety on students while they are speaking. The close frequency of the reported situations by the students being interviewed demonstrates that all the reasons have a significant influence on students' speaking anxiety. When the answers to this question are examined in detail, it can be seen that the codes “When I am not prepared in advance for speaking” and “When I am exposed to immediate questions” have the highest frequencies. Interviewee 6, who is one of the owners of this answer, state that:

“I get very anxious when I am not prepared to speak. For example, our teacher sometimes asks questions immediately such as “Yes, (Interviewee 6). What do you think about....?”. At this moment, I get incredibly anxious and do not know what and how to say. It is a very bad situation for me.”

Depending on this result, it can be concluded that not being prepared for speaking is a significant cause of their speaking anxiety for students at English preparatory program. In addition to this, both of the items above reveal that students are not happy with immediately asked questions which force them to speak without preparation. Instead, it can be concluded that students feel more comfortable and relaxed to speak English if they are given some time to get prepared for speaking or arrange what to say.

Another important point of this interview question is put forward by the codes “When I forget or cannot remember appropriate words” and “When I cannot pronounce the words correctly” and their high frequencies. These items and their high frequencies reveal that causes of foreign language speaking anxiety experienced by the students may have word knowledge origins. In other words, it can be concluded that trying to find the appropriate vocabulary items and pronounce them correctly at the same time cause anxiety on students while they are speaking English. Their focus on this struggle rather than the speaking itself may create an anxiety provoking mood.

The last point that should be discussed for this question is the code “When I have to speak in front of the class” which has the least frequency among other codes. Although there are several studies in the literature (Price, 1991; Koch & Terrel, 1991; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009; Young, 1990) which demonstrated “speaking in front of the class or peers” as a primary cause for speaking anxiety, the result of this interview question reveals that Turkish students do not regard this cause as a major one for their EFL speaking anxiety. This may be originated from the fact that students are concerned with the other causes of speaking anxiety mentioned above and the reactions of their friends are of secondary importance for them.

Question 3: For you, what are the reasons for this anxiety?

The third question of the interviews asked students the reasons for the anxiety they experience while speaking English. The students reported several points that they regarded as the reasons for speaking anxiety. These reasons were grouped in three categories and presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The reasons for foreign language speaking anxiety

	Codes	Frequency
Educational	I do not have enough practice of speaking	2
	I did not have a good English education	1
Individual	Being afraid of making mistakes	3
	I am learning a language that I am not familiar with	7
	Lack of self-confidence for speaking English	3
	I do not know how to say what I think	5
Environmental	Classroom atmosphere	2
	To speak in front of others	2
	Potential reaction of the other students on my speaking performance	3

According to the students' answers, it can be seen that there are several basic reasons for speaking anxiety and these reasons can be classified under three headings as educational, individual and environmental.

Depending on the results of this question, it is understood that the reasons for foreign language speaking anxiety mainly result from individual factors. Among these individual factors, the code "I am learning a language that I am not familiar with" has the highest frequency. That means Turkish students perceive English as a phenomena that they are unfamiliar with and trying to express themselves via this unfamiliarity forms a basic reason for speaking anxiety. On this issue, Interviewee 6 stated that:

"Actually we are learning a language that we do not know. I mean, we are foreign to that language and it is very difficult to express yourself in this language. We are trying to learn it and we have never heard this language before. For this reason, I get anxious when I speak and I think that is quite normal."

Furthermore, the code "I do not know how to say what I think" is seen as a remarkable reason for speaking anxiety with its high frequency. This code reveals two perspectives. The first one is that students, individually, make an effort for how to say what they think while they are speaking. If they experience a failure in this effort and cannot say what they think, this failure creates an anxiety for the next time. Secondly, it can be said that students get anxious while speaking English when they are not proficient enough to speak English or they are not equipped with the necessary structures and word knowledge. For this reason, students should not be forced to express themselves in the target language unless they are proficient enough to do so or they are equipped with the necessary structures and word knowledge of the current topic being covered in the classroom. In addition to this, it is found out that "being afraid of making mistakes" and "lack of self-confidence" are other individual factors which are regarded by students as basic reasons for speaking anxiety.

Other factors that are reported to be the basic reasons for speaking anxiety are in environmental group. This group of factors revealed that environmental reasons which are reported to be the reasons for students' EFL speaking anxiety are mainly related to other students in class. Speaking in front of other students and their potential reactions to the speaking performance of an individual constitute some basic reasons for speaking anxiety. With this result, the importance of having a sincere atmosphere in class, in which students help each other and do not look down on other students because of their speaking performance, comes into light.

The last group of factors which has the lowest frequency is the educational factors. Some students reported that "not having enough practice of speaking" and "not having a good English education" are basic factors for their speaking anxiety. It is seen that some Turkish students in EFL classrooms question their language learning background and the ones who think that their background was not beneficial enough for them, regard it as a basic reason for speaking anxiety.

Question 4: Do you worry about making mistakes while speaking?

The worry of making mistakes while speaking is one of the reasons that cause anxiety for students. This interview question aimed to investigate whether the participants worried about making mistakes while speaking. The results related to this question were presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Students' worry about making mistakes while speaking

		Frequency
Yes, I worry about making mistakes	Pronunciation	7
	vocabulary	3
No, I do not worry about making mistakes		5
I sometimes worry about making mistakes		4

The results of this question revealed that slightly more than fifty percent of the students worry about making mistakes while speaking English. Seventy percent of these students reported that they worry about making pronunciation mistakes most while thirty percent of them worry about making vocabulary mistakes. Depending on this, it can be concluded that pronouncing the vocabulary items correctly can be a source of EFL speaking anxiety for language learners in classrooms. While speaking in the classroom atmosphere, students try to pronounce the words correctly and they are aware of the fact that it is quiet probable to mispronounce a vocabulary item. This awareness may lead to a fear of making pronunciation mistake and it may result in anxiety for speaking. For this reason, language instructors should dictate their students that mispronouncing the vocabulary items is a quiet normal mistake in this learning process and these mistakes should be regarded as a learning step for better speaking skill rather than a source for speaking anxiety.

On the other hand, thirty percent of the students being interviewed reported that they do not worry about making mistakes while speaking English. On this issue, interviewee 2 stated that:

“No, I don't. I don't mind making mistakes because we are learning a foreign language and I think it is a very normal thing.”

It can be seen that some students do not worry about making mistakes while speaking English. They regard the mistakes as a normal part of this learning process. Language instructors can benefit from these students. Integrating this kind of students with the ones who worry about making mistakes and get anxious may be a good example of peer collaboration. This integration may help anxious students in changing their perception of making mistakes and overcoming their anxiety.

Finally, the results revealed that twenty percent of students sometimes worry about making mistakes while speaking English. The common point that these students reported is that the atmosphere of the classroom is influential on the level of their worry. The situation is clear in the sentences of Interviewee 13:

“Sometimes. (prompt). I mean it is related to the class atmosphere. When everybody tries to do something and participates in the lesson, I don't worry but when the atmosphere is funny and my friends make jokes with the speaking performance of others, I worry about making mistakes.”

According to this, it can be concluded that the atmosphere of the classrooms may have a negative or positive effect on the level of students' worry about making mistakes. As a result, the importance of the class atmosphere comes into light because, as it is seen, it may even affect students' perception of mistakes in this learning process.

Question 5: Do you worry about the evaluation and reaction of your friends on your speaking performance?

One of the factors causing speaking anxiety is the reaction or evaluation of other students. The fifth question aimed to investigate whether students worried about the reactions or evaluation of their friends while speaking English. The results depending on the answers of students to this question are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Students' worry about the reactions of their friends while speaking

	Frequency
Yes, I worry about the reactions of my friends	9
No, I do not worry about the reactions of my friends	6
I sometimes worry about the reactions of my friends	4

The results demonstrated that nearly thirty percent of the students do not worry about the reactions of their friends. They reported that they do not care what their friends do or say and they just focus on speaking. Some of these students, as Interviewee 1, told that they felt as if there is only him/her in the classroom.

“When I begin to speak, I feel there is only me and my teacher in the class. I just try to say what I want to say, finish my sentence and sit down. I don't care what my friends are doing or saying on my speaking or pronunciation.”

On the other hand, about fifty percent reported that they worry about the reactions of their friends. Some of them told that they were very afraid to be laughed at or to be a comic figure in front of the class and they sometimes did not want to speak because of this. The common point of these students is that this worry affects their speaking performance and result in a kind of anxiety provoking situation. Interviewee 18 stated on this issue that:

“Unfortunately, I am quiet worried about what my friends do or say on my speaking. I am always afraid of being laughed at by them if I pronounce a word incorrectly. I hate them laughing at me. For this reason, I sometimes do not want to answer a question even if I know the answer.”

As it is seen in the results of this interview question, the reaction of other students or peers may affect some students and cause anxiety provoking situations, and this negative effect should be minimized in classroom atmosphere. In addition to this, further research studies just focusing on the effect of other students on anxiety should be carried out to reach better results.

4.3. Overall discussion of the interviews

Five interview questions were prepared to obtain data regarding foreign language speaking anxiety. Thanks to these questions, several themes regarding speaking anxiety have emerged. In this part, these emerging themes are discussed.

4.3.1. EFL speaking anxiety as a separate phenomenon

The interviews revealed that speaking skill makes students feel anxious in the classroom atmosphere. That means, speaking English is perceived as an anxiety provoking factor by the learners on its own. On this point, Interviewee 7 stated that:

“We do a lot of things in the class but in my opinion, speaking is the most anxiety provoking one. (prompt). I don't know why but whenever I want to speak, I feel something bad that I cannot describe. I

cannot be sure what I am saying due to this feeling. I just say something correct or incorrect and sit down at the end. The problem is that I will feel the same thing for the next time.”

As the sentences demonstrate, EFL speaking anxiety is a separate phenomenon affecting the feelings and performances of learners. In addition to this, answers of the students to the other questions of the interviews revealed that speaking anxiety has several aspects, reasons, variables and results which are unique and specific to the nature of this phenomenon. For this reason, it can be concluded that EFL speaking anxiety should be focused on and studied separately in future research studies.

4.3.2. Spontaneous speaking: A primary situation causing speaking anxiety on learners

One of the interview questions revealed that speaking spontaneously is the most common situation in which students get anxious. In other words, students being interviewed reported that they experience anxiety most when they have to speak without being prepared in advance and when they are exposed to instant questions by their teachers. The sentences above illustrate the issue:

“I get very anxious when I am not prepared to speak. For example, our teacher sometimes asks questions immediately such as “Yes, (Interviewee 6). What do you think about.....?”. At this moment, I get incredibly anxious and do not know what and how to say. It is a very bad situation for me.” (Interviewee 6)

“When our teacher asks questions and waits for the answer, I get incredibly anxious. I think it would be better if she gave us a little time to think.” (Interviewee 11)

As the thoughts of students demonstrate, being unprepared for speaking, or spontaneous speaking causes anxiety on learners. When the students are asked instant questions or required to speak without any preparation, they get more anxious. For this reason, it can be understood that students feel more comfortable and become less anxious for speaking when they are given some time to arrange their ideas, think and get prepared for speaking. Therefore, language instructors should take this into consideration and integrate it to their oral activities.

4.3.3. Sources of foreign language speaking anxiety

After the analysis of student interviews, the obtained results revealed that foreign language speaking anxiety arises from three major factors. These are fear of making mistakes, a perfectionist attitude and reactions of other students.

The fear of making mistakes

Answers of students to the during the interviews demonstrated that most of the students in language classrooms are afraid of making mistakes while speaking English and this fear makes them feel anxious. On this issue, interviewee 10 stated that:

“Yes, I worry about making mistakes. (prompt). Especially, I am afraid of making pronunciation mistakes, and sometimes, I don’t want to speak when I’m not sure about the correct pronunciations.

As it is seen, fear of making mistakes is a significant factor that causes EFL speaking anxiety on learners. It may discourage students to speak in the classroom atmosphere. It can be concluded that overcoming this fear may decrease the level of speaking anxiety that students experience while speaking. For this reason, language instructors should teach their students that making mistakes is quite normal in a learning process and change students’ perspective for mistakes. Thanks to that, students will be aware of the fact that making mistakes is not a weakness but a learning step and that will help them overcome the anxiety they have for speaking.

The perfectionist attitude

One of the interview questions brought a significant theme into light regarding students' speaking performance. It was found that students had a perfectionist attitude which can be defined as their tendency to reach the correct result. In the answers of the students being interviewed, it is seen that students experience speaking anxiety due to this perfectionist attitude. They get anxious when they cannot pronounce the words correctly or when they cannot make correct sentences. The sentences of Interviewee 9 illustrate this issue:

“... I also get anxious when I cannot make correct sentences. I want to express myself with correct sentences. Besides, I want to pronounce the words correctly, but I cannot achieve this most of the time. I suppose trying to make everything correctly makes me nervous and anxious.”

The sentences above provide a good example of the perfectionist attitude. It is seen that students tend to produce grammatically correct sentences with contextually appropriate and correctly pronounced vocabulary items. Since achieving all these variables correctly, in other words producing perfect sentences, is a challenging performance, students feel anxious while speaking. They fully concentrate on producing correct words and sentences, and a probable mistake or a disappointment makes them anxious for the next speaking performance. Since it is clear that this perfectionist attitude may result in anxiety and have negative effects on students, it should be decreased or prevented by consultations and advices of language teachers.

Peer effect: Reactions of other students

Research (Ay, 2010; Horwitz et al., 1986; Noormohamadi, 2009; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009) in the literature revealed that fear of negative evaluation by others is one of the major sources of speaking anxiety. Qualitative data showed parallelism with those studies. Answers of the students demonstrated that reactions of other students to the speaking performance of a student play a remarkable role on EFL speaking anxiety he/she experiences. At this point, the statements of some students provide a clear illustration:

“Unfortunately, I am quiet worried about what my friends do or say on my speaking. I am always afraid of being laughed at by them if I pronounce a word incorrectly. I hate them laughing at me. For this reason, I sometimes do not want to answer a question even if I know the answer.” (Interviewee 18)

“I would feel comfortable and participate in speaking activities in a class in which other students do not laugh when we make a mistake or interrupt us when we are speaking.” (Interviewee 4)

As it is seen in the sentences of students, reactions of other students, namely peer effect, play a remarkable role on the anxiety students experience while speaking. Students are afraid of being laughed, negatively evaluated or interrupted by their friends in the classroom atmosphere. For these reasons, they get anxious to speak the target language in the classroom atmosphere. Depending on this, it can be concluded that minimizing this peer effect in language classrooms may help students get less anxious for speaking and accordingly they would be more eager and willing to participate in oral activities.

5. Conclusions

The present study examined EFL speaking anxiety through the perspectives of Turkish university students in an intensive language learning context. The level of EFL speaking anxiety experienced by the students was identified via a questionnaire and 19 students were also interviewed for a deeper analysis of this anxiety. The results of the quantitative data revealed that students of this study generally experienced a low level of EFL speaking anxiety in their classrooms. On the other hand, the

qualitative data demonstrated significant points regarding EFL speaking anxiety, and these points are taught to provide a guiding way for teachers to understand their students' anxiety in the speaking activities. Finally, in addition to putting forward that EFL speaking anxiety may be a separate phenomenon other than general foreign language anxiety and it should also be investigated in other contexts, the current study presents the following points as a conclusion for the analysis of that anxiety:

- speaking skill is perceived as an anxiety-provoking factor by most of the students,
- EFL speaking anxiety may have a facilitative effect which makes students more careful while speaking,
- students get more anxious when they speak without being prepared in advance and when they are exposed to immediate questions,
- EFL speaking anxiety may cause lack of self confidence and giving up speaking in classroom atmosphere,
- Factors causing EFL speaking anxiety can be grouped under three headings as individual, environmental and educational. Individual reasons such as not being familiar with the target language, lack of self-confidence and being afraid of making mistakes are more dominant than the others
- Most of the students worry about making pronunciation and vocabulary mistakes while speaking English in the classroom. This worry results in anxiety and the mood of the classroom has an influential role on this worry.
- Potential reactions and evaluation of other students in class can be a dominant factor on the anxiety that students experience while speaking.

These conclusions provide a pathway for teachers to follow when dealing with anxiety. It is clearly seen that they should give their students some time to get prepared for speaking rather than asking them immediate questions and waiting for the answer. Besides, the teachers should have more information about their learners' individual and educational background in order to get better precautions for anxiety. In the classroom atmosphere, students should be informed that making mistakes are quite natural while speaking and these mistakes should be seen as learning steps. In addition to this, the evaluation and negative reactions of other students in the classroom should be minimized by the teacher in order to have a more sincere atmosphere. To conclude, through these practical ideas suggested by this study, teachers may have a more sincere classroom atmosphere in which their students speak English more comfortably.

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Appendix A. Foreign language speaking anxiety questionnaire

<p>Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire - English Version</p> <p>This questionnaire is prepared to collect information about your level of English language speaking anxiety that you experience in classroom atmosphere. After reading each statement, please circle the number which appeals to you most. There are no right or wrong answers for the items in this questionnaire. Thanks for your contribution.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> '1' : Strongly disagree. '2' : Disagree. '3' : Not sure. '4' : Agree. '5' : Strongly agree. </p>

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I am never quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am afraid of making mistakes in English classes.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in English classes.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I get frightened when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English	1	2	3	4	5
5. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English classes	1	2	3	4	5
6. I get embarrassed to volunteer answers in English classes.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel nervous while speaking English with native speakers.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I don't feel confident when I speak English in classes.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English classes.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students	1	2	3	4	5
14. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in English classes.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I get nervous when I don't understand every word my English teacher says.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	1	2	3	4	5

İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin konuşma kaygısı: Devlet üniversitesinde bir durum çalışması

Öz

Bu çalışma yabancı dil konuşma kaygısının seviyesini, ana sebeplerini, belirleyici faktörlerini ve öğrencilerin algılarını araştırmaktadır. Çalışmaya Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesinin İngilizce hazırlık programında okuyan 383 ön-orta seviyede öğrenci katılmıştır. Öğrencilerin kaygı seviyesini ölçmek için anket yöntemi kullanılmış, daha sonra yaşadıkları kaygı ile ilgili daha detaylı veri toplamak için rastgele seçilmiş 19 öğrenciyle görüşme yapılmıştır. Nicel veriler tanımlayıcı istatistiklerle analiz edilmiş, nitel verilerin analizinde ise içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Nicel veriler öğrencilerin düşük seviyede konuşma kaygısı yaşadığını gösterse de, nitel veriler konuşma becerisinin öğrencilerin çoğu için kaygı yaratıcı bir faktör olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, İngilizce telaffuz, ani sorular, hata yapma korkusu ve olumsuz değerlendirmeler konuşma kaygısının temel sebepleri olarak bulunmuştur. Son olarak, bu çalışmanın sonuçları yabancı dil konuşma kaygısının kendine özgü sebepleri, değişkenleri ve sonuçlarıyla ayrı bir olgu olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: yabancı dil olarak İngilizce; İngilizce konuşma kaygısı; Türk öğrenciler

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