



A Descriptive Study on Foreign Language Anxiety among Children

Çocuklarda Yabancı Dil Kaygısı üzerine Betimsel Bir Araştırma*

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ABSTRACT: While research demonstrates that foreign language anxiety (FLA) has both facilitating and debilitating effects on achievement in the foreign language learning process, there are no data on the mentioned issue in the Turkish context regarding children who learn English as a foreign language (EFL). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the levels of FLA among Turkish children who learn EFL at school settings. The sample group in the study consisted of 494 Turkish EFL learners enrolled at primary and secondary schools. The data collection instruments consisted of a background questionnaire and the Children's Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (CFLAS). The frequencies, mean scores and standard deviations were calculated. The results indicated that examinations and grammar-based language activities are the reasons of a moderate level of anxiety. Unpreparedness before speaking, fear of making mistakes, unfamiliar topics, negative evaluation by other students and fear of failing are other sources of a high level of FLA among children. Given that FLA constitutes a considerable problem in the Turkish EFL context regarding children, several practical recommendations are given.

Keywords: Children, English as a foreign language, foreign language anxiety

ÖZ: Yapılan araştırmalar, kaygının yabancı dil öğrenme süreci üzerinde hem faydalı hem de zararlı etkilerinin olduğunu göstermekle beraber, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen çocuklar arasında kaygı düzeyleri üzerine yeterli ölçüde veri de bulunmamaktadır. Bu nedene dayalı olarak, mevcut çalışma, okul ortamında İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen çocuklar arasındaki olası kaygıyı inceleme amacı taşımaktadır. Çalışmanın örneklem grubu, ilk ve ortaokul düzeyine öğrenim gören ve yaşları 7 – 12 arasında değişen 494 çocuktan oluşmaktadır. Veri toplama aracı olarak bir arka plan anketi ve Çocuklarda Yabancı Dil Kaygı Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Toplanan veri için yüzdeler, frekans, aritmetik ortalama ve standart sapma hesaplanmıştır. Sonuçlar, sınavların ve dilbilgisi tabanlı dil öğretme ve öğrenme etkinliklerinin ılımlı düzeyde kaygı nedeni olduğunu göstermektedir. Ek olarak, konuşma etkinliklerine hazırlıksız olarak katılma, hata yapma korkusu, içeriği bilinmeyen konular ve başarısızlık korkusunun çocuklarda yüksek düzeyde kaygı doğurmaktadır. Çalışmanın sonunda, çocuklar arasındaki yabancı dil kaygısının önemli bir sorun olduğu dikkate alınarak, bir takım öneriler sıralanmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Çocuklar, Yabancı Dil olarak İngilizce, yabancı dil kaygısı

1. INTRODUCTION

Anxiety constitutes a significant role in the foreign language learning context. However, research indicates that there has not been a consensus regarding its causes and effects (Aydin, 2008). Thus, more research seems necessary in terms of foreign language anxiety. Speaking

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more specifically, while research has mainly focused on anxiety among adult foreign language learners, research on anxiety among children who learn a foreign language has not drawn attention. However, it is evident that research on anxiety levels among children is strongly necessary, as learning a foreign language at early ages facilitates proficiency in the target language (Cameron, 2003; Lightbown et al., 2006). In this perspective, how FLA affects the learning process is still an unanswered question. What is more, the issue seems significant, as it is necessary to obtain data on debilitating effects of FLA and to suggest solutions regarding possible solutions before adolescence in which foreign language learning may be more difficult when compared to childhood as Lenneberg (1967) underlines.

In Turkey, there have been radical reforms to increase achievement in EFL learning classes. After the obligatory education was extended to 12 years in 2012, EFL curricula were redesigned in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In other words, a strong emphasis was put on communication, interaction, and production in the target language instead of traditional grammar learning and teaching. More importantly, English became a must class beginning from second grade in the Turkish education system. However, what factors affect achievement in the learning and teaching processes should be investigated. In a narrower scope, how FLA impacts those processes remains as an untouched research area in the Turkish EFL context regarding children.

1.1. Literature review

Anxiety is defined as an emotional state which is experienced by an individual who feels danger, powerlessness, and tension (Blau, 1955). As an affective state, anxiety can be categorized into three types as *trait*, *state*, and *situation-specific*. Trait anxiety is seen as an aspect of personality (Scovel, 1978), whereas state anxiety is an apprehension experienced as a response to a definite situation at a particular moment (Spielberger, 1983). Situation-specific anxiety is experienced when the individual encounters specific situations and events (Ellis, 1994). For Horwitz et al. (1986) FLA constitutes a distinct complex of feelings, beliefs, perceptions and behaviors in relation to classroom language learning. In this sense, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) define FLA as an apprehension that is experienced when a situation requires using a foreign language in which the user is not fully proficient. Thus, it can be inferred that FLA is under the category of situation-specific anxiety (Aydın, 2008). For Horwitz and Young (1991), it has three varieties. First, communication apprehension occurs when the learner lacks mature communication skills while she has mature thoughts and ideas. Second, fear of negative evaluation is an apprehension towards evaluations by others, when the learner feels incapable of making a proper social impression. Last, test anxiety is an apprehension towards academic evaluation, when the learner feels the fear of failing in tests.

Research shows that FLA is directly related to several factors such as inter-personal relations, learning and teaching contexts, classroom practices, examinations, learners' beliefs, perceptions and attitudes towards foreign language learning (Young, 1991). In addition, the level of teaching materials, learners' motivation levels, teachers, learners' perceptions of the target culture are some of the factors that are related to FLA (Bailey, 1983; Oxford, 1992; Price, 1991; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991; Young, 1990). However, the effects of FLA vary when the learning process and beneficial and harmful outcomes are considered. In other words, while research shows that FLA has both facilitating and debilitating influences on the learning process, there is no consensus on which states, situations or events have the above-mentioned effects on the process (Aydın, 2008). For instance, on the one hand, research demonstrates that FLA prevents oral and written production (Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986; Young, 1991), on the other hand, a moderate level of anxiety results in perfect oral production (Gregersen, 2003).

Interestingly enough, while some studies reveal that anxiety has no effect on speaking skills (Gardner et al., 1987; Matsumoto, 1989; Young, 1986), research also indicates that FLA has a debilitating effect on speaking skills among foreign language learners (Koch & Terrell, 1991; Phillips, 1992). What is more, whereas FLA decreases the achievement level in the learning process (Gardner et al., 1987), it triggers mistakes among learners (Gregersen, 2003).

The source of conflicting results regarding the causes and effects of FLA may be related to the measurement of anxiety levels. Differently from the studies that focused on factors causing foreign language anxiety and its effects on the learning process, the first study that was designed to validate a scale was carried out by Horwitz (1986). The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) obtained from the study was first used by Horwitz et al. (1986) to measure foreign language anxiety. In this study, it was underlined that FLA was different from anxiety defined in the literature and classified as communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. The FLCAS was used in many studies to measure in various foreign language contexts since 1986. However, it should be highlighted that the mentioned scale was developed and used for adult language learners.

Nevertheless, the number of studies in the Turkish EFL context is fairly limited. In addition to this limitation, research in the Turkish EFL context focused on adult language learners, as previously underlined. Those studies mainly focused on the sources and effects of anxiety (Aydın et al., 2006), the relationship between anxiety levels of gender (Aydın & Takkaç, 2007; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013), anxiety effect on achievement (Çakıcı, 2016; Dalkılıç, 2001) and the relationship between anxiety and the use of technology (Aydın, 2011). In addition, studies concentrated on the examination of anxiety types as a reflection of situation-specific anxiety (Aydın, 2008; Koralp, 2005), writing anxiety that is seen as a language skill-specific anxiety (Atay & Kurt, 2006; Kırmızı & Kırmızı, 2015, Öztürk & Çeçen, 2007; Subaşı, 2010) and the role of multilingualism on FLA (Thompson & Khawaja, 2016). As a final note, it should be emphasized that all of the studies cited above focused on adult language learners in the Turkish EFL context.

While children feel minimum levels of anxiety while acquiring their first language, their anxiety levels regarding foreign language anxiety may vary. Nevertheless, in a global scale, the number of studies on FLA among young foreign language learners is quite limited. Among those studies, Chan and Wu (2000, 2004) focused on FLA among children and found that children experienced foreign language anxiety, specifically fear of negative evaluation. In those studies, personality and parental expectations were also found to be factors that caused foreign language anxiety. More importantly, the studies conducted by Chan & Wu (2000, 2004) concluded that teachers considerably had a low level of awareness of FLA among students. However, these studies have two limitations. First, the FLCAS developed for adult students was translated and administered to children. Second, as the sample group consisted of Taiwanese children, intercultural differences were not controlled as a factor.

In the Turkish ELF research context, two studies appeared on FLA among children (Aydın, 2012; Aydın, 2013). In these studies, it was found that the level of test anxiety among children was not high. However, anxiety levels were affected by test validity, time limitations, test length, test techniques, item instructions and learners' attitudes towards their teachers. In addition, gender was found to be a significant factor that affected anxiety levels. Those studies also have certain limitations. First, those studies focused on only text anxiety in terms of the foreign language learning context, as one of the types of foreign language anxiety. In other words, communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation among children were not explored. Second, the Test Anxiety Scale developed for adult language learners by Sarason

(1978) was translated into Turkish and administered to children without any moderation and adaptation. A few studies focused on anxiety among children in the Turkish context (Duman, 2008; Erözkan, 2009; Koçkar et al., 2002). However, the mentioned studies did not directly focus on FLA but test anxiety in a general educational context.

1.2. Overview of the current study

Several reasons guided the current study. First, the results obtained from previous results show that there has not been a consensus on sources, reasons, and effects of anxiety in a foreign language learning context. Second, while research demonstrates that a high level of FLA has both facilitating and debilitating effects on achievement in the foreign language learning process, there are no data on the mentioned issue in the Turkish EFL context regarding children. Third, in both global and national context, studies have mainly focused on adult learners, while there is a very serious lack of research concentrating on FLA among children. For those reasons, this study aims to examine the levels of communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety among children. To conclude, the study asks three research questions:

1. What is the level of communication apprehension among children?
2. What is the level of fear of negative evaluation among children?
3. What is the level of test anxiety among children?

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

The sample group in the study consisted of 494 Turkish EFL learners enrolled at primary and secondary schools of Balıkesir, a city in the Marmara Region in Turkey. Of the participants, 238 (48.2%) were girls and 256 (51.8%) were boys. Their mean age was 9.82 falling within the age range between seven and 12. The sample group consisted of 91 (18.4%) second, 98 (19.8%) third, 87 (17.6%) fourth, 80 (16.2%) fifth, 86 (17.4%) sixth and 52 (10.5%) seventh graders. The rationale behind choosing the sample group was that all of the participants were under their puberty and had obligatory English classes. It should be added that English is a must class taught a two-hour class for the 2nd and 3rd graders and four-hour class for 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th graders. It should be also noted that all classes mainly aims to communication and interaction after several radical changes in 2016.

2.2. Instruments

The data collection instruments consisted of a background questionnaire and the CFLAS adapted by Aydın et al (2016a) from Horwitz' (1986) FLCAS. The adaptation process included translation (2016a), simplification, moderation, pilot study of validation (2016b) and validation of the scale (2016c) consisting of 20 items. The rationale behind the scale adaptation instead of developing a new survey was that FLCAS developed by Horwitz (1986) was validated and mostly mainly preferred by researchers who focused on FLA. As a note, after a principal component analysis and the Varimax method were carried out, two items that were not functioning were removed from the scale. The background questionnaire gathered demographic information on the participants including their birth date, gender, and grade. To conclude, the CFLAS consisted of 18 questions in relation to foreign language anxiety in participants' native language, Turkish. Each response in the scale included facial expressions from one to five (1=very unhappy, 2=unhappy, 3=neither happy nor unhappy, 4=happy, 5=very happy), as can be seen in Figure 1.

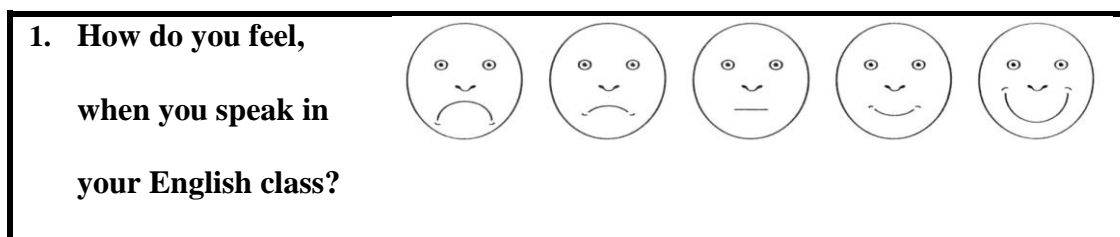


Figure 1. A sample item and facial expressions in the scale

2.3. Procedure

As measurement of children's behaviors in a research context is a problematic and complex area due to cultural elements, various research settings and low level of language proficiency in the target language, a four-step model was followed in the study. First, the FLCAS developed by Horwitz (1986) was translated from English to Turkish by five translators in blind sessions. Then, the translators unified the Turkish version of the scale in a three-tour of the panel. The English version of the scale was administered to 85 EFL learners at an advanced level of target language proficiency. Next, after four weeks, the Turkish version of the scale was administered to the same participants. Both versions of the scale obtained reliability ($r=0.77$ for the English version; $r=0.85$ for the Turkish version) and validity (% of Variance = 67.19 for the English version; % of Variance = 73.59 for the Turkish version). In the second phase, each of the items in the scale was simplified in accordance with conceptual and linguistic developments of the related age group. For this, the panelists discussed each of the items in three tours of the panel and reached a consensus regarding intelligibility and response among children. Then, individual and group drama activities, interactional games and progressive drama techniques were used to explore how children perceived the items in the scale. The sample group of the step consisted of 174 primary and elementary students. After the investigation of the visual and audio recordings by the panel members, they reached a consensus in terms of the intelligibility of the scale by children. In the third step, the moderated version of the scale was administered to 174 children for the pilot study of reliability and validity. At the end of this process, the scale consisting of 25 items was found to be reliable and valid ($r=0.85$; % of variance=59.83). In the final stage, the scale was administered to 470 children. The scale consisting of 20 items was found to be reliable and valid ($r=0.85$; % of variance=48.40).

The background questionnaire and the CFLAS were administered to the participants during first semester of the academic year of 2015-2016. After obtaining an ethical document from the Ethics Council of Social and Educational Sciences of the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University and a written permission from the authorities of Education Ministry, research ethics, the purpose and significance of the research and methodology were explained to the participants, school administrators, teachers and the participants' parents. Then, the students were invited to participate in the study.

The data collected were analyzed using the SPSS software. First, the reliability coefficient of the scale and total variance were computed. The reliability coefficient was calculated in Cronbach's Alpha indicating a high level of reliability ($r=0.78$). For the sub-scales, the reliability coefficients were found to be 0.79 for communication apprehension, 0.74 for fear of negative evaluation and 0.74 for test anxiety. The total variance of the scale showed that the scale was valid for measuring the level of FLA among children (% of the variance= 48.58). After obtaining reliability and validity of the scale, descriptive statistics were presented. For this purpose, the frequencies, mean scores and standard deviations were calculated.

3. RESULTS

The findings obtained from the study are divided into three subsections: First, findings on communication apprehension were given. After presenting findings on fear of negative evaluation, results regarding test anxiety were noted.

3.1. Communication apprehension

As it is shown in Table 1, within the context of communication apprehension, the data indicated that children had both high and low anxiety levels in terms of certain items. First of all, they reflected that they felt very happy when they spoke to a native speaker of English ($\bar{x}=3.79$). They also expressed that they generally felt happy when their teachers called them in their English classes ($\bar{x}=3.76$). Participants stated that they felt quite happy while they were speaking English in the class ($\bar{x}=3.46$). Second, the results demonstrated that children felt neither happy nor unhappy regarding only one item in the scale. They stated that they were neither happy nor unhappy when they saw there were many rules to learn to speak English ($\bar{x}=2.72$). Third, findings showed that children felt high levels of anxiety at the time of uncertainty and inadequateness. In other words, they stated that they felt mostly unhappy when they had to speak without any preparation in language classes ($\bar{x}=2.17$). Furthermore, they stated that they felt very unhappy when they did not understand what the teacher was saying in English ($\bar{x}=2.06$). It can be concluded that children experienced low, moderate and high levels of communication apprehension in accordance with various factors mentioned above.

Table 1. Communication apprehension among children

Items	Number	Frequency (%)					Mean	Standard Deviation
		Very unhappy	Unhappy	Neither happy nor unhappy	Happy	Very happy		
How would you feel if you spoke to a native speaker of English?	491	11.6	8.1	20.1	20.5	39.7	3.79	2.69
How do you feel when your teacher calls you in your English classes?	491	8.4	6.9	22.6	24.4	37.7	3.76	1.26
How do you feel while you are speaking English in the class?	493	11.0	12.6	24.3	23.9	28.2	3.46	1.31
How do you feel when you see there are many rules to learn to speak English?	492	23.2	20.7	29.5	14.4	12.2	2.72	1.30
How do you feel when you have to speak without any preparation in English classes?	492	37.4	28.3	21.5	5.9	6.9	2.17	1.19
How do you feel when you don't understand what the teacher is saying in English?	492	35.3	32.1	27.4	2.4	2.8	2.06	0.90

3.2. Fear of negative evaluation

Regarding the fear of negative evaluation, the data presented in Table 2 shows that children experience at two different levels of anxiety. First, judging from certain items of the scale, participants showed low anxiety levels. First, the participants stated that they felt mostly very happy when they volunteered answers in English classes ($\bar{x}=4.25$). Similarly, they remarked themselves as mostly very happy when they were given a chance to speak in their English classes ($\bar{x}=4.10$). They also stated that while they were speaking in English in front of their classmates, they had a low level of anxiety ($\bar{x}=3.55$). Second, findings indicated that the participants had a high level of anxiety regarding certain items. For instance, participants mostly seemed anxious when they did not understand what the teacher was correcting in the classroom ($\bar{x}=2.20$). Results also demonstrated that they had a high level of anxiety when the participants made mistakes in English classes ($\bar{x}=1.83$). They also felt anxious when the other students laughed at them while they were speaking in English ($\bar{x}=1.60$). To concluded, children experienced low and high levels of fear of negative evaluation.

Table 2: Fear of negative evaluation among children

Items	Number	Frequency (%)					Mean	Standard Deviation
		Very unhappy	Unhappy	Neither happy nor unhappy	Happy	Very happy		
How do you feel when you volunteer answers in English classes?	494	4.0	1.6	15.6	23.1	55.7	4.25	1.04
How do you feel when you are given a chance to speak in your English class?	493	6.1	4.9	15.2	21.1	52.7	4.10	1.19
How do you feel while you are speaking English in front of your classmates?	490	10.8	8.8	25.3	24.9	30.2	3.55	1.30
How do you feel when you don't understand what the teacher is correcting?	491	27.1	34.4	31.6	4.9	2.0	2.20	0.96
How do you feel when you make mistakes in English class?	493	45.1	31.8	19.7	2.0	1.4	1.83	0.91
How do you feel if other students laugh at you while you are speaking English?	493	65.1	18.3	11.6	1.2	3.8	1.60	1.00

3.3. Test anxiety

Values presented in Table 3 demonstrate that the participants experience at low, medium and high levels of anxiety regarding various items. First, for the items showing low-level anxiety, students felt confident about participating in English class ($\bar{x}=4.72$) and English exams ($\bar{x}=4.71$) when they were well-prepared. Second, one item regarding test anxiety indicated that students felt moderately anxious. That is, they felt moderate levels of tension when they were taking English exams ($\bar{x}=3.20$). Third, three items showed high levels of

anxiety among children. For example, they felt anxious when they were asked questions when they were unprepared ($\bar{x}=1.81$). They were also anxious when they forgot things they knew while speaking ($\bar{x}=1.77$). They stated that they were quite uncomfortable ($\bar{x}=1.51$) with the thought that they might fail English class. In conclusion, children suffered from test anxiety at low, moderate and high levels in accordance with various factors.

Table 3: Test anxiety among children

Items	Number	Frequency (%)					Mean	Standard Deviation
		Very unhappy	Unhappy	Neither happy nor unhappy	Happy	Very happy		
How do you feel when you are well prepared for English class?	493	2.4	1.2	2.6	8.9	84.9	4.72	0.79
How do you feel when you are well prepared for an English examination?	494	2.0	1.0	4.0	10.0	83.0	4.71	0.77
How do you feel when you have English examinations?	494	13.4	15.8	28.9	21.5	20.4	3.20	1.30
How do you feel when the English teacher asks a question which you haven't prepared in advance?	492	48.2	30.6	15.7	3.3	2.2	1.81	0.97
How do you feel when you forget things you know in your English class?	493	48.5	31.3	16.6	2.4	1.2	1.77	0.90
How do you feel if you fail in English classes?	494	66.4	21.3	9.3	1.4	1.6	1.51	0.85

4. CONCLUSIONS and DISCUSSION

Four conclusions were drawn from the study. First, children who learn EFL do not experience FLA when they are well-prepared for their English classes and examinations. In addition, they do not feel anxious when they volunteer in their classes and speak English to native speakers and teachers and classmates. However, children perceive that examinations and grammar-based language activities are the reasons of a moderate level of anxiety. Children also experience a high level of anxiety when teachers' corrections are understandable. They also have a high level of anxiety when they do not understand what their teachers say in English. Unpreparedness before speaking, fear of making mistakes, unfamiliar topics, and negative comments from other students and fear of failing are the sources of a high level of FLA among children. Second, in terms of communication apprehension, communication with native speakers, teachers, and classmates does not constitute anxiety. However, grammar activities carried out in classes cause a moderate level of communication apprehension among children. To add, unpreparedness to speak and understandable corrections made by teachers are strong sources of communication apprehension. Third, regarding fear of negative evaluation, children do not experience anxiety when they speak voluntarily in English classes. On the other hand, fear of making mistakes, teachers' corrections that are not clear and other students' negative

reactions while speaking are strong sources of fear of negative evaluation. Fourth and last, regarding test anxiety, children have a low level of anxiety if they are well-prepared to their examinations. Yet, they experience at a moderate level of anxiety during their examinations. In addition, they experience a high level of test anxiety during oral examinations. As a final note, the thought of failing among children is a strong source of test anxiety.

Some practical recommendation regarding the conclusions of the study can be noted. First, as preparedness to classes and examinations is an anxiety-reducing factor, EFL teachers can focus on individual learning and study skills regarding preparing their students for their classes. In this sense, they can develop strategies to guide their students about how to prepare the students for their classes and examinations. Second, as children perceive that grammar-based language teaching constitutes a considerable factor, teachers may avoid teaching grammar and making grammatical explanations (Harmer, 1991). Instead, they can use games, songs and communicational and interactional activities in their language classes. Third, EFL teachers can pay attention to the voluntariness of their students to reduce anxiety. That is, they cannot force the ones who are not ready to speak in front of their classmates and avoid understandable corrections (Harmer, 1991). In other words, teachers' corrections need to be balanced in terms of children's linguistic, cognitive and mental developments. For this purpose, smooth and gentle corrections can be performed in communicational activities rather than direct corrections. Fourth, teachers may inform their students about mistakes in the language learning process. In other words, teachers can impose on their students that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process. Fifth and last, as students think that fear of failure is a strong source of anxiety, teachers need to find alternative ways of testing and measurement activities such as portfolios and projects. In addition, they can make clear explanations, prepare clear instructions in oral and written examinations and pay attention to the content validity of the tests they administered.

Speaking broadly, it should be stated that EFL teachers should gain a cognitive and pedagogical perspective with respect to the sources and effects of foreign language anxiety. In other words, it is evident that they need not only gain information about FLA but also raise awareness and experience in relation to foreign language anxiety. They can also develop strategies for relating different elements together into a coherent whole for reducing the levels of anxiety among their students. It should be implicated that the internalization of the teaching profession will initiate their professional developments. For this purpose, instruction in in-service and pre-service programs can broadly focus on teaching to children and specifically concentrate on how to reduce anxiety among children.

A final note can be added regarding curriculum developers. As the study concluded that grammar-based language teaching and examinations are the strong reasons of FLA among children, curricula and language programs should be reorganized in terms of the place of grammar and examinations. For this purpose, first, language teaching programs should mainly concentrate on communicational and interactional activities in accordance with children's linguistic, mental, physical and cognitive developments. In other words, games, songs and drama activities should have the main portion of the teaching process. Second, traditional written and oral examinations should replace with classroom performance, portfolios, projects and homework. In other words, curricula should be revised in terms of central and teacher-made examinations to reduce their magnitude in the testing and evaluation system not only in the Turkish educational context but also in a global sense.

One of the limitations of this research was that the participants were restricted to 494 Turkish EFL learners enrolled at primary and secondary schools. The scope of the study was

limited to the descriptive data obtained from a background questionnaire and CFLAS adapted by Aydın et al (2016a; 2016b; 2016c). The data included Turkish children's perceptions of FLA levels in terms of communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. Further research focusing on other factors that could affect the levels of FLA is warranted qualitatively and experimentally for a deeper understanding of FLA among children. Studies should also focus on how teachers perceive FLA among children. To conclude, it is relatively evident that more research is needed to determine the problems facing children with respect to FLA. Last, research should focus on anxiety related issues in various cultural and educational settings.

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Uzun Özet

Kaygı, yabancı dil öğrenme sürecini dikkate değer bir ölçüde etkileyen önemli bir değişkendir. Ancak yapılan çalışmaların sonuçları, yabancı dil kaygısının kaynakları ve sonuçları hakkında bir uzlaşma göstermemektedir. Daha önemli bir nokta ise yabancı dil öğrenme bağlamında kaygıya odaklanan çalışmalar, çoğunlukla yetişkin öğrenciler üzerine yoğunlaşmış; yabancı dil öğrenen çocuklar arasındaki kaygı, araştırma bağlamında yeterli ölçüde dikkat çekmemiştir. Türkiye’de özellikle 2012 yılından sonra yabancı dil öğretimi alanında önemli değişiklikler olmuş bu bağlamda yabancı dil öğretimi ikinci sınıf düzeyine çekilmiş ve müfredat ise dilbilgisi öğretimi yerine hedef dilde iletişim, etkileşim ve üretim üzerine yoğunlaşmıştır. Ancak çocuklarda yabancı dil öğretimi ve öğreniminde hangi etkenlerin başarıyı etkilediği

konusundaki araştırmaların sayısı oldukça yetersiz kalmıştır. Daha dar bir odakla bakıldığında ise İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen çocuklarda kaygının öğretme ve öğrenme süreçlerini nasıl etkilediği konusunda ciddi anlamda araştırma eksikliği göze çarpmaktadır.

Mevcut çalışmanın arka planını üç temel nedene dayandırmak olasıdır. Öncelikle, yabancı dil öğrenme bağlamında yapılan çalışmalar, kaygının kaynakları, nedenleri ve etkileri üzerine bir uzlaşma göstermemektedir. İkinci olarak, araştırmalar, kaygının öğrenme başarısı üzerinde hem yararlı hem de zararlı etkileri olduğunu göstermekle birlikte, gerek küresel gerekse ulusal ölçekte çocuklarda yabancı dil kaygısının etkileri üzerine veri bulunmamaktadır. Üçüncü ve son olarak, kaygı odaklı çalışmalar çoğunlukla yetişkin öğrenciler üzerine odaklandığından, çocuklarda kaygı, araştırma bağlamında ciddi bir şekilde ihmal edilen bir alan olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu nedenlere dayanarak, mevcut çalışma; kaygının bileşenleri olan olası iletişim korkusu, olumsuz değerlendirme korkusu ve sınav kaygısının İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen çocuklarda karşılaşılan düzeyleri açığa çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Çalışmanın örneklem grubu, Balıkesir İl Merkezinde öğrenim gören 494 ilk ve ortaokul öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Yedi ve 12 yaş aralığındaki öğrencilerin yaş ortalaması 9.82 olup, katılımcıların % 42'si kız, % 51.8'i erkek öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. Katılımcılar, ikinci, üçüncü, dördüncü, beşinci, altıncı ve yedinci sınıf öğrencileridir. Çalışmada veri toplama aracı olarak Çocuklarda Yabancı Dil Kaygı Ölçeği uygulanmıştır. Ayrıca çocukların yaş, cinsiyet ve sınıf bilgilerini sorgulayan bir arka plan anketi de uygulanmıştır. Onsekiz maddeden oluşan ölçek, birden beşe kadar değerler karşılığında yüz ifadelerinden oluşmaktadır. Anket ve ölçek, 2015 – 2016 Eğitim – Öğretim Yılı'nın güz döneminde uygulanmıştır. Uygulama öncesi alınan Etik Kurul Belgesi ve İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü Yasal İzin Belgesi uyarınca, çalışmanın amacı ve önemi ve yöntemi ile etik kurallar hakkında okul yöneticilerine, öğrenci velilerine ve katılımcılara bilgi verilmiştir. Gönüllülük esasına göre sağlanan katılım sonrası, öncelikle toplanan verinin güvenilirliği ve toplam değişke analizi yapılmış, ölçeğin geçerli ve güvenilir olduğu bulgusuna dayanarak, betimsel analiz gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu amaçla, yüzdelik frekans, aritmetik ortalama ve standart sapma gibi merkezi eğilim ölçüleri hesaplanarak, elde edilen değerler, tablolar halinde sunulmuştur.

Çalışma sonucunda şu sonuçlara ulaşılmıştır: Öncelikle İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen çocuklar, hazırlıklı geldikleri derslerde ve sınavlarda yabancı dil kaygısını hissetmemektedirler. Ek olarak, çocuklar; yabancılar, öğretmenleri ve sınıf arkadaşları ile gönüllü konuşma etkinliklerinde de yabancı dil kaygısı duymamaktadırlar. Ancak, sınavlar ve dilbilgisi kaynaklı yabancı dil öğrenme, çocuklarda ılımlı bir düzeyde kaygıya neden olmaktadır. Çocuklar, aynı zamanda anlaşılması zor öğretmen düzeltmeleri nedeni ile de kaygılı hissetmektedirler. Benzer şekilde, öğretmenin hedef dilde söylediklerinin anlaşılmasında durumu da yüksek düzeyde bir kaygı kaynağı olarak deneyimlenmektedir. Hazırlıksız konuşma yapma, hata yapma korkusu, aşına olunmayan ders içeriği ve konuları, akranların olumsuz yorumları ve başarısız olma korkusu, çocuklarda yüksek düzeyde kaygı doğuran diğer etkenlerdir.

Çalışmada elde edilen sonuçlara dayanarak, bir takım öneriler sunulmuştur. Öncelikle, yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin bireysel öğrenme üzerine odaklanmaları, sınavlara ve derslere hazırlık aşamalarında gerçekli ve uygulanabilir stratejileri geliştirmeleri ve dilbilgisi temelli dil öğretiminden kaçınmaları önerilmiştir. Öğretmenlerin ayrıca gönüllü katılımı esas almaları ve anlaşılması zor düzeltmeler yapmamları da önerilmektedir. Son olarak, öğretmenlerin hata düzeltmelerine yönelik olarak stratejiler geliştirmeleri gerektiği de vurgulanmaktadır. Daha geniş bir bakış açısı ile yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin yabancı dil kaygısının kaynakları ve etkilerine dayalı olarak bilişsel ve pedagojik perspektif kazanmaları gerekmektedir. Müfredat

geliştiriciler ve politika belirleyiciler ise dilbilgisi tabanlı öğretim etkinlikleri ile sınav merkezli öğrenme yerine alternatif etkinlikler üzerine yoğunlaşmalıdır. Bu amaçla, öncelikle müfredat ve programlar, iletişim, etkileşim ve üretim üzerine yoğunlaşmalı; çocukların dilsel, mental, fiziksel ve bilişsel gelişim aşamaları dikkate alınarak, oyun, şarkı ve drama etkinliklerine yer vermelidirler. Geleneksel yazılı ve sözlü sınavların ağırlıkları hafifletilerek performans değerlendirilmesi, proje ve ödev çalışmaları ile portfolyo tutulması gibi alternatif ölçme ve değerlendirme araçlarına ağırlık verilmesi önerilmektedir.

Çalışmanın bir takım sınırlılıkları da bulunmaktadır. Öncelikle çalışmanın örneklem grubu, İngilizceyi yabancı olarak öğrenen 494 çocukla sınırlıdır. Çalışmadan elde edilen veriler, Çocuklarda Yabancı Dil Kaygı Ölçeğinin uygulanması sonucu elde edilen betimsel veri ile sınırlıdır. Toplanan veri aynı zamanda yabancı dil kaygısının bileşenleri olan iletişim korkusu, olumsuz değerlendirilme korkusu ve sınav kaygısı ile ilgili bulgularla sınırlıdır. Sonraki araştırmaların, çocuklarda yabancı dil kaygı düzeylerini etkileyen değişkenler üzerine odaklanması önerilmektedir. Çalışmalar, aynı zamanda çocuklarda yabancı dil kaygısının öğretmenler tarafından nasıl algılandığı konusuna da odaklanmalıdır. Son olarak, sonraki çalışmalar, çocuklarda yabancı dil kaygısının farklı kültürel ve eğitimsel bağlamlarda irdelenmesi üzerinde de odaklanmalıdır.