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Ayşe Tuğba UĞRAŞ



## ÖZET

### YABANCI DİL SINIFLARINDA İNGİLİZCE'YE KARŞI OLAN ENDİŞE SEBEPLERİ VE ENDİŞENİN AZALTILMASI İLE İLGİLİ VAKA ÇALIŞMASI

**Ayşe Tuğba UĞRAŞ**

**Yüksek Lisans Tezi, İngiliz Dil Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı**

**Tez Danışmanı: Doç.Dr. Şehnaz ŞAHİNKARAKAŞ**

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Bu çalışma endişenin dil öğreniminde nasıl ortaya çıktığını ve olası sebeplerini inceleyerek edebiyata katkıda bulunmuştur. Bu çalışma, öğretmenlerin, yabancı dil derslerinde konuşma endişesi yaşayan öğrencileri detaylı bir şekilde incelemesini amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, ayrıca, yabancı dil öğretmenlerine, kaygılı öğrencilerin kaygı problemiyle baş etmesine yardım etmeleri için, bazı öneriler sunmaktadır.

Bu çalışma kolektif vaka çalışması olduğu için, araştırmacı endişeli öğrencileri ve onların ortak sorunlarını inceleme şansı bulmuştur. Çalışmadaki katılımcılar, Gaziantep X Sağlık Meslek Lisesi’de okumakta olan dört öğrenci olmuştur. Bu çalışmada, öğrencilerin iki tanesi kız öğrenci, diğer iki tanesi ise erkek öğrencidir. Öğrencilerin hepsi dokuzuncu sınıf öğrencisidir ve kendilerine güven olmamasının yanısıra yabancı dil konuşmaktan da çok korkmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dil Öğrenimi, Endişe, Endişe Sebepleri.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **A CASE STUDY OF THE REASONS FOR ANXIETY AND ITS REDUCTION IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

**Ayşe Tuğba UĞRAŞ**

**M.A. THESIS, ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING**

**Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Şehnaz ŞAHİNKARAKAŞ**

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This study contributes to literature by examining how anxiety reveals itself in language learning and by revealing possible causes of anxiety. This study aims at helping teachers investigate in details the students who experience the speaking anxiety problem. This study also gives teachers some suggestions about helping the students overcome their problem.

As this study is a collective case study, the researcher has found the chance of investigating the anxious students and their common problems. The participants in this study were four students at Gaziantep X Medical Vocational High School. In this study, two of the students were female and the other two of the students were male. They were all ninth graders, and all of these students were afraid of speaking a foreign language as well as they are lack of self- confidence.

**Keywords:** Language Learning, Anxiety, the Reasons of Anxiety.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

FLA: Foreign Language Anxiety

FL: Foreign Language

TL: Target Language

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

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## CHAPTER 1

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background

Learning a second language can become a terrible occasion due to the fears it causes. According to MacIntyre & Gardner (1994), language anxiety is generally known as the feeling which is felt when the person feels worry in learning a foreign language especially while speaking, listening, or reading aloud. The pressure made on the students, in order that their performance will develop well in the second language, makes them feel more anxious in the second language (ESL) classroom, and causes them to dislike the English courses.

Foreign language anxiety is composed of a union of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in learning a foreign language as the learning process is a distinctive duration (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). The term *foreign language anxiety* is a more general term than other anxiety inducing situations such as learning anxiety, test anxiety, and so on.

Although some people are successful in other subjects or courses, they may suffer from second language anxiety, which may make them close to new information in the second language. That means language anxiety may also affect individuals who do not experience anxiety in their daily lives. When a student fails to participate in the lessons or to prepare for class, s/he may not do homework and may not be unable to give an answer to even simple questions about the topic they have studied. These students block themselves towards learning and do not learn well. Besides, unfortunately some students and teachers may be hard put to overcome second language learning anxiety. Sometimes learners may not be able to understand the sounds of a foreign language and its structure, and this situation may be resulted in feeling second language anxiety. On the other hand, the students experiencing anxiety of foreign language learning may not be able to comprehend what the teacher is saying, which is a major cause of foreign language anxiety.

Teachers may also be one of the elements which cause foreign language anxiety. Sometimes teachers may think that putting the frighteners on learning the foreign language help them become more motivated to learn it. Young (1991) describes it best by stating the following:

Instructors who believe their role is to correct students constantly when they make any error, who feel that they cannot have students working in pairs because the class may get out of control, who believe that the teacher should be doing most of the talking and teaching, and who think their role is more like a drill sergeants than a facilitator's may be contributing to learner language anxiety (p. 428).

The teacher in a second language classroom should do her/his best in order to help the anxious students overcome their problem, and should not cause their stress to arise. The teachers should also be careful while selecting the ways in realizing and correcting the mistakes made by the students, which can also cause to anxiety on students. As correction is necessarily a part of learning a foreign language, teachers should pay heed to the way of correcting them.

The causes of anxiety in foreign language learning need solutions to help reduce the students' anxiety. According to Young (1991), when the problem of anxiety is caused by speaking, negative evaluation, and foreign language-learning generated anxieties, teachers should try to solve these anxiety problems inside or outside the classroom. What teachers should do first is to recognize the fears of the anxious students, and then may write them down in a journal or notebook. The teachers may help them share their anxieties in the course, therefore the anxious students may realize that they are not the only one who experiences anxiety, in other words, that there are other learners experiencing the same problem. Avoiding the situation cannot help students, so second language teachers should take care of their

students' needs and fears. Teachers should try to give students understandable information with lifelike materials, and to make them more active in lessons in order to help them communicate in the target language. Also, teachers should review their teaching methods and their beliefs in order to be successful in their profession. For this, as Young (1991) suggests, with the help of the use of videotaping, teachers may find the opportunity to look at both themselves and the students as the third eye, which help them evaluate their own teaching style, and develop themselves in their profession. They may also attend to conferences, workshops, and panels to learn the philosophies, practices, and research which they do not know or practice.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Anxiety becomes a common problem among the learners when the learners feel worry because of an unexpected danger or an expected danger during the course, which causes the learners to feel terrible (Selami, Yavuz& Yeşilyurt, 2009). Spielberg (1983) defined anxiety occurred in the nervous system due to the feeling of nervousness or an excitation. The anxiety is based on the feeling of worry, and has an excessive negative effect on the learners' development socially, personally and academically.

When students are not fully proficient and when the use of second language is needed, second language anxiety is experienced. In such cases, even if learners have great ideas, thoughts, creativity, they may not have enough communication skills. In this case, they experience communicative apprehension.

The students, who participate in foreign language classes more relaxed or less anxious, may be more advantageous in the language classes than the other students experiencing foreign language anxiety. Because of the anxiety, the anxious students may not concentrate on the course, they may feel reluctance towards the course, and as a result their hearts may beat

fast, then they may forget what to say. As a result, the language learning process may be blocked or ended by these psycho-physiological symptoms (Horwitz et al., 1986).

The students, who are the ninth graders of Gaziantep X Medical Vocational High School, have difficulty in speaking a second or foreign language. They experience second language anxiety and this causes them not to be successful in English.

### **1.3. Significance of the study**

This study contributes to literature by examining how anxiety reveals itself in language learning and by revealing possible causes of anxiety. Through this study, teachers can investigate the details of the speaking anxiety problem of the students. They can help the students overcome their problem by encouraging them, motivating them, giving enjoyable assignments, behaving towards them in a friendly way, making them socialize, making them participate in groups inside or outside the classroom. With this research, they may realize that all the students need is self-confidence and the interest of their teachers. If teachers do their best to win the student over, they can draw the attention of the students, create a supportive atmosphere, motivate the students, make them feel secure and confidently so that the students can speak without feeling anxiety. If teachers do not care about these points, English will be probably the most difficult subject they will take in their entire life and students will continue to dread walking through those English class doors.

### **1.4. Aims and Research Questions**

The major purpose of the research is to find out the reasons of second language anxiety which the students feel while practicing English orally and to show in what ways it reveals. In other words, what are the factors that make speaking English more difficult or unaccomplishable in some situations than in others. This study seeks to examine the problem of language anxiety in detail. This study consists of discovering the factors caused by the

learner's own sense of self, by the language learning process, or by the situation or social environment he or she is a part of. Secondly, this study aims at finding out and suggesting some strategies for language teachers in order to decrease language anxiety in the learners.

Accordingly two research questions were asked:

1. What are the reasons of anxiety which the students feel while practicing English orally?
2. How can the researcher reduce the students' anxieties?

## CHAPTER 2

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction

Chapter two presents a review of the related literature. Through this chapter, the role of language anxiety in language classes is shown. The causal factors or the sources of foreign language anxiety, the differences and similarities between fear and anxiety, types of foreign language anxiety, research on foreign language anxiety, and how to deal with foreign language anxiety are explained in this chapter.

#### 2.2. Foreign Language Anxiety

Anxiety plays an important role among many crucial factors for foreign language learning. In literature, many definitions of language anxiety have been claimed, but in general it is a common thought that foreign language anxiety differs from other anxieties or fear (e.g. Andrade & Willams, 2009). Before giving these definitions, it is perhaps necessary to mention briefly how anxiety in general is defined and differentiated from fear.

According to Barlow's definition (2000), anxiety can be regarded as being focused on the feeling of future through which the learners will motivate themselves towards the possible dangers. Anxiety differs from fear as anxiety is related to dangers of future while fear is related to present dangers (Barlow, 2000, p. 1249). Fear focuses on present and is caused by something seen as a threat by the learners; however, anxiety is a long-term feeling which focuses on future, and needs to be cared about in order to overcome it. Even if almost all people have suffered from anxiety at any time in their daily lives, most of them do not fortunately experience this problem for a long time. If the problem of anxiety is experienced for a long time, then it is named as an *anxiety disorder* (Weiner & Craighead, 2010).



What the difference between anxiety and fear is the fact that fear is caused by something realistically dangerous and is an appropriate response to a present threat (Henig, 2012) while anxiety is a feeling of fear, worry, and nervousness resulted in an overreaction to a threatful situation for future (Bouras, 2007). It continues with the feeling of restlessness, getting tired, having problems in concentration, or muscular tension.

Foreign language anxiety is defined by Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) as the apprehension experienced when the learner is obliged to use a foreign language with which the individual is not fully proficient. It is, therefore, seen as a fixed personality trait which causes the person to overreact. Language anxiety is associated with learning the second language, and many elements such as the language classroom, competitiveness, attitudes towards the targeted language, negative evaluation, low self-esteem, lack of group membership and anxiety with teacher may be the reasons of foreign language anxiety (Andrade, & Williams, 2009; MacIntyre, Noels, & Clement, 1997; Lucas, Miraflores, & Go, 2011). In other words, foreign language anxiety, as MacIntyre (1995) states, is social and situation-specific.

If foreign language anxiety reaches a high level, it will put a barrier to the performance or the achievement in the targeted language. As Young (1991) states, foreign language anxiety can reveal as a result of not being able to perform orally, forgetting what to say or which word to use, and reluctance to speak or to read aloud by keeping themselves silent (p. 430).

There are many sources of foreign language anxiety. In addition to learners' beliefs and teachers' beliefs about learning or teaching a foreign language, the level of language course, language skills, motivation, proficiency, teachers, and tests are other factors arousing anxiety (Andrade & Williams, 2009; Aydın, 2008). Moreover, there is a correlation between fear of negative evaluation and foreign language anxiety. Fear of negative evaluation may be

triggered by the teacher who is a fluent speaker and the classmates who are better in speaking the foreign language (Andrade, & Williams, 2009). When students are not fully proficient and when the use of second language is needed, second language anxiety is experienced. Those students feel that they are not able to make a proper statement which is appropriate for the expectations of others. Sometimes, they know the subject or the correct answer; however, as they do not have self-confidence, they prefer to keep silent with the fear of being evaluated negatively by others. These learners do not participate in the classroom activities as a result of the fear of making an error. They observe some of the successful students, and listen to them. But the fear of making a mistake keeps them silent. Therefore, sometimes speaking while being watched by their peers can be another source of anxiety in learning a foreign language (Andrade, & Williams, 2009). A student, who deals with foreign language anxiety, and makes an effort to get free from it, may not find enough time for himself/ herself to concentrate on the course. This case may cause talkative students to experience speaking anxiety as well.

Foreign language anxiety can reveal in a negative way physically, psychologically or socially (Andrade, & Williams, 2009). Physically, the learners may experience the symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, muscle tension, stomach troubles, and change in breathing. Psychologically, the learners may experience the symptoms such as disorder in concentration, embarrassment, unwanted thoughts, and feeling of helplessness. Socially, the learners can experience the symptoms such as unwillingness to participate, inappropriate silence and withdrawal from the course. These outcomes affect negatively the performance of the learners in the targeted language.

There are mainly three causes of foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et. al, 1991). In addition to these causes, Mac-Intyre and Gardner (1991) claims that foreign language anxiety can be resulted from the negative expectations in foreign language learning. On the other hand, the

causes resulted from the classroom atmosphere have some effects in a negative way for the first sparks of foreign language anxiety (Price, 1991; Piniel, 2000). Similarly, Horwitz et al. (1991) claim that foreign language anxiety is regarded as a combination of beliefs and feelings occurred in classroom atmosphere, which is of great importance in the language learning process.

Many research show that foreign language anxiety is related to many factors such as age (Bailey, Onwuegbuzie & Daley, 2000), gender (Aida, 1994; Baker & MacIntyre, 2000), some personality features (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002), negative self-perceptions, beliefs and feelings (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey & Daley, 1999).

### **2.2.1. Components of Foreign Language Anxiety**

Foreign language anxiety is composed of three elements: comprehension apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et. al., 1986).

#### **2.2.1.1. Comprehension Apprehension**

"I just know I have some kind of disability: I can't learn a foreign language no matter how hard I try " (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 123).

"Sometimes when I speak English in class, I am so afraid that I feel like hiding behind my chair. When I am in my Spanish class I just freeze! I can't think of anything when my teacher calls on me. My mind goes blank" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 123).

These sayings belong to the learners who suffer from language anxiety. According to Horwitz et al. (1986) language anxiety can result from relations of the learners, suggesting that communication apprehension is concerned with the foreign language anxiety. They describe communication apprehension as a kind of feeling caused by fear or anxiety about communicating with people.

According to Freidman (1980), communication apprehension is experienced by the learners who have an aptness to feel anxiety when speaking a foreign language. Moreover, it

may exist in most everyday communication situations, or may even be the part of a general anxiety trait that arises in an individual's daily life.

In reference to the argument of Horwitz et al. (1986) about communication apprehension, it can be concluded that communication apprehension has a great role in foreign language anxiety although both students and teacher may not be tuned in it. On the other hand, as anxiety is a psychological event which weakens people even when using their mother tongue orally, communication apprehension may appear if a student cannot comprehend what is being spoken in the course.

Similarly, according to Horwitz et al. (1986), foreign language anxiety is connected with the students' knowledge, because their knowledge determines whether they will experience difficulty in understanding and being understood. Horwitz et al. (1986) regard communication apprehension as a type of being shy because of fear of anxiety in talking to people. They analyze and conclude that having difficulty in speaking in groups or in public, or in listening to a foreign language are all symptoms of communication apprehension. Additionally, it is a type of anxiety which comes into existence when the learners have difficulty in explaining their thoughts or ideas to other students. The learners experiencing this kind of anxiety are embarrassed to communicate not just in a public but in most conditions. It comes into existence mostly in public speaking, and in operating in practice in front of an audience. Because of this apprehension, the learners may not show their real performance in front of the teacher and their peers. Similarly, the communication apprehension can be a result of perfectionism and competitiveness (Horwitz et al., 1986).

#### **2.2.1.2. Test anxiety**

Evaluation is one of the most significant elements in the process of language learning. Language learners usually have tests, quizzes, and exams; they experience a kind of performance anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) state that test anxiety refers to a type of

performance anxiety caused by a fear of failure. The fear of not being able to perform well especially in oral tests is known as test anxiety. This type of performance anxiety includes the evaluation process of language learning.

According to Zeidner (1998), performance anxiety is a kind of anxiety which occurs while taking tests and exams, including anxiety related to the danger or the fear of not being successful in an exam, and the associated negative consequences. It has always been discussed the fact that giving marks to the students by conventional means of evaluation causes poor performance in education for many students. Horwitz et al (1986) explain how anxiety affects learners negatively by attracting our attention at this point as the following:

Students who are test-anxious in foreign language class probably experience considerable difficulty since tests and quizzes are frequent and even the brightest and most pre-prepared students often make errors. Oral tests have the potential of provoking both test and oral communication anxiety simultaneously in susceptible students (p. 130).

Actually Horwitz et al (1986) state that the students, who have test anxiety, try to realize their unrealistic wishes on their own and feel that what they should realize is a perfect test performance not a failure. Therefore, they probably have considerable difficulty; however, because tests and quizzes are continual, therefore even the most successful students may make some errors unfortunately. They may not be able to show their real performance in exams although they have that ability and they are successful in the course in fact. Therefore, these people are likely to become anxious and confused during instructions, and this can affect their performance in foreign language classrooms negatively.

### **2.2.1.3. Fear of negative evaluation**

Fear of negative evaluation is the third type of anxiety related to foreign language learning. It might be considered similar to test anxiety; however, fear of negative evaluation is

more comprehensive in scope. It is the fear of being evaluated or judged by others; teacher and friends in the classroom environment. On this subject, according to Young (1991), the students who are afraid of saying wrongly do not want to take place in the activities and to be passive in the course. For Horwitz et al. (1986), it becomes the fear of others' evaluations, and causes to avoidance of evaluative situations which may be in a negative way. In this respect, the fear of negative evaluation may be stemmed from student's comparing each other with regards to some qualities. They suggest that this anxiety is dissimilar to test anxiety as it is not only limited to the test situations.

In a similar way, Aida (1994) suggested that students who have a fear of negative evaluation are apt to sit passively in the classroom environment and not to take part in classroom activities in case they may show poor improvement of the language skills; therefore, they do not participate in the class to avoid anxiety situations.

Consequently, after these three components of foreign language anxiety, as a conclusion of their research, Horwitz et al (1986) suggest that although communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation supply helpful clues for a definition of foreign language anxiety. Also, they pronounce that foreign language anxiety is not only the integration of these fears. Also, they add the fact that foreign language anxiety is a set of factors which include self-perceptions, negative beliefs, feelings, and behaviors occurring in some certain classroom atmosphere as language learning is an inimitable process. No matter how FLA is performed, the sources of FLA should be analyzed well in order to overcome the problem.

### **2.2.2. Types of Anxiety**

Many learners have a common thought on the fact that anxiety has negative influences and results in language learning, it is of great importance in both psychology and education

(Horwitz, 2001). According to Arnold (1995), there are different faces of language anxiety. Anxiety may be a short-term state or a long-term trait. Anxiety includes different types or faces (Dornyei, 2005). In other words, it is a whole that supports different features. According to psychologists, there are three different categories of anxiety: *trait anxiety*, *state anxiety*, and *situation-specific anxiety*.

#### **2.2.2.1. Trait Anxiety**

*Trait anxiety* is known as a personality characteristic of the learner who finds reasons to feel anxiety for a long term (Scovel, 1978). When anxiety occurs in repeated situations, then it is called as a “trait” (Macintyre, 1995), and seen as a characteristic of learners’ feature. Some people feel anxious or uncomfortable in many occasions they live every day. They may find reasons to feel unrelaxed towards the things they face in their daily lives. This shows that their anxiety is personality-based. Trait anxiety is named also as personality-based anxiety, and defined as "an individual's likelihood of becoming anxious in any situation" (Spielberger, 1983).

#### **2.2.2.2 State Anxiety**

*State anxiety* is experienced temporarily or for a short time, and caused by a particular anxiety-commoving factor such as being tested or watched by others (Horwitz, 2001). According to Nunan (1999), the state anxiety is a *passing state* because it is temporary in some situations. In other words, the state of nervousness only occurs during particular moments in class. State anxiety is a temporary emotional experience which has cognitive effects (MacIntyre, 1995). For example, some students feel anxiety before taking an exam or before language courses.

### **2.2.2.3. Situation-specific anxiety**

Another type of anxiety is situation-specific anxiety. Some people feel anxiety at a specific moment or a specific event. It occurs in particular situations as a constant emotion. The feelings experienced during a test, when solving problems, when speaking may be named as situation-specific anxiety (MacIntyre, 1999; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). *Situation-specific anxiety* is initiated as a result of being triggered by a certain situation or event such as speaking English in front of other people, examinations of the English courses, or class participation (Ellis, 1994).

### **2.3. Research about Foreign Language Anxiety**

Language anxiety is an important subject for researchers as it has effects on learning a foreign language. There are many research, in some of which the researchers have examined the relationship between foreign language anxiety and language performance studies (Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 1986; Tallon, 2006; Wang, 2005).

Foreign language anxiety may cause learners to have potential problems in language learning. For example, when they feel anxious, learners may find their study boring or less enjoyable, and they may face think that they will not be able to understand the spoken instructions (Horwitz and Young, 1991). Anxious learners may keep themselves in silence rather than giving effective responses to their own errors. In short, some literature suggests that foreign language anxiety can affect on students' foreign language learning negatively.

Self-concept of foreign language anxiety and beliefs about foreign language learning are mentioned in the study of Wang (2005). He applied foreign language (FL) classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) to 185 first and second year undergraduate EFL (English as a foreign language) students in China. At the end of the study, he found out the fact that Chinese EFL students' level of language anxiety is higher than the participants' levels of the studies made before.



In the study of Tallon (2006), there were 413 students who were applied in order to find whether the students of Spanish suffer from language anxiety. He also wanted to compare the anxiety level of the students with the previous studies and to compare the anxiety level with self-evaluated proficiency in Spanish. According to the results, he found the fact that if language anxiety arises, self-evaluated proficiency will decrease, and if self-evaluated proficiency arises, language anxiety will decrease.

In the study of Horwitz (1986), there were 78 beginning students of Spanish and French. She tried to examine in what way language anxiety, expected grades and actual grades are related. She found the result that there was a negative significant correlation among these three factors.

Aida (1994) studied with 96 American second-year Japanese students by using FLCAS. He found a significant negative correlation between FLCAS scores and final grades. This result shows that the higher the students' levels of anxiety, the more they are apt to get lower grades.

In Turkey, several studies (Aydemir, 2011; Çakar, 2009; Sağlamel, 2009) have been made to examine language anxiety. In the studies, the researchers mostly took attention to the role of language anxiety in learners' achievement scores, the relationship between different types of anxiety, the relationship between gender and foreign language anxiety, the relationship between past language learning experiences and the foreign language anxiety levels, and the role of language anxiety in specific skills.

Through his study, Sağlamel (2009) aimed at finding and identifying the relationship between anxiety levels' of university students and speaking grades. While trying to identify the relationship between these two factors, he also tried to find alternative ways and give suggestions to reduce language anxiety in speaking classes. At the end of his study, he found that there was not a significant relationship between language anxiety and speaking grades.

However, according to Sađlamel, there was a difference between male students and female students. He observed that the male students experiences less anxiety than female students.

Aydemir (2011) aimed at finding the difference between the foreign language anxiety levels of the university students at the beginning and at the end of the academic year. Through his study, he observed that there was a significant increase in the participants' language anxiety levels between the beginning and the end of the academic year. At the end of the study, he became aware of the fact that fear of negative evaluation plays an important role in the increase in students' language anxiety levels resulted as well as learner's beliefs, perceptions, and feelings.

In another study, akar (2009) aimed at examining the relationship between past language learning experiences and the foreign language anxiety levels of university students by using both quantitative and qualitative methods. With her study, she found that students' prior history of visiting countries, having had a native teacher or not, having studied another language different than English had importance for foreign language anxiety. As a result, there was a relationship between past language learning experiences and foreign language anxiety.

In this study, the researcher tries to discover the factors caused by the learner's own sense of self, by the language learning process, or by the situation or social environment he/she is a part of. Secondly, this study aims at finding out and suggesting some strategies for language teachers in order to decrease language anxiety in the learners. With this research, teachers may realize that what all the students need is self-confidence and the interest of the teachers. If teachers make an effort to win the student over, they can draw the attention of the students, create a relaxing learning environment, motivate the students, make them feel secure and confidently so that the students can speak without feeling anxiety. If teachers ignore these

points, English will be probably the most difficult subject that they will take in their entire life and students will continue to dread walking through those English class doors.

#### **2.4. Dealing with Foreign Language Anxiety**

In order not to let foreign language anxiety reveal or in order to reduce the level of it, teachers should identify all possible problems which may block the way of the course. In order to help the students who are experiencing anxiety to overcome this problem, making fun of a wrong answer should not be accepted, and mistake tolerance should be applied. Teachers should create a learning environment in which the students regard errors as a natural part of learning a foreign language, also, students should be encouraged to ask for help without running the risk of embarrassment or without hesitating (Dornyei, 2001).

Students can share their anxieties in a group or foreign language class to see that they are not alone in their fears. Teachers can assist to students in order that they can approach the anxiety-provoking situation in a more realistic way instead of avoiding the situation. Creating a learning atmosphere for arising motivation of the learners (Alderman, 2004), and a collaborative atmosphere (Gregersen, 2003) can help reduce the fear of making errors.

Teachers should avoid correction directly in speaking activities as it may have bad effects on students' confidence, and it may discourage learners who are anxious about being picked out as speaking silly in the targeted language (Lightbown and Spada, 1999).

Both verbal behaviors such as use of humor, use of students' first names and nonverbal behaviors such as eye contact, positive gestures may be employed by the teacher, since they can reduce anxiety and impact positively on motivating the students towards learning the foreign language (Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993).

## CHAPTER 3

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology of the thesis study, including research design, participants, data collection procedures, instruments, and data analysis techniques. The first purpose of this study is to examine the reasons of language anxiety, why EFL learners feel anxious or feel embarrassed while learning to speak English language, and how language anxiety reveals itself. The second purpose of this research is to suggest some useful strategies for language teachers in order to reduce language anxiety in the learners. This purpose includes the elements of language anxiety which come from the learners' own self, from the learning process and from the social environment of what he or she is part of.

In the study, foreign language anxiety was investigated from both in and outside of the language classroom setting in a wide social context. Therefore, through this study, the researcher has been able to assess learners' levels of foreign language anxiety based on communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and learner beliefs, perceptions, feelings related to foreign language anxiety.

#### 3.2. Research design

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), researchers who use quantitative strategy are unconcerned with detailed explanations because the detailed information blocks the way of developing generalizations. The qualitative studies are unique as they describe an experience, event or person which cannot be written in numerical form. Only qualitative strategy can be useful to describe personal stories. As qualitative research focuses on natural situations, events, or activities, the researcher examines a situated activity by employing interviews,

tape-or video-recordings, observations, teacher journal, and so on. Having gathered the data, the researcher then tries to interpret the phenomena.

According to Merriam (1998), qualitative research is a more general concept which includes several types of investigations that help us understand and explain the meaning of social problem without changing the natural setting a lot. Therefore, qualitative researchers search for detailed information. They look for the uniqueness of each case they study, and they look closely at the context of each case. They also put to use stories of the participants to help provide a detailed description (Stake, 1995, p. 43) of each case. In qualitative research, the main instrument is the researcher himself/ herself who collects, analyzes the data, and involves herself/ himself with the people and settings she or he studies.

There are also some studies which are called as "case study" which is a specific, and a working research. In a case study, the researcher "tries to understand how the actors, the people being studied, see things" (Stake, 1995, p. 12). A case study includes "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit" (Merriam, 1998, p. 193). Its main aim is to give a description, an explanation, and a judgment. On the other hand, *collective case study* is composed of a set of case studies made coordinately, and may also be known as *multiple case studies* (Yin, 2003; Stake, 2006). It is always better to study more than one case as these cases can be studied comparatively by showing similarities and differences among all of the cases. Therefore, the results or claims deduced from these cases can be more general and persuasive as they give the same evidence from a set of case studies (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Additionally, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), research method in a study depends on the research questions which the researcher chooses. For this thesis study, the researcher has decided on using a qualitative research strategy as it is best appropriate for the

data which answer the research questions of the study. After the researcher has decided to examine a collective case study, she has considered the most obvious way in order to answer and to find solutions to the research questions. The goal of this study is to understand personal experiences of language anxiety of the students. She has focused on rich descriptions of their private experiences in language courses. She has aimed at making mention of conducting individual interviews and focused groups in order to collect the data form research. The main reason to use a qualitative method was because of the fact that it started with the participants and continued to work by comprehending and making comments on the experiences of the students in a specific occasion (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). As language anxiety is affected by many different factors, it cannot be described or explained in a linear way (Ohata, 2005). How the students feel anxious in foreign language learning, what the reasons of it are, how it reveals itself, how the students overcome it, and what teachers can do was investigated using qualitative research strategy. As the researcher has thought that qualitative research gave a more distinct image which would show the relationship between language anxiety and language performance.

### **3.3. Participants**

As this study is a collective case study, the researcher has found the chance of investigating the anxious students and their common problems. The participants in this study were four students at Gaziantep X Medical Vocational High School. In this study, two of the students were female and the other two of the students were male. They were all ninth graders, two of whom were thirteen years old and the other two of whom were fourteen years old. One of the female students stayed in a dormitory and lived far away from her family while the rest lived with their families. All of these students were afraid of speaking a foreign language and they are lack of self- confidence.

### **3.4. Data Collection Procedures & Instruments**

In the process of this study, first the researcher observed all of the students. Then, she realized that four students had difficulty in language courses and suffered from language anxiety. After she realized these students, she interviewed with them one by one. She took some notes about their background information and made them talk about their feelings or thoughts about their foreign language experiences.

Through this process, the researcher used observation scheme, teacher journal, and unstructured interview. These instruments helped her gather information about each of the cases and generate a detailed description of each of the cases.

#### **3.4.1. Observation Scheme**

After the researcher realized the anxious students in language courses, she prepared an observation scheme. She aimed at identifying the anxious students and how their anxiety would reveal itself. In this scheme, she took some notes about their name, class, age, gender, when / how many times / how long anxiety reveals itself, and how their anxiety is observed (see Appendix A). She used this observation scheme when she found clues about their anxiety, and she wrote notes whenever she observed anxiety on these students.

#### **3.4.2. Teacher Journal**

In teacher journal, the researcher wrote some extra information about the anxious students. From time to time, when she talked to these students and learned something, she wrote it down. Also, the stories of the students were written in teacher journal. The participants' stories are different from each other. Sometimes while chatting with them, they gave information about their previous teachers, the reasons of their fear in language courses, their feelings while speaking English. All of the information was written in teacher journal.

The notes in the teacher journal helped the researcher prepare questions to follow up on previous interviews, and correct her thoughts in order to avoid her biases. After she listened to the participants' stories, she wrote her thoughts and feelings on their experiences in the journal.

### **3.4.3. Unstructured Interview**

To learn more in-depth information about the sources and effects of students' anxiety, an unstructured interview was used. This interview included some issues such as general emotional reactions in English courses, anxiety- provoking situations in English courses, effects of anxiety on learning and performance, physical symptoms of anxiety, and the sources of anxiety in English courses. In this research, the researcher wanted to use unstructured and face to face depth-individual interviews due to "its flexibility balanced by structure and the quality of the data so obtained" (Gillham, 2005, p. 70).

At the beginning of the process, after the researcher realized the anxious students, she made interview with them every two weeks. In a room, she prepared them an atmosphere in which they could feel comfortable and they could speak without hesitating. She used a voice-recorder, because she did not want to write some notes in front of the students. She thought that they could not feel comfortable themselves. After the interview, she listened to the recordings and took notes about the students.

During the interviews, the researcher asked the participants to recall and reflect on their previous experiences. They recalled their own experiences as second language learners and reflected on their language anxiety in language courses. She avoided yes-no questions because in this study she aimed at obtaining descriptive, personal accounts of the participants' experiences. She asked the participants to summarize their past and recent experiences as language learners. She interviewed them in a more detailed manner about the topics they



mentioned during the previous interviews which were very important to the study. To help make them feel comfortable and be sincere while sharing their personal stories with the researcher, she shared her own personal stories of language anxiety with them.

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

Data analysis for this study was carried out on the assumption that the survey instruments were internally consistent and would produce valid data. The data obtained from the interviews, teacher journal, and observation schemes were assessed in order to identify the reasons of language anxiety and the ways in which anxiety reveals itself. A detailed individual background information was gathered in order to learn their interest in a foreign language.

After the data were collected, they were analyzed and evaluated case by case. While analyzing the data, qualitative methods were used in order to provide interpretive results at the end of the study. The recorded interviews were listened for many times by the researcher, then the data was noted down in an understandable way in order to analysis and interpret. Finally, the data was analyzed together with the background information of each participant. The researcher made comments on the results, then compared and contrasted them together with another teacher, including the supervisor of this thesis.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the major analyses conducted on the data obtained from the study. First, the research questions are mentioned, and then the results of each research questions are discussed by giving the related information of each case.

#### 4.2. Results

Second language anxiety is sometimes caused by the fear of negative evaluation. This fear results from the lack of self-confidence. Young (1991) found that anxious learners thought their skills in language were less successful than their peers' and they were looking down at them. The students of Gaziantep X Medical Vocational High School were afraid to speak out aloud in front of the class, during speaking practice. They thought of others' evaluation a lot, and they felt that they were not able to make a proper statement which was appropriate for the expectations of others. Sometimes they knew the subject or the correct answer; however, as they did not have self-confidence, they preferred to keep silent with the fear of being evaluated negatively by others. Besides, fear of negative evaluation can be triggered by the teacher as a fluent speaker and the classmates. The learners did not participate in the classroom activities as a result of the fear of committing a verbal error. They observed some of the successful students' speeches, pronunciation, and they were getting afraid of making pronunciation errors in classroom. As they lacked self-confidence, they preferred to keep silent. Therefore, speaking in front of their peers became another source of anxiety in learning a foreign language.

In this study, research questions are given in the results and discussion section again, and the results are examined by looking at each research question one by one to give a clear and understandable explanation in each case.

This study conducted to shed light on the reasons of language anxiety and how to deal with it. It was tried to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the reasons of anxiety which the students feel while practicing English orally?
2. How can I reduce the students' anxieties?

#### CASE-1 (Student A)

She is from Şanlıurfa, and stays in a dormitory in order to be able to continue this high school. Her parents send her to Gaziantep despite their life in hard conditions. She says that she has not liked English since her childhood; and has not loved any English teacher.

The researcher observed that she felt anxious while speaking, listening, and reading in front of people in language classes. Generally she was relaxed during the lesson. However, when it became her turn, she was getting very anxious, and her mind went blank. Until her sentences or short utterances finished, her anxiety continued to reveal itself. She felt hot, then her cheeks were burning, and she cried in language classes. Her sentences always started with the phrase "I cannot...". This student, also, found English nonsense as some words such as "I, enough, one" were read in a different way from the way they were read in Turkish. Sometimes, even if she knew the answer, she kept herself in silence because of the fear of negative evaluation.

R.Q.-1: What are the reasons of anxiety which the students feel while practicing English orally?

In the interviews which the researcher made with her, she learned that the main reason of the hatred of the student towards English was her previous teacher. According to the student's words, her previous teacher said that it was enough to save five of the students who were the most hardworking ones; the rest was useless; they were all lazy; they were all shiftless and inefficient. The teacher always said "Haven't you studied again?", "I have taught you the subject, but you have not understood it." The student also said the followings:

The teacher shouted at me many times; however, when my parents came to school, he never said anything to my parents. Therefore, I did not say anything to them, either. If the teacher had said something to them, my parents would have warned and helped me. When the teacher said to my parents that I participated in the lesson, I confirmed him. However, I had not answered even five questions since the beginning of the year. Besides, I do not like reading books, so I cannot write and read in English in front of people. Also, I am afraid of reading wrong, not being able to answer the questions, or the fact that my friends laugh at me. On the other hand, at home, when my brother and my sister were speaking in English, I shouted at them in order not to hear anything in English, and I did not let them speak.

At the beginning of the year, the researcher taught English to her class as a teacher, but then the curriculum was changed, and the other English teacher started to give English lessons to them. After two weeks, the curriculum was changed again, and the class came to the researcher again. In the following interviews, the researcher started to see the development on her. The student said the followings:

At the beginning of the year, I thought that I would come to the board in every English course, so my fear of English triggered again. My bias "English will be terrible again" started to disappear, and I started to like English a little bit. However, when the

curriculum was changed, I listened to the other teacher, and I hated English more. The other teacher was very hard, so I turned to the previous "me". Just as I started to like English a little bit after many years, I hated English again. The other teacher said to us "Do not make any voice! If you do not obey my rules, you cannot pass English courses." Then, you returned to English courses and I felt more relaxed a little bit. I started to learn something in English through word games, dramas, theatres, videos, films. Still, I am afraid of English very much. One day, we were reading a dialogue in the language course. I was afraid of coming to the board. Because of my fear, I lied that I had a stomachache. In fact, I did not have any stomachache. I said so, as I was afraid of reading aloud or speaking English. Before it became my turn, I went out of the classroom with this reason. I could not learn anything with obligation. I did not like English very much, because I could not learn it easily. On another day, before English course started, I ran away from the classroom, and sat on the fire-stairs in order not to participate in the course. I do not have self-confidence. Therefore, I am embarrassed of speaking English in front of others or being watched by others. One day, in an English course, we were doing reading exercise, it became my turn. You told me to read the sentence. I did not read it, and I feared terribly. I shouted at you "I will not read it, I do not want to read anything!", and then I went out of the classroom. Then, I regretted very much. Because of my regret, I could not come to the school and look at you. I wrote a letter to you so that you would forgive me. In the letter (Appendix B), I explained all of my feelings and I apologized you for what I had done.

According to the observations of the researcher and the notes she wrote down, she found that the main reason of her foreign language anxiety was her hatred towards English which was caused by her previous teacher. With his rough behavior and words, he made the students feel anxious in language classes, so she was afraid of being watched and laughed by

others as she had no self-confidence. As a result, she had the fear of making mistakes and getting low grades.

R.Q.-2: How can the researcher reduce the students' anxieties?

As the researcher mentioned in chapter two that foreign language anxiety is composed of three elements: comprehension apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et. al., 1986). In this student, all of these elements were observed. At the beginning of the year, as she did not have self-confidence, she always got away from participating in the class. She put a barrier to her mind and closed herself to English as she was afraid of being tested, being unsuccessful, and as a result negative evaluation. Therefore, she was apt to sit passively in the classroom environment and not to take part in classroom activities because of her anxiety.

Anxiety is a multifaceted construct (Dornyei, 2005). It has three categories of anxiety: *trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety*. As anxiety of this student was personality-based, it was a trait anxiety. Her anxiety occurred in repeated situations, and she found reasons not to feel relaxed in English courses.

According to the student, there were many rules to remember in English. As the researcher knew her feelings and the fact that she understood a new language slowly, the researcher did not give any rules in the classes of the researcher. The researcher gave what she wanted to teach them in an indirect way such as films, short-videos, word games, dramas, and so on.

Creating a relaxing environment provides a collaborative atmosphere and helps motivation of the students. Teacher-student relations are also of capital importance; because students should be encouraged to help for ask without hesitation or embarrassment. In order to reduce the anxiety level of this student, the researcher tried to have a connection with her in a

friendly way. As this student was a hard girl, it was not easy to make her talk about herself. In time, the researcher started to win her heart. As this student poured her heart out to the researcher, she felt intimate with the researcher. Then, the researcher observed that she began overcoming her prejudices towards English.

In order to reduce her anxiety level, the researcher avoided direct correction in classroom activities, and tried to make the students have fun in English courses. In only one-word activities and word-puzzles, the student started to participate in the class. In time, the researcher observed that the student enjoyed while they were listening to the song in listening activities and she sang the song with smiling. Even if her anxiety did not end, the researcher observed that she really contributed to reduce the anxiety of the student a little bit.

#### CASE 2 (Student B)

This student was one of the most well behaved students. He loved English but he experienced anxiety especially when speaking or reading English aloud. He listened to the lesson carefully; however, whenever he wanted to participate or begin to speak in the course, his anxiety revealed itself and continued from the beginning of the course to the end of it.

R.Q.-1: What are the reasons of anxiety which the students feel while practicing English orally?

Actually, he had the problem of stuttering in his daily life a little bit. When the subject was a foreign language, his problem of stuttering came to a terrible level. As he knew the fact that he was not as fast as their peers, he was afraid of mockery and laughter. When it became his turn, his breathing became fast, his facial expression changed in a bad way, and his speech disturbances came out.

In the first course of the researcher, she did not realize that he had the problem of stuttering as it was not revealed in his mother tongue. One day, while he was reading a passage in English, he started to stutter and he left the sentence incomplete as he embarrassed of his situation. The whole class started to laugh at him, and then the researcher stopped them. After the course, the student went out immediately, and the researcher talked to the rest of the students. The researcher said that what they did was wrong, and they owed him an apology. Then, the researcher added that this would happen to anyone of them, and they had to support him.

In the upcoming days, during the interviews, the researcher learned that in his previous years, his friends always laughed at him and this caused him to lose his self-confidence in English courses. He did not continue to study English as he thought that he could not be successful. He continued to be afraid of negative evaluation by his peers, and this situation resulted in having low grades and his turning in upon himself.

According to the observation of the researcher, his anxiety was situation-specific as he felt anxious only when it became his turn to speak or read in English. He became anxious only in a particular situation permanently. Even if his stuttering revealed itself more obviously while speaking or reading in English, the researcher knew this student loved English course and me, about which he wrote down on a paper after an English course. During the courses, the researcher observed that the student was only afraid of apprehension about others' evaluations and of saying wrongly, so he did not want to take place in the activities and to be passive in the course.

R.Q.-2: How can the researcher reduce the students' anxieties?

As this student did not have prejudices towards English like student A, it was not so difficult to help him. The researcher saw the efforts of this student to be successful in English



and to overcome his stuttering. He knew that his stuttering was related to his fears, therefore in order to overcome his stuttering, he would pull his fears down and have self-confidence.

In the free times of the researcher, she called him to her room. The researcher and the student studied English together in reading activities. In the beginning, the student was very anxious and excited; however, in time his anxiety started to reduce. He said to the researcher that every evening he studied English for fifteen minutes by reading a passage aloud and he recorded his reading. They listened to the recordings together, and were like a kid in a candy store when they realized the difference between the first recording and the last one. At the beginning of the year, before the researcher realized his anxiety, the student was sitting at the desk at the back. But now he was sitting at the desk in front of the table of the researcher, and he was enjoying English courses.

#### CASE-3 (Student C)

She was the most obvious student who revealed her anxiety from the very beginning of the English courses. She hated English through speaking, writing, listening, or reading, and she showed her feelings with her behaviors. From the beginning of the course to the end of it, she did not feel confident and relaxed. Although her twin-brother was just the opposite of her, she had prejudices and hatred towards English. During English courses, she always wanted to go to the toilet with any reason. Her voice changed, and she felt restless. According to what the researcher learned from the friends of the student, she became ill at ease only in English courses. Without any reason, the student shouted at others when the other students said something to her, and got angry with everybody in the class. As she had no self-confidence, she wreaked her anger on her friends, and she moved against them aggressively. In almost all of English courses, she said to me that she had stomach troubles and she would go out.

R.Q.-1: What are the reasons of anxiety which the students feel while practicing English orally?

After the researcher was sure that the student was hateful towards English, the researcher wanted to take information from her twin-brother about her, and he told the researcher the whole story. Her hatred towards English started three years ago when her previous English teacher beat her as she did not answer the question which resulted in her nose bleeding. Onwards the very day, her hatred towards English and English teachers started, and she was afraid of the fact that her flaws were picked out by other people. She became shy about being picked out as different in a crowd while practicing English. Fear of negative evaluation put a barrier for her to study English and to be successful.

As it is mentioned in chapter two, *trait anxiety* is relatively fixed personality characteristic, and a long-term aptness to be anxious (Ellis, 1994). When anxiety occurs in repeated situations, then it becomes a “trait” (Macintyre, 1995). Anxiety, which this student experienced, was a trait anxiety. Her anxiety never changed during the lesson. English was the most awful thing for her, so she could always find a reason to hate it. According to the observations of the researcher, the main reasons of the student’s anxiety were comprehension apprehension, anxiety caused by being watched or tested, and fear of negative evaluation. Similarly, in the interviews, the student said the following:

I always make many mistakes while speaking English, I don’t understand it, so I cannot express myself in a foreign language. While speaking, I think for a while what to say. Even if I speak slowly and by thinking what to say, I still make mistakes. No matter how hard I try, I cannot be as successful as my friends. They speak more fluently and better than me. You teach us the same course, but they understand the course better. Even if I listen to you carefully, I cannot put my ideas into correct order.

Therefore, I prefer to be silent and to listen to my friends instead of participating in the course actively.

R.Q.-2: How can the researcher reduce the students' anxieties?

As she was the most difficult case for the researcher, the researcher gave much more efforts to the student than other three students. It was really hard to make a hit with the student. As she had a twin-brother, the researcher tried to use this advantage. Her twin-brother loved English much, studied English, and did his homework regularly. In order to take the particular attention of the anxious student, first the researcher made the twin-brother love herself. As the researcher knew the anxious student was jealous of her brother, through this way, the researcher wanted to create impression on her about English and English teacher.

Comparison between students was not a good way; however, it worked well this time as she was jealous of her brother. She always wanted to be better than her brother in all case whether at home or school, therefore the researcher used this frailty of her. Both of the twins enjoyed films and song in their daily lives, so the researcher tried to arouse her interest in English through films and songs. During the lessons, English films were applied as a part of this study. At the beginning, she did not catch what the actors were talking and they got exhausted. However, when she realized that her brother enjoyed these English films and painted them in glowing colors, she gave herself a chance, and she tried to love English through films. At the end of the self-test process, she realized that she could understand and enjoy watching English films if she wanted.

#### CASE-4 (Student D)

This student experienced anxiety until her sentences finished while speaking or reading English. Whenever she participated in the course, she felt hot, and her cheeks were burning. As her pronunciation of English was really terrible, her self-confidence was getting

less and less. She knew that she was not as fast as her peers, so while reading or speaking in English she started to laugh at herself and then cry for her unsuccess. She said that she listened to English songs every day, but she did not understand the songs and movies in English. She did not catch what were said in movies or songs. She wanted to understand the English world and its culture. She wanted to benefit from the advantages that the process provided her. However, she knew that it was hard for her to be successful in reading aloud or speaking in English as her pronunciation of English was really terrible.

R.Q.-1: What are the reasons of anxiety which the students feel while practicing English orally?

In the interviews, according to what she said, when it became her turn to read aloud or speak in English, unwanted thoughts came to her mind. What she wanted to say disappeared, she forgot what she would say and could not answer the question in speaking activities. When it was not her turn to speak, she knew the answer of every question. While reading, her heart beat very fast, and she was unable to get her tongue around a word.

*State anxiety* is a temporal anxiety, a response to a particular anxiety-commoving stimulus such as an important test or the turn to speak. What this student experienced was a *passing state* because it was temporary in some situation. In other words, the state of nervousness only occurred during particular moments in class.

Her anxiety resembled the example of learners' experiences which Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 123) gave as "I just know I have some kind of disability: I can't learn a foreign language no matter how hard I try." Her communication apprehension was caused by fear or anxiety about communicating with people.

R.Q.-2: How can the researcher reduce the students' anxieties?

Foreign language anxiety consists of "self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al. 1986, p. 128). In order to help this student, what the researcher first had to do was to break her thought "I cannot do, and I cannot be successful in speaking or reading in English."

When the researcher learned the anxiety of the student after the observations of the researcher and what she said in the interviews, the researcher tried to reduce her anxiety by correcting the pronunciation of the students not directly but indirectly. Also, every week the researcher brought songs to the class. First, they listened to the song, filled in the blanks, and then sang the song altogether. In the last five minutes of the class, the researcher asked for a voluntary student who would sing the song together with the singer himself.

### **4.3. Discussion**

In this part, the results are investigated by reviewing the similar studies or research done both in Turkey and in different countries. Those studies are helpful in that this study can be compared by looking how similar or different than those studies. The research questions are examined one by one to come up with a clear explanation.

#### **4.3.1. Discussion relating to research question 1**

R.Q.-1: What are the reasons of anxiety which the students feel while practicing English orally?

Foreign language learning process is a unique process, because learners are required to communicate using a language which they have not mastered perfectly. Several studies of foreign language anxiety show that language anxiety has to be overcome by the learners in order to learn and understand the foreign language better (Horwitz et al., 1986). Therefore, the

aim of the research is to examine the reasons of anxiety which the students feel while practicing English orally. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), three components of foreign language anxiety have been identified as communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Students suffering from communication apprehension do not feel relaxed speaking in the target language when being watched by others. Students suffering from fear of negative evaluation regard language errors not as a natural part of the learning process, but as a threat to themselves. According to these students, language errors are also a source for negative evaluations either from the teacher or their peers. As a result of the foreign language anxiety, they keep themselves silent, and do not participate in language activities (Ely, 1986). Students suffering from test anxiety regard the foreign language process as a test situation, rather than an opportunity for communication and skills improvement.

Motivation is another important factor in foreign language learning. Motivated students are less anxious in second language courses than students who are instrumentally motivated. The research findings claim that anxiety and motivation are "two separate dimensions with overlapping behavioral consequences" (Gardner, Day & MacIntyre, 1992, p. 212).

After data was collected, the researcher found that four students were experiencing English language speaking anxiety as a result of fear of negative evaluation from their peers, perception of low ability in relation to their peers, and anxiety caused by previous teachers. Their anxiety was attributed to the above factors. First, these students did not want to participate in speaking activities. While there can be a number of potential factors for this, this research showed that their reluctance was not due to the fact that they did not realize the value of learning English, so they had laziness, or lack of interest in the English language. These students' narratives provided strong evidence that they did not participate in speaking activities, because they believed that they were not good at speaking, so they feared that their

peers would evaluate them in a negative way. Teachers were also of great importance on the anxiety of these students. The study claimed that behaviors of teachers could make students feel anxious in language classes and could cause them to hate English, to be afraid of making mistakes, and to get low grades.

Another source of this fear was the belief that they should come up with errorless and perfect sentences. This finding seems similar to Gregersen's (2003) suggestion that anxious learners tend to focus on form rather than content. All of these anxious students feared that mistakes in speaking activities would bring shame on them in their social environment.

In the research data, it was found that fear of negative evaluation from their peers was more dominant than fear of negative evaluation from the teacher. When asked to participate in speaking tasks with the teacher only, without their friends who were listening to them, these anxious students were observed to be more willing to participate in the activities. It is not unsurprising that these students were withdrawn and silent during speaking activities.

As a result, the reasons, which are learned through observations and interviews, can be summarized as the following:

- The difficulty of putting the ideas into writing
- Their hating being picked out as different in a crowd while practicing English
- Not being as fast as their peers
- Fear of the fact that their flaws are picked out by others
- Many rules to remember
- Different ways to spell each word
- Understanding a new language slowly
- Not having high grades
- Fear of negative evaluation of the teachers
- Prejudices and hatred towards English caused by the previous teachers

- Feeling anxiety while speaking and the thoughts of failure
- Not feeling confident and relaxed
- Fear of getting low grades
- Fear of the parents as a result of getting low grades
- Fear of negative evaluation by their peers
- Not being interested in English
- Forgetting what they know while speaking
- Having the problem of stuttering
- Fear of mockery or laughter
- Not being as fast as their peers
- The thought of "My friends are better than me."

In the interviews, the participants were asked what reactions they showed when they were obliged to speak English. The students stated that they showed different reactions such as bodily reactions, emotional reactions, expressive reactions and verbal reactions in English.

#### Bodily reactions

- Change in breathing
- Feeling hot, cheeks burning
- Heart beating faster
- Muscles relaxing, restful
- Stomach troubles
- Feeling warm, pleasant

#### Emotional reactions

- Mind went blank



- Could not concentrate
- Had many unwanted thoughts

#### Expressive reactions

- Moving against people aggressively
- Changes in voice
- Changes in facial expression
- Crying
- Laughing

#### Verbal reactions

- Silence
- Speech disturbances
- Short utterances
- One or two sentences

### **4.3.2. Discussion relating to research question 2**

R.Q.-2: How can the researcher reduce the students' anxieties?

In the interviews, the participants were asked in which situations they would feel comfortable in English classes or what they expect their teachers to do. Answers were various:

1. To find a foreigner to whom they can talk on the phone.
2. To bring some short clips about the unit to the class so that they can find a chance to listen to the native speakers and try to improve their pronunciation.
3. To play games which include speaking in English

4. To make group-work activities in speaking instead of the oral tests.
5. To bring movies to the class once a week.

Having examined the sources for the foreign language anxiety of the students, the following classroom interventions were implemented, to help them overcome it:

- Creating a learning atmosphere provided "optimal motivation" (Alderman, 2004). Also collaborative learning could help reduce fear of foreign language. The students both enjoyed the lesson and learned English together.
- Songs in English were applied because the students were having fun while listening to the songs. Every course, in the last ten minutes, they listened to the song, filled in the blanks of the song, and then sang the song altogether.
- English films were also applied. At the beginning, they did not catch what the actors were talking and they got exhausted. At the end, they started to understand and enjoy watching English films.
- Short-term projects were applied because of their benefits in foreign language settings cited in the literature as the followings:
  - a) students are more personally involved, and as a result they usually have increased motivation (Lee, 2002)
  - b) they do not realize that they are continually tested
  - c) it is easier for them to pay particular attention to communication, rather than to accuracy, as they know less about language errors (MacIntyre, Noels& Clement, 1997, p. 269).

Also, through project work, students have an active role and responsibilities in practicing the project work, therefore their self-confidence can arise, and the effect of perceptions of low ability in the target language can reduce.

- Teacher-students relations should be at the right consistency. There were many rules were discussed with the students. Laughing at a wrong answer was not accepted, and mistake tolerance was recognized. Therefore, mistakes were considered a natural part of learning a foreign language and students were encouraged to ask for help without feeling embarrassment (Dornyei, 2001). I also tried to encourage the students to continue a speaking activity, despite making errors through scaffolding in which I clarified the necessary steps for the task.
- Group-works were applied, and the groups were formed from mixed ability students. Students were given equally academically challenging tasks, and the same questioning strategies were used for all students (Alderman, 2004), so that they understood that there was no different formality among the students.
- Praising these students in front of others in the classroom non-verbally such as a positive head movement was most often applied, which gave them confidence and motivated them more.
- Privacy between the student and the teacher is one of the important factors which affect the motivation of the student in a negative or positive way. Behaviors that could be regarded as a potential source of anxiety were avoided. Information about students' test scores was kept private and was not announced to the whole classroom as it could reduce their self-confidence and cause them to withdrawal from participating in the activities.
- Providing indirect correction was of great importance in language learning. We avoided direct correction in the activities, as it can hurt students' self-confidence and discourage the students from learning a foreign language.

- Use of humor, use of students' first names, eye contact, and positive gestures were applied as they can reduce anxiety and motivate them to learn (Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993).

With the help of these classroom interventions, the researcher observed some development on the students as the following:

- Seeing English as a great opportunity
- Its being exciting and learnability
- Benefiting from the advantages that the process provides them
- Understanding the world and its cultures better
- Their being praised for good scores in school
- Increasing their ability to perform other creative activities
- Their being interested in English music, movies
- Developing their pronunciation of English
- The ability to perform better in school
- Improving their social and business skills in the future by loving English
- Increasing in self-confidence
- Exercising and strengthening the faculties of the brain
- Loving the sounds of English

Consequently, speaking is the most "anxiety-provoking aspect in a second language learning situation" (Cheng, Horwitz & Schallert, 1999, p. 420). A study which examined the sources of foreign language, speaking anxiety showed a correlation between a) anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, and b) anxiety and perception of low ability in relation to peers and native speakers (Kitano, 2001). According to Kitano, teachers should find ways to help students deal with fear of negative evaluation, with the help of positive reinforcement such as positive comments. In relation to learners' perception of low

ability, teachers should make an effort in the classroom environment in order to create a "sense of community in the classroom" and should apply group-work. In this way, students do not fight with each other in a competitive way (Kitano, 2001).

## CHAPTER 5

### 5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

#### 5.1. Overview of the Study

The current study was a qualitative study which examined the reasons of foreign language anxiety and how to deal with it. The qualitative methods were used to recognize an experience or an event. Individual experiences cannot be written in numerical form. Only qualitative strategy can help describe personal stories, and it focuses on natural situations, events or activities. As a qualitative study with the aim of finding detailed information, this study attempted to identify the possible sources of foreign language anxiety and the ways to reduce anxiety in speaking and reading classes. For this, qualitative data collection was employed including interviews, observations, teacher journal, and so on.

The first purpose of this study was to investigate the reasons of language anxiety, why EFL learners felt anxious or felt embarrassed while learning to speak English language, and how language anxiety reveals itself. The second purpose of the research was to suggest some useful strategies for language teachers in order to reduce the foreign language anxiety of the learners.

The participants of this study, who were the ninth graders of Gaziantep X Medical Vocational High School, had difficulty in speaking a second or foreign language. They experienced second language anxiety and this caused them not to be successful in English. As to the findings of the present study, it proved that the learners of English experience speaking and reading aloud anxiety. At the study, it was found that four students in Gaziantep X Medical Vocational High School suffered from foreign language anxiety while speaking or reading aloud in English. After the study and the interventions, these students showed improvement in English language speaking performance.

Many researchers (Horwitz et al., 1986; Philips, 1992; Price, 1991; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Young, 1992) have accepted speaking as problematic and extremely anxiety-provoking, and therefore the most challenging aspect in foreign language learning. Moreover, the related literature on foreign language anxiety was reviewed and answers to two research questions were answered in detail. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the reasons of anxiety which the students feel while practicing English orally?
2. How can the researcher reduce the students' anxiety?

## **5.2. Summary of the Findings**

The first research question investigated the reasons of anxiety which the students felt while practicing English orally. The results showed that the reasons of foreign language anxiety were communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, language errors, low motivation, fear of negative evaluation from their peers, perception of low ability in relation to their peers, and anxiety caused by previous teachers. The results suggested that teachers and learners go hand in hand in order to overcome the problem of foreign language anxiety.

The second research question investigated the ways to reduce these students' anxiety. The results showed that in order to reduce the foreign language anxiety of the learners, teachers were of the great importance. The results claimed that creating a learning environment, applying songs, films, short-term projects, group works, teacher-students relations, privacy between teachers and students, praising the anxious students, providing indirect correction, use of humor, use of students' first names, eye contact, and positive gestures worked well to reduce the anxiety level of the students.

According to this study, the characteristics of the anxious students in this study changed as the followings. These students now:

1. Are not so afraid of making mistakes in foreign language class.
2. Concentrate on the course more than before.
3. Start to participate in the speaking or reading activities more.
4. Feel not always but sometimes uncertain about whether what they say is right or wrong.
5. Think that they are all in an equally good condition as to success and noone is better than the rest of the class.
6. Do not feel so anxious as before in foreign language courses.
7. Worry when they do not understand what is being taught.
8. Are still afraid of being unsuccessful in foreign language courses.
9. Are not afraid of being laughed or evaluated negatively by their peers.
10. Feel less thrilled when it is their turn to speak.
11. Can rarely forget what to say when they panic.
12. Are not embarrassed to make mistakes, so their self-confidence develops a little bit.
13. Have still got beating hearts when it is their turn.
14. Do not feel as boring as before while studying English.

An observation scheme was used in which these students' willingness to participate in speaking tasks was recorded. Research findings gave strong evidence that at the end of the study, these anxious students were significantly more willing to participate in speaking and reading activities. Besides, at the end of the study, the eye-contact of these anxious students was more often. Even if they still made errors, these errors did not put a barrier for them to participate in the course. They started to feel more relaxed, and to participate in speaking tasks.



### **5.3. Pedagogical Implications**

This study examined the problem of language anxiety in detail. This study consisted of discovering the factors caused by the learner's own sense of self, by the language learning process, or by the situation or social environment he/she is a part of. Secondly, this study aimed at finding out and suggesting some strategies for language teachers in order to decrease language anxiety in the learners. Therefore, the following recommendations can be made. Language instructors may recognize the symptoms of anxiety such as a lack of self-confidence, and reluctance to speak. Teachers may ask students to talk about their fears about language learning. According to Foss and Rietzel (1991), dialogue journals can be used in order to decrease foreign language anxiety. By this way, students could understand the symptoms of their stress or fear in a secret way, and want to share them with their teacher, so the teachers will be able to learn the anxious feelings of the students, and will be able to take precautions for the reduction of anxiety. Teachers, also, could use videotaping or reciprocal class visit in order to examine their own language teaching. Hereby, they could pay attention to instructional practice and their own attitudes toward learners. They may be helpful, friendly, patient in order not to lose the student.

### **5.4. Limitations of the Study**

Since this study was conducted in a limited period of time, a detailed study in a longer time can be carried out with a group of participants, which include more anxious learners than this study, in order to examine the relationship between foreign language anxiety and language performance to see the long-term effects.

Finally, this current study does not intend to determine the sources or the reasons of foreign language anxiety, another study can be conducted to examine the sources or the reasons of foreign language anxiety using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

## **5.5. Suggestions for Further Research**

The study was conducted in Gaziantep X Medical Vocational High School, and the study included four participants who were the ninth graders at this school. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized for all the foreign language students. These interventions showed only the ways to move from theory to practice. This did not mean that these interventions worked well and concluded with an excellent end as one of the students showed not maximum improvement but minimal improvement in participating in speaking activities and her speaking performance developed just a little bit because the way which was effective for an anxious student may not be effective for another.

Teachers may be aware of the fact that language learning is full of stress for the anxious students. The recommendations of this study and previous studies suggest that teachers should not regard silent students as having “poor attitude” (Gregersen, 2003, p. 30), because actually they experience foreign language anxiety. They may try to recognize the anxious learners as soon as possible, and take precautions to help them overcome foreign language anxiety (Aida, 1994). Before applying any strategies or methods to help students overcome foreign language speaking anxiety, teachers may try to identify their students closely, and learn their attitudes toward oral production. After identifying the anxious students, teachers may try to find the reasons that cause their performance to get worse. Through this way, teachers, who are also the researchers of foreign language anxiety, can not only help the anxious students overcome the problem but also develop himself or herself in his or her profession.

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## 7. APPENDICES

### 7.1. APPENDIX A: OBSERVATION SCHEME

Student's name: .....

Class : .....

Age : .....

Gender : .....

ANXIETY REVEALS ITSELF :

WHEN?	
HOW MANY TIMES ?	
HOW LONG?	
OBSERVATION (HOW?)	
NOTES	

7.2 APPENDIX B

(00)

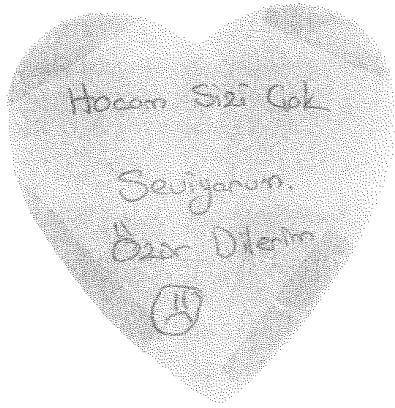
(00)

(00)

Öğretmenim öğretmenlik ettim çok çok dilerim  
ben de çok çok öğretmenlik yapayım  
Ama ben çok çok çok dilerim

Lütfen lütfen kollarınızı irtibatlıca her kollarınızı  
ben de çok çok ağrıyorum. Diler irtibatlıca dilerim.  
Ama sizi çok seviyorum. Ama ben kışkırtm.

Dr. ~~Burhan~~ ~~Akdoğan~~



NOT: Bu da eskatoloji size aldım.