



Factors Affecting the Level of Test Anxiety among EFL Learners at Elementary Schools

Assoc.Prof.Dr. Selami AYDIN
Balikesir University-Turkey
saydin@balikesir.edu.tr

Abstract

Many studies on test anxiety among adult language learners have been performed, while only a few studies have dealt with overall test anxiety. In addition, these studies do not specifically address test anxiety in foreign language learning among elementary school language learners. Thus, this study aims to investigate the level of test anxiety among young learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) and the relationship between test anxiety and factors such as gender, age, grade, achievement level, and economic background. The sample group for the study consisted of 477 EFL learners from five elementary schools. A background questionnaire and the Test Anxiety Scale (TAS) were used to collect data. The collected data were used to provide a descriptive and correlational analysis to address the research questions. The results show that young language learners have a low level of test anxiety and that the variables are significantly correlated with some items in the scale.

Keywords: English as foreign language; children and young adolescents; test anxiety

INTRODUCTION

Research results indicate that individual differences, such as beliefs, attitudes, expectations, motivation levels, and affective states are factors with significant effects on the foreign language learning process (Aydin & Zengin, 2008). Test anxiety as an affective state also has considerable influences on that process. Therefore, this paper focuses specifically on the levels of anxiety among children and young adolescents who learn English as a foreign language (EFL) at elementary schools in Turkey and the relationship between the levels of test anxiety and five variables: gender, age, grade, achievement level, and economic background. The study was conducted because previous studies have mostly focused on test anxiety among adult EFL learners, while research activities focusing on young learners are fairly limited. In other words, as MacIntyre & Gardner (1991) states, *foreign language anxiety is more relevant to language learning among adults*, and studies have focused on college (Aida 1994; Ganschow, Sparks, Anderson, Javorshy, Skinner, & Patton 1994) and high school students (Chang 1999; Ganschow & Sparks 1996; Na 2007). A few studies appeared that focus mainly on language anxiety, but not specifically on test anxiety among elementary school students (Chan & Wu 2000; Chan & Wu 2004). In 1997, the duration of elementary education was extended to eight years by including students aged six to fourteen. As a result of regulations by the Turkish National Assembly, the duration of obligatory elementary education in Turkey was increased from five to eight years in 1997. Moreover, foreign language learning extended obligatorily to fourth- and fifth-grade learners, in addition to sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students. Another





considerable change was that the content of sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade English curricula was reorganised for the levelling examination, an official and central examination for selection and placement of elementary school students in high schools that is administered separately for each grade at the end of the academic year. Hence, because the central examination includes items that aim to measure the learners' level of EFL proficiency, English classes gained increased importance. Therefore, there is a compelling need to examine test anxiety in EFL learners at elementary schools. However, though English classes gained considerable importance compared to other subjects, including Turkish, Science, Mathematics and Social Studies courses, only three studies (Duman 2008; Erözkan 2009; Koçkar, Kılıç & Şener 2002) on this issue were noted. Considering that test anxiety is a significant factor that affects the foreign language learning process and that there is a serious lack of research on test anxiety among EFL learners at elementary schools in Turkey, it may be concluded that there is an apparent need for further study on the subject.

Before presenting the literature review, three terms frequently used in the paper require explanation. Firstly, *anxiety* is defined as an affective state that is an uncomfortable emotional state in which one perceives danger, feels powerless, and experiences tension when faced with an expected danger (Blau, 1955). Secondly, *language anxiety* is a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning that arise from the uniqueness of the language learning process (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). Finally, *test anxiety* is an apprehension towards academic evaluation, and is described as a fear of failing tests and of unpleasant experiences, held either consciously or unconsciously by learners in various situations (Horwitz and Young, 1991).

There are certain factors with significant effects on test anxiety among foreign language learners. In other words, the results of previous studies indicate that test anxiety constitutes a factor that has a significant influence on the foreign language learning process (e.g. Aida 1994; Petridou and Williams 2007). The variables can be divided mainly into three categories: (1) subject variables such as age, gender, grade, economic and educational background (Madsen 1982; Putwain 2007; Rasor & Rasor 1998), and achievement and proficiency levels (Horwitz, 2001); (2) independent variables such as attitudes towards EFL learning, study skills, test validity, techniques (Shohamy, 1982), testing environment (Bushnell 1978), test length and formats (Mandelson, 1973), time limit (Madsen and Murray 1984), and test introduction (Young cited in Aydin, 2007); (3) and extraneous variables such as teachers, course books, and language teaching methods (Rotenberg, 2002) and techniques. The scope of this study is limited to assessing the level of test anxiety among elementary school EFL learners and the relationship between test anxiety level and the subject variables age, gender, achievement level, and economic background.

Few studies have been conducted on test anxiety among elementary school EFL learners. Furthermore, fairly limited studies appeared on the variables that may affect test anxiety among children and young adolescents. To begin with, some studies focused on language anxiety rather than test anxiety among children and young adolescents. For instance, two studies conducted by Chan and Wu (2000, 2004) aimed to investigate language anxiety but not test anxiety specifically among elementary





school students. In the studies, it was found that test anxiety was a cause of language anxiety and appeared when students had low proficiency levels. In terms of gender and some other variables, Duman (2008) examined test anxiety levels of 8th grade students and observed a significant correlation between test anxiety and variables such as gender, paternal occupation, school type, socioeconomic status, parents' educational background, family income, and academic support. Moreover, Unruh and Lowe (2010) examined the validation of the Spanish version of the Test Anxiety Inventory for Children and Adolescents for elementary and secondary students and found that gender constituted a significant factor. On other hand, in a recent study focused on the interaction between students' domain-specific expectancies and values as a predictor of test anxiety, Selkirt, Bouchey and Eccles (2011) found that few gender differences emerged. One study was found on the relationship between test anxiety and achievement, one of the variables investigated in the present study. In the mentioned study, Koçkar, Kılıç, and Şener (2002) aimed to reveal the relationship between test anxiety and achievement among elementary school students and found that higher test anxiety caused lower academic achievement. Apart from the variables examined in the study, Erözkan (2009) aimed to determine the effects of factors such as parenting styles, self-esteem, perfectionism, and test anxiety on depression levels of elementary school students, and concluded that test anxiety is an important predictor of depression. Another study focused on anxiety reduction rather than the factors that may affect test anxiety level. In this meta-analysis (Ergene, 2003) that synthesised the results from test anxiety reduction programmes, it was found that individually conducted programmes, along with those combining individual and group counselling formats, produced the greatest changes in terms of anxiety reduction. The author stated that there is a serious lack of research on test anxiety reduction programmes for elementary, secondary and high school students. As a note, although the Test Anxiety Scale administered in the current study was used in prior research, it should be highlighted that the scale was administered to graduate (Powers, 1986), and university (Furlan, Cassady & Pérez, 2009) students while Lowe, Lee, Witteborg, Prichard, Luhr, Cullinan, Mildren, Raad, Cornelius and Janik (2007) investigated internal consistency, and test-retest stability of the short Spanish version. Conclusively, some problems can be noted regarding the aforementioned studies. Firstly, the studies focused on language anxiety among EFL learners at elementary schools, but not on test anxiety. Secondly, research activity in Turkey has so far aimed to investigate overall test anxiety among children, who are in a period of increasing responsibility and independence, and among early adolescents, who experience many physical, mental, emotional, and social changes (Green & Palfrey, 2001). But test anxiety studies have not been specifically aimed at EFL learners at elementary schools. The present study is guided by two research observations. Other studies have mostly focused on test anxiety among adult language learners, while researchers have mainly investigated only language anxiety. Studies have not specifically investigated test anxiety among children and early adolescents. Secondly, the studies on test anxiety among children and early adolescents have examined test anxiety in general, but not test anxiety in relation to EFL learning. With these concerns in mind, the paper examines two research questions:

- 1- What is the level of test anxiety among children and young adolescents who learn English as a foreign language?





- 2- Is there a significant correlation between the level of test anxiety among students at elementary schools and the independent variables gender, grade, achievement level and economic background of children and early adolescents?

METHOD

The sample group of the study consisted of 477 EFL learners taking English classes at five elementary schools in Balıkesir, Turkey. The mean age of the subjects was 11.8, in the range of 9 and 14; 51.3% were female students, while 48.7% were male. The participants of the group were 100 fourth-, 95 fifth-, 89 sixth-, 92 seventh-, and 101 eighth-grade students, and the subjects were randomly selected from five elementary schools. To determine the achievement levels of the subjects, their mean scores on the formal examinations administered by their teachers were examined. The mean score was calculated as 72.8 in the range of 100, while standard deviation was 19.0. Finally, to determine the economic levels of the participants, they were asked about their parents' monthly income. The mean was found to be 1149.32 TL (575 Euro) between 400 TL (200 Euro) and 5000 TL (2500 Euro). The following table shows the distribution of the participants according to gender, age, grade, school, achievement level, and economic background after missing values were omitted.

Table-1: Distribution of the Participants According to the Variables.

Variables	N	%	
Gender	Male	241	51.3
	Female	229	48.7
Age	9	17	3.6
	10	97	20.7
	11	95	20.3
	12	88	18.8
	12	83	17.7
	14	89	19.0
School	Burhan Erdayı Primary School	100	21.0
	23 Nisan Primary School	99	20.8
	Sevinç Kurşun Primary School	99	20.8
	Namık Kemal Primary School	92	19.3
	Plevne Primary School	87	18.2
Grade	4	100	21.0
	5	95	19.9
	6	89	18.7
	7	92	19.3
	8	101	21.2
Achievement Score	0 – 20	18	4.3
	21 – 40	24	5.7
	41 – 60	77	18.4
	61 – 80	151	36.0
	81 – 100	149	35.6
Monthly Income	400 – 1000 (€200-€500)	207	59.0
	1001 – 2000 (€501-€1000)	115	32.8
	2001 – + (€1001 - +)	29	8.3





The data collecting instruments consisted of a questionnaire interrogating the participants about their gender, age, school, grade, the mean examination score, and parents' monthly income, as well as the Test Anxiety Scale (TAS) developed by Sarason (1978). The TAS consisted of 37 multiple-choice items that aimed to measure the students' level of test anxiety (See Appendix 1). The items in the scale mainly focused on tension, worry, test irrelevant thinking and bodily reactions. Each of the items was assessed on a scale ranging from one to five (never=1, rarely=2, sometimes=3, usually=4, always=5).

The study included a three-step procedure; the translation and correction of the TAS, administration of the instruments and statistical analysis. First, the author translated the statements in the scale, and a group of five pre-service teachers of English examined each item to correct the translation mistakes. Second, the scale was administered to a group of ten students in order to correct the misconceptions and obtain the moderation. Last, after obtaining written permission from national education authorities, the background questionnaire and the TAS were administered to the participants during the last week of fall semester in 2009.

The collected data were analysed using the SPSS software. In the analysis, the reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha Model. The reliability coefficient of the scale, which was calculated to be 0.901, indicated a high level of reliability. The internal consistency reliability was .90 (Powers, 1986), whereas Tryon (1980) noted that the TAS has had a split-half reliability of .91 and a test-retest reliability of .82. In addition, Furlan, Cassady & Pérez (2009) found that the scale had internal consistency and stability. It should be noted that the TAS developed by Sarason (1978) has been used to assess test anxiety among children (Lowe *et al.*, 2007). The total variance of the scale was found to be 60.1. The value demonstrated that the scale was valid to measure the level of test anxiety among children and early adolescents (See Appendix 2). As mentioned above, after a factor analysis, it was noted that the scale consisted of four sub-factors such as tension, worry, test irrelevant thinking and bodily reactions. As for the statistical analysis of the research questions, the data were examined for three purposes. Firstly, the numbers and frequencies were used to describe independent variables given in the background questionnaire. Secondly, means and standard deviations were computed to identify the level of test anxiety. Finally, t-test and ANOVA were carried out to detect the correlations between the independent variables of gender, age, grade, achievement level, and economic background and the level of test anxiety.

RESULTS

1- Test Anxiety among children and young adolescents:

The first research question concerned the level of test anxiety among elementary school students (See Appendix 1). Generally speaking, these values indicate that EFL learners at elementary schools have a low level of test anxiety. The first result is that good scores on tests always increase students' self-confidence for subsequent exams ($\bar{x}=4.62$). Secondly, the subjects usually feel confident and relaxed when they are



informed of taking a test ($\bar{x}=3.86$), though they usually believe that they could have exhibited a better performance after taking a test ($\bar{x}=3.79$). On the other hand, they are usually aware that the school authorities and teachers should be mindful of the effects of tense situations on their performance ($\bar{x}=3.50$). The subjects also do not suffer from anxiety when they have studied sufficiently ($\bar{x}=2.33$). Thirdly, examinations sometimes have some negative physical effects, such as rapid heartbeat ($\bar{x}=3.46$), trembling ($\bar{x}=2.61$) and anorexia ($\bar{x}=2.72$). In addition, examinations sometimes cause some affective problems in specific situations, such as panic ($\bar{x}=3.37$) and dread during pop quizzes ($\bar{x}=2.88$), worry and uneasiness before taking a test ($\bar{x}=2.91$), anxiety even when students are well-prepared ($\bar{x}=2.84$), depression and worry after a test ($\bar{x}=2.85$), freezing up ($\bar{x}=2.49$), fears of failure and poor performance ($\bar{x}=2.85$), apprehension about the future ($\bar{x}=3.47$) and fear of interferences in their study skills and performance during exams ($\bar{x}=2.89$). However, students do not understand why their peers get upset about tests ($\bar{x}=3.14$). Furthermore, during exams the participants sometimes believe that other students are brighter ($\bar{x}=2.83$), suffer from time pressure ($\bar{x}=3.07$), and prefer writing papers instead of examinations ($\bar{x}=2.73$). The fourth and last result is that EFL learners at elementary schools rarely experience perspiration problems ($\bar{x}=2.35$) and stomach ache due to test-related anxiety ($\bar{x}=2.02$) and can control their feelings so that they do not interfere with their performance ($\bar{x}=2.36$). In addition, the subjects are also rarely confused when they study hard and do not feel nervous when they forget facts they know well ($\bar{x}=2.06$). Finally, they do not believe that their performance would be better without examinations ($\bar{x}=1.89$), rarely think unrelated thoughts during exams ($\bar{x}=2.35$), and are not bothered about tests ($\bar{x}=2.07$).

2- The Relationship between Test Anxiety and the Variables:

The second research question concerned the relationship between the level of test anxiety among students at elementary schools and the variables gender, age, grade, achievement and economic background of students. The following sub-sections present the findings on the relationship between dependent and independent subject variables.

The values presented in Table 2 indicate that gender is significantly correlated with only two among 37 items in the TAS. The findings given in the table show that male students seemed to overcome their anxiety better while working on tests ($p=0.05$), whereas females were more aware of tense situations during examination periods than males were ($p=0.01$). To summarise, it could be concluded that gender was not a significant factor on the level of test anxiety among the subjects.

Table-2: The Relationship between Gender and Test Anxiety.

Statements	Gender	N	Mean	F	Sig.
I seem to be overwhelmed by my anxiety while working on tests.	Female	242	1.57	3.98	.05
	Male	228	1.73		
It seems to me that examination periods should not coincide with such tense situations.	Female	240	3.90	6.48	.01
	Male	228	3.61		



Age is significantly correlated with the level of test anxiety. The findings indicate that the younger students felt more confident and relaxed when they were informed about taking a test than the older ones did ($p=0.00$). Moreover, older students stated that they felt more uneasy before exams ($p=0.05$), were bothered about examinations ($p=0.00$), were depressed after taking tests ($p=0.04$), froze up on tests ($p=0.00$), and feared failure more than the younger students did ($p=0.00$). Moreover, the values indicate older learners were affected more significantly by tests in terms of perspiration problems ($p=0.01$) during tests and stomach aches after tests ($p=0.00$). Finally, older students had a stronger belief that their emotional feelings interfered with their performance ($p=0.04$), and they seemed to be overwhelmed by their anxiety during working on tests ($p=0.01$). They preferred writing papers instead of taking exams ($p=0.00$), and believed that they would learn better without examinations when compared to the younger students ($p=0.00$).

Due to the parallelism between age and grade, the ANOVA test results on the correlation ($p=.00$) between grade and the level of test anxiety revealed similar findings on the relationship between age and test anxiety. On the other hand, three other items in the TAS were found to be significantly correlated with grade. As shown in Table 3, higher grade students seemed more worried about tests when they were to take tests and pop quizzes than the lower grade students did ($p=0.00$). Furthermore, it was demonstrated that test anxiety affected the performance of higher grade learners more adversely ($p=0.00$).

Table-3: The Relationship between Grade and Test Anxiety.

Items	Grade	N	Mean	F	Sig.
If I were to take an English test, I would worry a great deal before taking it.	4	99	2.52	3.98	.00
	5	95	2.94		
	6	88	2.90		
	7	93	3.03		
	8	102	3.35		
Thoughts of doing poorly interfere with my performance on tests.	4	100	2.59	5.74	.00
	5	93	2.43		
	6	89	2.70		
	7	92	3.26		
I dread courses where the teacher has the habit of giving "pop" quizzes.	8	100	3.24	4.77	.00
	4	100	2.38		
	5	95	2.74		
	6	89	2.98		
	7	92	2.99		
	8	101	3.34		

Five of the TAS items focused on the relationship between the levels of achievement and test anxiety. These concerned the comparison of participants to their peers, the relation between being prepared for an exam and worry, the relation between





doing poorly and performance, anxiety-provoking situations and the feeling of uneasiness before exams. The findings provided in the following table indicate that students with low achievement levels tended to compare themselves to their peers ($p=0.01$), felt more uneasy before handing a test back ($p=0.02$), and their performance was more adversely affected by doing poorly than other students with higher achievement levels ($p=0.02$). On the other hand, higher-level learners were more aware of anxiety-provoking situations than the participants with low levels of achievement ($p=0.00$).

Table-4: The Relationship between Achievement Levels and Test Anxiety Levels.

Items	Scores	N	Mean	F	Sig.
While taking an English test, I find myself thinking of how much brighter the other students are than I am.	0 - 20	19	3.47	3.68	.01
	21 - 40	25	3.28		
	41 - 60	78	3.03		
	61 - 80	151	2.76		
	81 - 100	149	2.52		
On exams I take the attitude, "If I don't know it now there's no point worrying about it".	0 - 20	18	3.56	2.85	.02
	21 - 40	25	3.16		
	41 - 60	77	2.75		
	61 - 80	146	2.75		
	81 - 100	148	2.43		
Thoughts of doing poorly interfere with my performance on tests.	0 - 20	18	3.17	2.90	.02
	21 - 40	25	3.12		
	41 - 60	78	3.04		
	61 - 80	151	2.90		
	81 - 100	147	2.45		
It seems to me that examination periods should not coincide with such tense situations.	0 - 20	18	2.94	5.28	.00
	21 - 40	25	2.80		
	41 - 60	77	3.56		
	61 - 80	152	3.76		
	81 - 100	147	4.10		
I start feeling very uneasy just before handing a test back.	0 - 20	18	3.00	4.19	.00
	21 - 40	25	2.80		
	41 - 60	76	2.87		
	61 - 80	152	2.68		
	81 - 100	148	2.14		

As the findings in Table 5 show, the income level of the participants' parents significantly correlated with only one TAS item. That is to say, students with high income levels felt more confused even when they studied harder than those with low and medium levels, while 36 other items were not found to be correlated with the level





of test anxiety ($p=0.05$). In conclusion, economic background of the students was not found to be a factor that affected their levels of test anxiety.

Table-5: The Relationship between the Levels of Income and Test Anxiety.

Statement	Monthly Income	N	Mean	F	Sig.
The harder I work at taking or studying for a test, the more confused I get.	400 – 1.000	208	2.3702	3.12	.05
	1.001 – 2.000	115	2.1913		
	2.001 - +	29	2.9310		
	Total	352	2.3580		

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Six main results were obtained from the study, the first of which is that EFL learners at elementary schools have a low level of test anxiety. More specifically, EFL learners at elementary schools usually feel more confident and relaxed when they study sufficiently, have better scores and are well informed of tests. On the other hand, students have a medium level of test anxiety in some specific situations. Tests have a moderate level of affective and negative physical effects on students at elementary schools. For instance, students sometimes experience rapid heartbeat, trembling and anorexia and feel panic and dread due to pop exams, fears of poor performance and failure, apprehension about the future and fears of interference with their study skills. Nevertheless, they do not prefer writing papers instead of taking examinations and do not experience perspiration problems and stomach upset. Secondly, female students are more aware of tense situations during exams, while males feel more worried during studying for tests. Thirdly, the older the students are, the more they are bothered about exams, depressed after tests, uneasy before exams, and experience fears of failure. In addition, older learners experience more perspiration problems and stomach aches after tests, believe more strongly that their feelings interfered negatively with their performance, and think that they will learn better without examinations. Thus, they prefer writing papers instead of taking exams, while younger learners feel more confident about tests. Fourthly, considering that grade is a factor that seems to be parallel to age, higher-grade students are more worried about pop exams, and are affected more negatively in terms of their performance than lower-grade students. Fifthly, test anxiety has a facilitating effect on students' achievement. That is, the students with high achievement levels are more aware of anxiety-provoking situations, do not feel more uneasy, compare themselves less to their peers, and have a better performance than the students with lower levels of achievement. Finally, the students who live under better economic conditions feel more confused even when they study harder.

Below is a summary of the discussion of the study results. To begin with, it should be underlined that the findings in the study do not support the results found in prior studies. First, the results of the study indicate that EFL learners at elementary schools have a low level of test anxiety while Chan and Wu (2000, 2004) found that test anxiety is a source of language anxiety and that less proficient students have higher





levels of test anxiety. Similarly, although Erözkan (2009) demonstrated that test anxiety is an important predictor of depression, the level of test anxiety found in the study was not low. Moreover, in spite of the findings indicating that test anxiety causes lower academic achievement levels (Koçkar, Kılıç & Şener, 2002), the present study revealed that test anxiety has a facilitating effect that increases students' achievement levels. Second, the results found in the study seemed similar to the ones in previous research regarding certain variables. For instance, as Duman (2008) found significant correlations between variables such as gender and families' income level, the results of the study show that test anxiety is significantly correlated with factors such as age, grade, gender and economic background. On the other hand, while gender was found as a significant factor, Selkirt *et al.* (2011) found that few gender differences emerged. To end, the study seems significant as it contributes to related literature regarding the contradictory results in terms of the level of test anxiety and the relationship between gender and test anxiety. Given that EFL learners at elementary schools have low levels of test anxiety and that some variables significantly correlate with the level of test anxiety, some practical recommendations can be noted. Though students have low levels of test anxiety, their self confidence about tests is directly related to studying sufficiently and to being well informed about tests. In this sense, teachers should be aware that informing students about tests and motivating them to study sufficiently are two significant factors that reduce their levels of test anxiety. On the other hand, as anxiety-provoking situations have some negative affective and psychical effects on children and early adolescents, teachers should be informed about relaxation techniques. Specifically speaking, as students experience rapid heartbeat, trembling, and anorexia and feel panic and dread due to pop exams, fears of poor performance and failure, apprehension about the future and fear of interferences with their study skills before, after and during exams, teacher should help their students by using short-term relaxation techniques, such as tensing, palming and deep breathing and long-term relaxation techniques, such as positive and negative self-talk. Furthermore, communication strategies should be employed between learners and parents to prevent fears of the future and of failure, as well as to prevent interferences with study skills. For this purpose, teachers and parents should be aware of anxiety-provoking situations and factors, such as age, grade, achievement and economic background, and with the help of school counsellors, talk to students about *whys* and *hows*. Specifically, outputs from diaries, peer and group talks, teachers' and parents' observations and students' experiences should be shared among teachers, students, and parents comprehensively to increase students' achievement levels in EFL learning. In conclusion, it is neither practical nor helpful to create a learning environment in which there are no anxiety-provoking factors and situations. In other words, as demonstrated by the results of the present study, the facilitating effects of test anxiety are helpful in cases when negative physical and affective problems related to tests are reduced to lower levels.

As a final note on the limitations of the research, the subjects of the study were limited to 477 EFL learners at five elementary schools in Balıkesir, Turkey. Furthermore, the scope of the study was confined to the data collected using the Test Anxiety Scale by Sarason (1978) and several selected variables, gender, grade, achievement level and economic background. Given that the study investigates the level of test anxiety among children and early adolescents and the relationship between test





anxiety and the variables age, gender, grade, achievement, and economic background, further studies should focus on the effects of other variables, such as validity of tests, time limit, test length, format, techniques and instructions and testing environment as well as extraneous variables, such as teacher, teaching methods and techniques, and course books.

Acknowledgements: The author would like to thank the authorities of the Research Projects Unit at Balıkesir University for their support for the study through the project entitled *Test Anxiety among Primary School EFL Learners* (2008/43).

References

- Aida, Y. (1994). Examination of Horowitz, Horowitz, and Cope's construct of foreign language anxiety: The case of students of Japanese. *Modern Language Journal*, 78(2), 155 – 68.
- Aydın, S. & Zengin, B. (2008). Anxiety in foreign language learning: A review of literature: *The Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 4 (1), 81 – 94.
- Aydın, S. (2008). An investigation on the language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation among Turkish EFL Learners. *Asian EFL Journal, Teaching Articles*, 30(1), 421—444.
- Aydın, S. (2009). Test anxiety among foreign language learners: A review of literature. *The Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*. 5(1), 127-137.
- Blau, A. (1955). A unitary hypothesis of emotion: Anxiety, Emotions of Displeasure, and Affective Disorders, *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 24, 75 – 103.
- Bushnell, D. D. (1978). Altering test environments for reducing test anxiety and for improving academic performance. Retrieved on September 15, 2010 from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED161946.pdf>.
- Chan, D. Y. C. & Wu, G. C. (2000). A study of foreign language anxiety of elementary school EFL learners in Taiwan. Paper presented at the 2000 Educational Academic Conference, 85 – 100.
- Chan, D. Y. C. & Wu, G. C. (2004). A Study of foreign language anxiety of EFL elementary school students in Taipei County, *Journal of National Taipei Teachers College*, 17 (2), 287 – 320.
- Chang, G. B.Y. (1999). English learning anxiety: A comparison between junior and senior high school students. Paper presented at 16th conference on English teaching and learning, China, 97 – 109.
- Duman, G. K. (2008) A research into the test anxiety level of the senior students (8th grades) of state and private primary schools in Kadıköy district of İstanbul Anatolian side caused by the OKS (secondary school student selection and placement exam). Unpublished MA Thesis. Yeditepe University, İstanbul, Turkey.
- Ergene, T. (2003). Effective interventions on test anxiety reductions: a meta-analysis. *School Psychology International*, 24 (3), 313 – 328.
- Erözkan, A. (2009). The predictors of depression in eighth grade primary school students, *Elementary Education Online*, 8(2), 334 – 345.
- Furlan, L. A., Cassady, J. C. & Pérez, E. R. (2009). Adapting the cognitive test anxiety scale for use with Argentinean university students, *International Journal of Testing*, 9(1), 3-19.
- Ganschow, L. & Sparks, R. (1996). Anxiety about foreign language learning among high school women. *Modern Language Journal*, 80 (2), 199 – 212.





- Ganschow, L., Sparks, R., Anderson, R., Javorshy, J., Skinner, S. & Patton, J. (1994). Differences in language performance among high-, average-, and low-anxious college foreign language learners. *Modern Language Journal*, 78 (1), 41 – 55.
- Green, M. & Palfrey, J. S. (2001), Bright futures family Tip Sheets: Middle childhood. National Center in Maternal and Child Health, Arlington (VA).
- Horwitz, E. K. (2001). Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21, 112 – 126.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 70 (2), 125 – 132.
- Horwitz, E. K. & Young, D.J. (Eds.). (1991). *Language anxiety: from theory and research to classroom implications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Koçkar, İ. A. Kılıç, B. G. & Şener, Ş. (2002). Test anxiety among primary school students and academic achievement. *Çocuk ve Ergen Sağlığı Dergisi*. 9 (2), 100 – 105.
- Lowe, P. A., Lee, S. W., Witteborg, K. M., Prichard, K. W., Luhr, M. E., Cullinan, C. M. & Janik, M. (2008). The Test Anxiety Inventory for Children and Adolescents (TAICA) Examination of the Psychometric Properties of a New Multidimensional Measure of Test Anxiety Among Elementary and Secondary School Students. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 26(3), 215-230.
- MacIntyre, P. D. & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Language anxiety: Its relationship to other anxieties and to processing in native and second languages. *Language Learning*, 41 (4), 513 – 34.
- Madsen, H. S. (1982). Determining the debilitating impact of test anxiety. *Language Learning*, 32(1), 133-143.
- Madsen, H. S. & Murray, N. (1984). Retrospective evaluation of testing in ESL content and skills courses. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of TESOL, Huston.
- Mandelson, L. R. (1973). Test performance on verbal learning task as a function of anxiety-arousing testing instructions. *Journal of Educational Research*, 67 (1), 37 – 40.
- Na, Z. (2007). A study of high school students' English learning anxiety. *Asian EFL Journal*, 9 (3), 22 – 34.
- Petridou, A. & Williams, J. (2007). Accounting for aberrant test response patterns using multilevel models. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 44 (3), 227 – 247.
- Powers, D. E., & December, I. (1986). *Test anxiety and the GRE general test*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Putwain, D. W. (2007). Test anxiety in UK schoolchildren: prevalence and demographic patterns. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 77 (3), 579 – 593.
- Rasor, L. T. & Rasor, R. A. (1998). Test anxiety and study behavior of community college students in relation to ethnicity, gender, and age. Retrieved on September 15, 2010 from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED415942.pdf>.
- Rotenberg, A. M. (2002). A classroom research project: the psychological effects of standardized testing on young English language learners at different language proficiency levels. Retrieved on September 15, 2010 from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED472651.pdf>.
- Sarason, I.G. (1978). The test anxiety scale: concept and research. In C.D. Spielberger & I.G. Sarason (Eds.), *Stress and anxiety* (5). Washington, D.C.: Hemisphere Publishing Corp.
- Selkirt, L. C., Bouchey, H. A. & Eccles, J. S. (2011). Interactions among domain specific expectancies, values and gender: Predictors of test anxiety during early adolescence. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 31(3), 361-389.
- Shohamy, E. (1982). Affective considerations in language teaching. *Modern Language Journal*, 66(1), 13 – 17.





- Tryon, G. S. (1980). The measurement and treatment of test anxiety. *Review of Educational Research*, 50(2), 343-372.
- Unruh, S. & Lowe, P. A. (2010). The development and validation of a Spanish language version of the test anxiety inventory for children and adolescents. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Science*, 32(1), 164-183.





APPENDICES

Appendix-1. Numbers, means and standard deviations of the TAS items.

Items	N	Mean	SD
Getting a good mark on one test seems to increase my confidence on the second.	474	4.62	.90
If I knew I was going to take an English test beforehand, I would have felt more confident and relaxed.	471	3.86	1.35
After taking a test, I feel I could have done better than I actually did.	475	3.79	1.33
It seems to me that examination periods should not coincide with such tense situations.	475	3.75	1.65
The school authorities should recognize that some students get more nervous about tests than others and that this affects their performance.	471	3.50	1.48
During exams, I wonder if I will ever get through a good high school.	479	3.47	1.53
I feel my heart beats very fast during exams.	472	3.46	1.48
I start to feel very panicky when I have to take a pop exam.	475	3.37	1.55
I really do not see why some people get so upset about tests.	472	3.14	1.59
I think I could do much better on tests if I could take them alone and not feel pressured by a time limit	475	3.07	1.52
If I were to take an English test, I would worry a great deal before taking it.	477	2.95	1.53
I have an uneasy, upset feeling before taking an examination.	471	2.91	1.46
Thinking about the mark I may get in a course interferes with my studying and my performance on tests.	472	2.89	1.60
I dread courses where the teacher has the habit of giving "pop" quizzes.	477	2.88	1.64
I get depressed after taking a test.	477	2.85	1.44
Thoughts of doing poorly interfere with my performance on tests.	474	2.85	1.59
Even when I am well prepared for a test, I feel very anxious about it.	474	2.84	1.56
While taking an English test, I find myself thinking of how much brighter the other students are than I am.	479	2.83	1.47
As soon as an exam is over, I try to stop worrying about it, but I just can't.	478	2.80	1.51
On exams I take the attitude, "If I don't know it now, there's no point in worrying about it".	469	2.75	1.64
I would rather write a paper than take an examination for my mark in a course.	480	2.73	1.69
I do not study any harder for exams than for the rest of my course work.	474	2.73	1.57
I do not enjoy eating before an important test.	471	2.72	1.57
I feel the need for "cramming" before an exam.	464	2.67	1.46
Before an examination, I find my hands or arms trembling.	469	2.61	1.58
During tests, I find myself thinking of the consequences of failing.	474	2.59	1.51
I start feeling very uneasy just before handing a test back.	475	2.55	1.57
I freeze up on things like English tests.	479	2.49	1.52
When taking a test, my emotional feelings do not interfere with my performance.	475	2.36	1.48
During examinations, I find myself thinking of things unrelated to the actual course material.	471	2.35	1.40
While taking an English test, I perspire a great deal.	476	2.34	1.49
The harder I work at taking a test or studying for one, the more confused I get.	478	2.33	1.41
I wish examinations did not bother me so much.	477	2.07	1.32
During an examination, I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.	479	2.06	1.41
After tests, I am so tense that my stomach gets upset.	475	2.02	1.43
If examinations could be done away with, I think I would actually learn more.	474	1.89	1.44
I seem to be overwhelmed by anxiety while working on tests.	477	1.65	1.23





Appendix-2. Factor analysis of the scale.

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.53	28.46	28.5	10.53	28.46	28.5
2	2.02	5.45	33.9	2.02	5.45	33.9
3	1.69	4.57	38.5	1.69	4.57	38.5
4	1.37	3.71	42.2	1.37	3.71	42.2
5	1.24	3.35	45.5	1.24	3.35	45.5
6	1.15	3.10	48.6	1.15	3.10	48.6
7	1.14	3.07	51.7	1.14	3.07	51.7
8	1.08	2.92	54.6	1.08	2.92	54.6
9	1.01	2.72	57.4	1.01	2.72	57.3
10	1.00	2.71	60.1	1.00	2.71	60.1
11	.95	2.56	62.6			
12	.92	2.48	65.1			
13	.85	2.30	67.4			
14	.79	2.14	69.5			
15	.78	2.12	71.7			
16	.73	1.96	73.6			
17	.71	1.91	75.5			
18	.69	1.85	77.4			
19	.66	1.79	79.2			
20	.63	1.70	80.9			
21	.60	1.63	82.5			
22	.57	1.55	84.1			
23	.55	1.49	85.5			
24	.52	1.40	86.9			
25	.48	1.30	88.2			
26	.47	1.28	89.5			
27	.46	1.23	90.7			
28	.44	1.20	91.9			
29	.42	1.12	93.1			
30	.40	1.07	94.1			
31	.38	1.02	95.2			
32	.36	.97	96.1			
33	.35	.93	97.0			
34	.32	.86	97.9			
35	.31	.83	98.7			
36	.26	.70	99.4			
37	.21	.56	100.0			





İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil olarak Öğrenen İlköğretim Öğrencilerinde Yabancı Dil Kaygısını Etkileyen Faktörler

Yrd.Doç.Dr. Selami AYDIN
Balıkesir Üniversitesi-Türkiye
saydin@balikesir.edu.tr

Genişletilmiş Özet

Problem: Araştırma sonuçları, tutum, inanç, beklenti, isteklendirme, duyuşsal durumlar gibi değişkenlerin yabancı dil öğrenimi üzerinde anlamlı etkiler bıraktığını; duyuşsal durumlardan biri olan sınav kaygısının da öğrenme sürecinde dikkate değer etkilere neden olduğunu göstermektedir (Aydın & Zengin, 2008; Aydın, 2008; Aydın, 2009). Ancak, sınav kaygısı üzerine odaklanan çalışmalar, çoğunlukla yetişkin yabancı dil öğrencileri üzerine yoğunlaşmış, çocuklar üzerinde yapılan çalışmalar ise yabancı dil kaygısı üzerine odaklanmıştır (Chan & Wu, 2000; Chan & Wu, 2004). Oysa ülkemizde zorunlu eğitim, 1997 yılından beri sekiz yıla çıkarılmış, yabancı dil dersleri sadece 6, 7 ve 8. sınıflar için değil aynı zamanda 4. ve 5. sınıf öğrencileri için de zorunlu olmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra, yabancı dil derslerinin konuları, liselere öğrenci yerleştirmek için uygulanan Seviye Belirleme Sınavının (SBS) içeriğine de yansıtılmış; sonuç olarak İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğrenimi, dikkate değer bir önem kazanmıştır. Ancak, sınav kaygısının yabancı dil öğreniminde önemli bir değişken olduğu dikkate alındığında, ciddi bir düzeyde araştırma eksikliğinin olduğu açıktır.

79

Yapılan çalışmaların sonuçları, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreniminde sınav kaygısının anlamlı bir faktör olduğunu ve bazı faktörlerin de sınav kaygı düzeyi üzerinde etkilere sahip olduğunu göstermektedir (Aida, 1994; Petridou ve Williams, 2007). Bu faktörler arasında; cinsiyet, yaş, sınıf, ekonomik düzey ve başarı gibi denek değişkenlerinin sınav kaygı düzeyi üzerindeki etkileri başlıca araştırma konularındandır. Chan ve Wu (2000, 2004) tarafından yapılan iki ayrı çalışmada, yabancı dil öğrenen çocuklarda dil kaygısının incelenmesi amaçlanmış, sınav kaygısının dil kaygısının bir nedeni olduğu sonucuna erişilmiştir. Bir diğer çalışmada (Koçkar, Kılıç ve Şener, 2002), ilköğretim öğrencilerindeki kaygının akademik başarıyı düşürdüğü sonucuna varılmıştır. Duman (2008) tarafından yapılan çalışmada da, 8. sınıf öğrencilerinin dil kaygı düzeyi ile cinsiyet, baba mesleği, okul türü, gelir düzeyi gibi değişkenler arasında anlamlı ilişki olduğu görülmüştür. Bir başka çalışmada (Erözkan, 2009), çocuklardaki sınav kaygısının önemli bir depresyon göstergesi olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, yapılan çalışmalarla ilgili olarak iki önemli sorun göze çarpmaktadır: Birincisi, sınav kaygısı ile ilgili çalışmalar çoğunlukla yetişkin öğrenciler üzerinde yoğunlaşmış, çocukların örneklem olarak alındığı çalışmalarda da dil kaygısı odak olarak alınmıştır. İkinci olarak, ülkemize yapılan çalışmalar, çocukların taşıdığı dil kaygısı üzerinde yoğunlaşmış olmakla birlikte İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin kaygı düzeyleri araştırılmamıştır. Bu nedenlerden dolayı, bu çalışma, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen ilköğretim öğrencilerinin sınav kaygı düzeylerini bulmayı ve kaygı





düzeyi ile cinsiyet, yaş, sınıf, başarı düzeyi ve ekonomik durum gibi değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Yöntem: Çalışmanın örneklem grubu, Balıkesir'deki beş ayrı ilköğretim okulunda öğrenim gören 477 öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. %51.3'i kız, % 48.7'si erkek olan katılımcıların yaş ortalaması 11.8'dir. Sınıflara göre dağılımı, 100 (4), 95 (5), 89 (6), 92 (7) ve 101 (8) olan öğrencilerin başarı düzeylerini belirlemek için resmi sınavlardan alınan puanlar kullanılmış, puanların aritmetik ortalaması 100'lük ölçekte 72.8 olarak bulunmuştur. Öğrenci velilerinin aylık gelir ortalaması ise 1.149 TL olarak hesaplanmıştır.

Veri toplama aracı olarak, katılımcıların yaş, cinsiyet, sınıf, puan ortalaması ve aylık gelir durumlarını sorgulayan bir anket ile Sarason (1978) tarafından geliştirilen Sınav Kaygı Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Ölçek, sınav kaygı düzeyini belirlemeyi amaçlayan 37 çoktan seçmeli maddeden oluşmuştur. Ölçek soruları araştırmacı tarafından Türkçeye çevrildikten sonra beş İngilizce öğretmen adayı tarafından gözden geçirilerek düzeltilmiş, 10 kişilik bir ilköğretim öğrenci grubuna uygulanarak ılımlılaştırılmıştır. Anket ve ölçeğin uygulanmasının ardından, toplanan veri, SPSS yazılımı kullanılarak analiz edilmiş ve kaygı düzeyini belirlemek için sayı, ortalama ve standart sapma değerleri, değişkenler ve sınav kaygısı arasındaki ilişkiyi görebilmek için de t-test ve ANOVA değerleri bulunmuştur.

Sonuçlar: Çalışma sonucunda altı sonuca ulaşılmıştır. İlk olarak, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen çocuklar, yeterli ölçüde çalıştıklarında ve sınavlar hakkında bilgilendirildiklerinde düşük düzeyde bir sınav kaygısı taşımaktadırlar. Diğer yandan, kaygının düzeyi, belirli durumlarda orta düzeye yükselmekte, bu durum bir takım fiziksel ve duyuşsal sorunlara neden olmaktadır. Bahsedilen durumlar, sınava hazırlanırken yaşanan karışıklık, sınav sonucu başarısız olma korkusu, sürpriz sınavlar ve gelecek korkusu ile sınırlıdır. Bu durumlardan kaynaklanan sınav kaygısı, öğrencilerde kalp çarpması, iştahsızlık ve titreme gibi fiziksel sorunlara; panik olma, şaşkınlık gibi duyuşsal problemlere yol açmaktadır. Bütün bunlara rağmen, öğrenciler, sınav yerine ödev hazırlamanın daha uygun olacağına da inanmamaktadırlar. İkinci olarak, erkek öğrenciler, sınava hazırlanma sürecinde daha kaygılı bulunurken, kız öğrenciler, sınav sırasındaki gerginlik yaratan durumlar konusunda daha yüksek düzeyde farkındalık düzeyine sahiptirler. Üçüncü olarak, yaşça büyük öğrenciler küçük olanlara göre, sınavlar konusunda kendilerini daha sıkıntılı hissetmekte, sınav sonrası daha depresif olmakta, daha yoğun düzeyde başarısızlık korkusu yaşamaktadırlar. Ayrıca, yaşça büyük öğrenciler, hızlı nefes alma ve mide ağrısı gibi fiziksel sorunları daha yoğun yaşamakta, testlerin performansları üzerindeki etkilerini daha olumsuz bir biçimde hissetmekte, böylece sınav yerine başka etkinliklerin değerlendirilmesi gerektiğine inanmaktadırlar. Dördüncü olarak, yaşın kaygı düzeyi üzerindeki etkilerine ek olarak, daha üst sınıftaki öğrenciler, daha düşük sınıftakilerle karşılaştırıldıklarında, sürpriz sınavlardan dolayı kendilerini daha kaygılı hissetmektedirler. Beşinci olarak, sınav kaygısı öğrencilerin başarıları üzerinde kolaylaştırıcı bir etkiye sahiptir. Başarı düzeyi yüksek olan öğrenciler, sınav kaygısı uyandıran durumlarla ilgili olarak daha yüksek oranda farkındalığa sahiptir. Son olarak, ekonomik düzeyi yüksek olan





öğrenciler, düşük olanlara göre çalışma yoğunluğu arttıkça bildikleri konuları daha çok karıştırmaktadır.

Çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular, önceki çalışmaların sonuçları ile karşılaştırıldığında, iki temel farklılık göstermektedir. Öncelikle, düşük düzeydeki öğrencilerin daha kaygılı oldukları bulgusunun aksine bu çalışmada, başarı düzeyi yüksek olan öğrencilerin daha kaygılı oldukları bulunmuştur. Ek olarak, önceki bulguların aksine, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen çocuklar, düşük düzeyde kaygı taşımaktadırlar.

Öneriler: Çalışmadan elde edilen sonuçlara dayanarak bazı öneriler sunmak mümkündür. Öncelikle, yeterli ölçüde çalışmanın ve testler hakkında öğrencilerin bilgilendirilmelerinin, kaygıyı düşüren etkenler olduğu bulgusundan yola çıkarak, öğretmenlerin çalışma becerileri ve testlerle ilgili bilgilendirme konusunda farkındalık sahibi olmaları gereklidir. Diğer yandan, orta düzeyde bir sınav kaygısının bazı fiziksel ve duyuşsal sorunlara neden olmasını engellemek için öğretmenlerin kısa ve uzun dönemde uygulanan rahatlatma teknikleri konusunda bilgilendirilmeleri de gereklidir. Ek olarak, anne-baba, öğrenci ve öğretmen arasındaki iletişim stratejileri de kaygıyı engellemek açısından gözden geçirilmelidir. Daha dar bir bakış açısı ile sınav kaygısı ile bağlantılı faktörler konusunda öğretmen ve anne-babalar bilgilendirilmeli, okullardaki rehberlik uzmanlarının da yardımı ile günlükler, akran ve grup sohbetleri, öğrenci, öğretmen ve anne-babaların gözlemlerinden elde edilen bulgular paylaşarak neden ve nasıl sorularının cevapları kapsamlı bir şekilde paylaşılmalıdır. Sonuç olarak, içerisinde kaygı doğuran faktörlerin olmadığı bir öğrenme ortamı yaratmak ne mümkün ne de uygulanabilir bir düzeydedir. Bu yüzden, kaygıdan kaynaklanan fiziksel ve duyuşsal sorunların olabildiğinde düşük düzeye çekilerek, kaygının yararlı etkilerinden faydalanmak, daha faydalı görülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenimi, çocuklar, sınav kaygısı

