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514

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TEACHER FACTOR ON ANXIETY LEVEL OF UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY SCHOOL LEARNERS' SPEAKING

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Abstract

Anxiety, which is seen as a barrier in the language learning process by many teachers and researchers, prevents learners from learning effectively. Also, determining the impacts of negative feelings on the language learning process is quite important for teachers since these feelings may be a mental block for the learners by preventing them from using the comprehensible input, they get. Although there are numerous studies on the impact of anxiety levels in language classrooms and on the reasons that might cause anxiety, there are relatively fewer studies on teachers' impact on the anxiety level of learners' speaking. Also, foreign language classroom anxiety has been studied deeply, yet speaking anxiety and its reasons related to foreign language teachers were not investigated sufficiently. Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of teachers on the anxiety level of university preparatory school learners' speaking skills. For this study, a quantitative research design with the help of an online questionnaire, which was administered to the university preparatory learners studying at a state university based in Ankara, was used. 226 participants from different age ranges and academic majors participated in the study. Based on the data analysis, the research presented here showed how teachers can increase or decrease the anxiety level of foreign language learners especially while they are speaking the target language. The results show that there is a strong relationship between the teacher and learners' speaking anxiety. Depending on the rapport between learners and teachers, the level of different feelings in the classroom has been changing. Furthermore, female, and male learners differ in terms of their anxiety level while speaking English. However, there is not a significant difference between the anxiety levels of learners and their age or academic majors. Based on this, the findings can contribute to a better learning environment with lower affective filters by revealing the relationship between the teacher and learners' anxiety levels.

Keywords: speaking anxiety, learner-teacher relationship, learner anxiety

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1. Introduction

As a productive skill, speaking has an essential impact on language learning. There are numerous variables affecting speaking skill in language classrooms. One of these variables is the emotional state of the learners while producing the language. Since speaking is a productive skill, feeling comfortable is vital while communicating. Furthermore, several variables have little or great impact on the learners' emotional state such as gender, academic success, family background, internal or external motivation towards school or subject, peer relationship, and teacher relationship. With respect to this, a lot of studies have focused on these variables and their effects on the learners' success (Du, 2009; Tercan & Dikilitaş, 2015; Wentzel, 2017). As Du (2009) mentioned two factors, the first one is 'motivation' and the second one is 'attitude' which is getting efficient while learning a language. While the students with a positive attitude can show active participation, the students with a negative attitude are slower and less eager to learn a language. Du (2009) goes on with anxiety which is not the intended feeling in a language classroom, and lastly, the exact opposite is self-confidence. Also, lack of self-confidence and being afraid of making mistakes can affect students' in-class performance in a negative way (Habiburrahim, Risdaneva, Putri, Dahliana, & Muluk, 2020). While speaking a foreign language, these variables should not be ignored either by teachers or by learners. Tercan and Dikilitaş (2015) claim that although anxiety seems to decrease the effectiveness of learning, a reasonable amount of anxiety may be necessary in order to revive the learning process, yet when it is too much it ends up with failure. There are also some factors that have an impact on the speaking anxiety of the learners and their academic success. For example, misunderstanding the teacher, a lack of self-confidence, and feeling shy increases the speaking anxiety level (Timina, 2015). Also, Akkakoson, (2016) found that limited knowledge of vocabulary was considered as the most anxiety-provoking factor while speaking English. Another factor that affects speaking anxiety is that a positive peer relationship influences the academic performance of students in a good way (Wentzel, 2017). Also, Kurdi and Archambault (2017) clarify the gender effect by stating that girls with higher academic results show the highest increase in anxiety when they have a problematic relationship with their teachers; however, boys performing academically well also have high anxiety levels. However, Hişmanoğlu and Özüdoğru (2017) found that there is not a relationship between age or gender and learners' feelings about speaking. Another variable that affects speaking anxiety is the teacher effect. Because language learning is directly related to human psychology (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014), in the production stage, it can be affected easily and more rapidly by another human. For example, when learners have a close teacher relationship, they perform better (Baker, 2006). Also, the studies proved that having a positive relationship with someone who is speaking English has an impact on the students' willingness to communicate in English (Hişmanoğlu & Özüdoğru, 2017). Moreover, since speaking is a productive skill and the teachers are the directors of the classrooms, they have an influence on their learners' anxiety levels. For these reasons, recent studies have investigated the anxiety level of learners, the negative impacts of high anxiety levels during the language learning process, and the variables affecting the anxiety levels of the learners. However, the teacher factor affecting the anxiety level of learners when they speak a foreign language is not

explored enough in the literature. For this reason, the current study is needed for the purpose of filling the gap in the literature.

Furthermore, as it is the 21st century, the methods and techniques have changed in language learning and teaching. Therefore, the students' characteristics, emotional states, and even the curricula design have changed, as well (Ataberk & Mirici, 2022). As Ataberk and Mirici (2022) stated, the students do not have enough self-confidence in dealing with 21st century skills in real-life contexts. Furthermore, when distance learning and face-to-face learning are compared in terms of anxiety factors, the results showed that the students can feel more anxious while communicating in the target language in distance learning, they are less afraid of making mistakes (Gokce & Kahraman, 2022).

Concerning these, the present study aims to find out how teachers affect their learners' speaking anxiety and how anxious are university preparatory school learners while communicating in English. Also, whether the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their gender, age, or academic major has been revealed as well. The study intends to gain a better perspective for both the teachers and the learners in the language learning and teaching journey by lowering the affective filter and increasing the positive feelings in the classroom. To do these, the participants are asked to express their feelings in different situations, and six research questions are developed to achieve the goals above.

1. What is the role of the teacher on the anxiety level of university preparatory school learners' speaking?
2. To what extent can teachers affect their learners' speaking anxiety?
3. How anxious are Turkish university preparatory school learners while communicating in English?
4. Do the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their gender?
5. Do the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their age?
6. Do the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their majors?

In line with the questions above, the present study aims to find out the teachers' impact on the learners' speaking anxiety level. While finding out the effects of teachers on preparatory school learners' emotional states, some suggestions will be presented for better language classrooms.

2. Method

This section presents the overall methodology adopted in the current study. A quantitative research design was used for the presented study. Also, the current study was conducted in a state university, School of Foreign Languages, Turkey, and the participants consisted of state university preparatory school learners. To collect data, Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

Questionnaire (FLSAQ), adopted from Ozturk and Gurbuz (2014) was used, and the data obtained in the study was analyzed using SPSS 23.0.

2.1. Research design

The current study adopts a quantitative design in order to explore to what extent teachers might affect the anxiety level of their learners. Since the teacher factor on the anxiety level of university preparatory school learners' speaking is related to human psychology and may not be observed directly (Peng, 2013), a quantitative design is more suitable. Also, the current study can be stated as correlational research since it attempts to show a strong or weak relationship between teachers and the anxiety level of learners, and several variables, such as gender, major, and age of learners, are analyzed with the help of the correlational research (Taylor, 2005). With these purposes in mind, the quantitative data were collected by an adapted version of the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS), adopted from Ozturk and Gurbuz (2014). One of the main goals of this study is to seek out how much teachers might influence their learners' emotional state in the classroom. Furthermore, other variables on the anxiety level of university preparatory school learners while they are speaking English are made clear by a quantitative research design with a correlational analysis. Furthermore, before the data collection process, The Hacettepe University Ethics Committee approved the study.

2.2. Setting and the participants

This study was conducted at a state university, the School of Foreign Languages in Turkey. The participants consisted of state university preparatory learners, with different English levels between A1 and B2. There are some reasons for choosing the current setting and participants. One of the reasons for choosing the School of Foreign Languages at a state university is that one of the school's aims has been improving the learners' current English level in all four skills and subskills. For this reason, the learners have been exposed to English during their school days. Another reason is that the learners studying there have different majors, which enables the current research to compare the anxiety level of learners with their majors. Also, the age level of learners varies which gives a chance to find out if there is a difference between their emotional state while speaking English and their age. Lastly, the geographical position of the school has an impact on choosing the setting since it is easier to access the participants. Moreover, it is important to mention that there is an English proficiency exam for the learners at the very beginning of the school year. If they are successful, they can go on studying their main majors such as engineering, or teaching. However, if they fail the exam, they need to study at School of Foreign Languages for one year to be able to improve their English skills.

Table 1. Number of the participants

Participants' Gender/Age/Academic Major		The Numbers
By gender	Female	137
	Male	89
By age	17 years old	1
	18 years old	75
	19 years old	98
	20 years old	32
	21 years old	8
	22 years old	5
	23 years old	6
	25 years old	1
By academic major	Teaching	45
	Engineering	126
	Medicine	13
	Architecture	21
	Urban and Regional Planning	11
	Industrial Design	8
	Public Finance	2

As Table 1 shows, there are 226 participants in total. 137 of them are female while 89 of them are male. Most of the participants are 18 and 19 years old. Besides, the academic majors of the participants are teaching, engineering, medicine, architecture, urban and regional planning, industrial design, and public finance.

2.3. *Data collection tools*

For the current study, Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ), which was adapted from Ozturk and Gurbuz's Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS) (2014) was used. Ozturk and Gurbuz selected 18 items, which were directly about foreign language speaking anxiety, out of 33 items of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). Also, 4 items, which were adapted from Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) by Pianta (2001), were added because the current questionnaire (FLSAQ) focused on learners' speaking anxiety, but it was not sufficient to survey the teacher factor on their speaking anxiety. Therefore, with 18 statements from FLCAS and 4 statements from STRS, FLSAQ has 22 items in total. Moreover, this five-point Likert-scale questionnaire's responses range from *one* 'strongly disagree' to *five* 'strongly agree'.

The permissions for FLCAS and STRS were obtained, and two experts in the English Language Teaching field approved the adapted version of the questionnaire. Moreover, since some of the participants might find it difficult to understand the questionnaire items in English, it was translated into Turkish by the researcher and by two expert English teachers in order to increase the level of reliability of the research instrument. Besides, the participants were required to provide their demographic information such as age, gender, and academic major.

2.4. *Data collection and analysis*

The Statistic Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data quantitatively. Also, the data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed through Independent-Samples T-Test and One-Way ANOVA. While SPSS was analyzing the teachers' impact on the anxiety level of prep learners' speaking skills, the t-test looked for if there was a meaningful relation between the learners' gender and their anxiety level. Also, one-way ANOVA was used for analyzing the relationship between anxiety and learners' age or academic majors since these consisted of more than two variables. Besides, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of Sphericity were applied to explore if the size is enough for factoring, or if the correlations are significant within a correlation matrix. While the KMO value result showed that the sample size was adequate, Bartlett's test of Sphericity value showed that the data were appropriate and meaningful. Besides, Cronbach's Alpha was carried out to determine the reliability of the questionnaire.

Table 2. Summary of the Methodology

Research Questions	Instruments	Number of the Participants	Quality of the Participants	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis
1. What is the role of the teacher on the anxiety level of university preparatory school learners' speaking?	Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ),	226	Prep Learners (CEFR levels are between A1 and B2)	Quantitative	SPSS
2. To what extent can teachers affect their learners' speaking anxiety?	Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ),	226	Prep Learners (CEFR levels are between A1 and B2)	Quantitative	SPSS
3. How anxious are Turkish university preparatory school learners while communicating in English?	Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ)	226	Prep Learners (CEFR levels are between A1 and B2)	Quantitative	SPSS
4. Do the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their gender?	Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ), Demographic Information	226	Prep Learners (CEFR levels are between A1 and B2)	Quantitative	SPSS, t-test
5. Do the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their age?	Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ),	226	Prep Learners (CEFR levels are between A1 and B2)	Quantitative	SPSS, One-Way ANOVA

		Demographic Information			
6. Do the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their majors?	Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ), Demographic Information	226	Prep Learners (CEFR levels are between A1 and B2)	Quantitative	SPSS, One-Way ANOVA

As Table 2 shows, there are 226 participants, whose CEFR levels range from A1 to B2, and all of them have filled in the questionnaire FLSAQ and have given short answers about their age, gender, and academic majors. To be able to answer the first three research questions, which are the role of the teacher on the anxiety level of university preparatory school learners' speaking, the extent of teacher impact on learners' speaking anxiety, and how Turkish university preparatory school learners are anxious while communicating in English, SPSS was used to analyze the data. Last three questions that are "Do the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their gender?", "Do the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their age?", and "Do the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their majors?" were analyzed by t-test, a one-way ANOVA to explore if there was a significant difference between the level of anxiety and age/ gender/ or major or not.

3. Results and Discussion

Data were collected to find out the teachers' impact on the anxiety level of learners' speaking skills by focusing on preparatory school learners since they have extended English courses throughout an academic year. In addition, this study aimed at finding the relationship between teacher impact on the learners' English-speaking anxiety. The study also investigated other factors that may affect the anxiety level such as different gender, age, or academic majors. It was aimed to fill in the gap in the literature, and to give some suggestions for both learners and teachers in order for eliminating negative feelings and removing barriers to feeling positive while speaking English. For the purposes above, an online foreign language speaking anxiety questionnaire was administered to the learners. The findings and discussion are presented under each research question part below.

RQ (1): What is the role of the teacher on the anxiety level of university preparatory school learners' speaking? & RQ (2): To what extent can teachers affect their learners' speaking anxiety?

The findings of the study indicate that the learners agree most with the item which is *“When I know that my English teacher values his/her relationship with me, I feel quite pleased with speaking activities”* with 4.19 mean score, whereas; they agree least with the items that are *“I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English”* with 2.52 mean score, and *“I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make”* with 2.52 mean score. Furthermore, the average of the learners is not sure about feeling upset when they do not understand what their teacher is correcting. The reason for this might be the fact that people feel more comfortable while talking in a friendly environment. With the help of their warm and good relationship with their teacher, the learners may try to create a friendly atmosphere because in a friendly classroom atmosphere, the learners care about their teachers’ opinions about them (Daud, 2019). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) supported the same idea as one of their participants expressed that their English teacher was so kind and supportive in the classroom, and she/he respects the students, so they love both the teacher and the lesson. These findings show that they certainly care about their relationship with their English teacher. Similarly, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) highlighted that when students have more supportive teachers, they are eager to feel more positive.

Moreover, they do not get affected negatively by being laughed at when they speak English or being corrected for every mistake they make as much as the other items in the questionnaire. The reason behind this may be that they are old enough not to laugh at others when they speak English or mispronounce some words, and since they are trying to learn English, they may know that making mistakes is one of the vital components and an inevitable part of the language learning process. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) stated three related performances that increase the learners’ anxiety level, which are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, and according to them, communication apprehension may be a result of being shy while communicating with other people which can be observed while speaking in front of a group of people. However, in the current study, the participants’ statistics mean for the item *“I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in English classes”* is 2.74, for the item *“I get embarrassed to volunteer answers in English classes”* is 2.65, for *“I don’t feel confident when I speak English in classes”* is 2.91, for *“I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called in English classes”* is 2.92, for *“I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in English classes”* is 2.94, and for the item *“I feel anxious when I have to spontaneously share information about myself in English classes”* the mean score is 2.82. These show that most of them either strongly disagree or disagree with the items about speaking in front of the others in English classes.

Besides, most of the learners are not sure about whether they get upset when they do not understand what the teacher is correcting or not as the mean score shows 3.00. Also, when they feel that their teacher is ready to correct every mistake, most of them are not afraid. This might be because they know that they can ask again when they do not understand something since it is the correct place for them to improve their English proficiency level. Moreover, in the language learning process, mistakes help us to find out where to focus, and they are a natural part of learning. When the learners do not understand every word that their English teacher says, most of them do not agree with the idea that they get nervous. As Krashen suggested “humans acquire language in only one way—by understanding messages, or by receiving

‘comprehensible input’ . . . that contains structures at our next ‘stage’—structures that are a bit beyond our current level of competence” (1985, p. 2), the teachers’ English level is higher than the learners in those language classrooms so they may be using a bit higher level of English in order to improve the learners’ language competence. Another idea by the participants is that they get nervous when the English teachers ask questions which they have not prepared in advance, since they may feel insecure about talking all of a sudden and it may cause uncertainty. When they have prepared or they are more organized, they know what to say and when to say which makes them less nervous. Balemir supports the same idea by claiming that not being prepared for the topic before the lesson increases the anxiety level of language learners (2009). In addition, when they share a kind and warm relationship with their teacher in English classes, they know that their English teacher values his/her relationship with them, and when their teacher praises them, they feel less nervous, more confident, and quite pleased. Most of the students either agree or strongly agree with the statements above, which illustrates that their relationship with their teachers, or the attitudes of their teachers have an impact on their emotional state.

Overall, the findings for this research question reveal that the learners feel anxious or nervous while speaking English depending on different situations and contexts. While in some contexts, they are affected negatively by some situations, in other contexts, including this study, they may not experience negative emotions that much. Also, the relationship with their teacher has a significant role in the learners’ anxiety level. As a whole, it can be concluded that when they have a friendly and warm relationship with their teachers, they are less likely to feel anxious. Unfortunately, when they cause learning anxiety, they cause low academic achievement and low self-confidence for their learners, too (Awan, Azher, Anwar, & Naz, 2010). In order not to affect the learners negatively, they need to lower the affective filter in their classroom and increase the positive feelings. To be able to encourage the learners to speak more willingly and to enhance their motivation level, teachers should deal with anxiety problems in their classrooms. In brief, teachers need to be careful about their relationship with the learners and their attitudes towards their learners in language classrooms in order to have a positive classroom atmosphere with less affective filter.

RQ (3): How anxious are Turkish university preparatory school learners while communicating in English?

The fact that teachers have an impact on the anxiety level of prep learners’ speaking and the role of the teachers can be high sometimes are presented previously. However, whether it is the same for all of the countries’ preparatory school learners is still a question mark, although situations and context have a significant role in that. The third research question of the current study is leading the study to determine how anxious Turkish preparatory school learners are while communicating in English. To answer the question, the frequency of the questionnaire results will be uncovered while comparing the results with other countries’ learners that were mentioned while reviewing the literature.

First, the learners do not agree to the items *“I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English”*, *“I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in English classes”*, *“I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students”*, *“I don’t feel confident when I speak English in classes”*, *“I feel nervous while speaking English with native*

speakers” since the mean scores of them are lower than 3,00. It shows that Turkish learners, who are studying at a state university School of Foreign Languages, do not feel so many negative feelings while speaking English. They are not afraid of being laughed at because of their mistakes while speaking English, they do not have a lack of self-confidence when they speak English, or they are not nervous even when they talk to native speakers. These findings show that the affective filter is relatively diminished in the classrooms. However, findings from Pakistan show the opposite since Pakistani students get quite nervous in English language classrooms as they are exposed to this language just in language classrooms (Awan et al., 2010). According to the FLCAS results (Horwitz et al., 1986), Awan et al. found out that Pakistani students are unable to talk spontaneously, are worried about pronunciation, are afraid of being misunderstood, etc. (2010). In addition, they suggest lowering the affective filter and creating a more friendly classroom environment since the high level of anxiety creates lower academic success.

Second, although they do not feel much negativity during English-speaking sessions, the participants agreed on some of the items such as *“I am never quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English”*, and *“I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English classes”* since the mean scores of them are higher than 3,00. These findings show that although most of them feel confident when they speak English or they do not get nervous or confused in English classes, they are still not quite sure of themselves while talking and if they are not prepared, they may start to panic. The reason is that when the learners have a positive attitude towards the language, they start to talk more as supported by Yashima (2002), who conducted a study in a Japanese EFL (English as a Foreign Language, which is learning English as a foreign language) context. In addition, a study from China investigated the roles of the emotional states of teachers and learners on anxiety in foreign language classrooms and they found out that perceived student emotional support was highly influential on FLCA (Jin & Dewaele, 2018). Therefore, the emotional state of the learners should not be ignored in language classrooms.

Lastly, the items such as *“When I know that my English teacher values his/her relationship with me, I feel quite pleased with speaking activities”*, and *“I feel more confident while speaking English when I share a kind and warm relationship with my teacher in English classes”*, and *“When my teacher praises me, I feel less nervous while speaking English”* has high mean scores in terms of agree or strongly agree. It shows that Turkish preparatory school learners strongly care about their relationship with their teachers and the teacher factor has a high impact on the anxiety level that they feel when they speak English. Also, the learners need positive reinforcement to feel less anxious or nervous.

In brief, Turkish university preparatory school learners at a state university in Turkey do not feel anxious or nervous mostly although they are still getting nervous when they have to speak without preparation. In addition, they are not sure of themselves when they speak English in classes despite feeling confident. One of the most important findings proves that Turkish preparatory learners feel more confident, more pleased, and less nervous when they have a good relationship with their teachers and when they are praised by their English teachers. The result may change in different countries since the items depend on the context in which the learning and teaching takes place.

RQ (4): Do the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their gender? & RQ (5): Do the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their age? & RQ (6): Do the learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their majors?

To be able to examine if learners differ in terms of their anxiety level depending on their gender, an independent sample t-test was carried out. According to the findings, female learners scored meaningfully higher than males. For this reason, it can be concluded that while female learners are slightly above “Not Sure”, they are closer to the “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” option in the questionnaire. Female learners are more anxious than male learners in terms of speaking English.

In the literature, there are some studies dealing with the same question. Some of them found out that the gender of the students had no impact on the anxiety level of the learners neither at the very beginning of the language learning process nor after a long time (Batumlu & Erden, 2007). Batumlu and Erden found out that the anxiety level of female and male students was similar in language classrooms at a university in Turkey, which is a similar context as the current study. However, the academic achievement of the learners depended on the anxiety level of them (2007). Similarly, Dewaele (2007), Kirubasankar, Nagarajan, Kandasamy, and Kattimani (2021), and Balemir (2009) stated the fact that gender had no impact on foreign language anxiety or anxiety disorders of the students. On the other hand, some studies in the literature studied students to find out if there was a meaningful relationship between gender and anxiety level. As Na (2007) studied with Chinese students, the findings showed that most of the students experienced anxiety in the classroom and male students were more anxious than females in language classrooms. According to other results on the effects of FLCA on learners’ achievements, undergraduate male students felt anxiety more than females, so they concluded that female students might have been more self-confident than males (Awan et al., 2010; Na, 2007; Yan & Horwitz, 2008;).

As a result, in the literature, there are different findings related to the difference between gender/sex and foreign language anxiety levels. In some of them, they claim that there is a meaningful relationship between males and females, although there is not even a relationship between anxiety and gender in some others. In the current study, there is a difference between female and male learners’ anxiety level since the mean score of female participants is 3.17, while the male participants’ mean score is 2.79. The results show that the anxiety level of female participants is more likely to be affected by their teachers.

Moreover, the relationship between the learners’ age and their anxiety level while speaking English has been analyzed by one-way ANOVA, and findings show that there is no statistical difference. The results may be because between 18 and 23 (years 17 and 25 are excluded due to the minority of the participants) there is not much generation gap. Also, the learners whether they are 18 or 23 are in the same class and taking the same courses. Therefore, regardless of their age group, the coursebook they use in the classroom, the activities in the class, homework, exams, etc. are the same as well. These may be the reasons why learners do not show a difference in terms of their English-speaking anxiety level and age.

Similarly, one-way ANOVA results show that there is not a significant difference statistically between preparatory learners’ academic majors and anxiety levels when they speak English.

These findings may share similar reasons with the difference between age and anxiety. Although their main majors are different, the language input that the learners are exposed to is the same since they are at the same school. Due to the fact that their language learning materials, and other variables do not change in the same school, there is no difference between their anxiety level depending on their majors as well.

4. Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

The main aim of the study was to explore if there is a teacher factor on the anxiety level of university preparatory school learners' speaking, and to what extent can teachers influence their learners' anxiety level. Another aim was to find out how anxious or nervous were Turkish preparatory school learners. Besides, whether there is a difference between the learners' gender, age, and academic majors and their anxiety level while communicating English.

In line with these purposes, quantitative data were collected from the preparatory students studying at a state university, School of Foreign Languages, Turkey. For data collection, a modified online questionnaire, Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ) by Öztürk and Gürbüz, who selected 18 items out of 33 items of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz et al., (1986), and 4 items, which were adapted from Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) by Pianta (2001) in order to measure the anxiety level of learners while speaking English depending on teacher factor. As the proficiency levels of most of the participants were beginner or elementary, it was necessary to administer the questionnaire in Turkish. After translating it, a back translation was also made by two English language teachers to find out the best version of the questionnaire. For the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was used, and the score was ,933. KMO value was ,93, which meant that the sample size was adequate. Also, Bartlett's test of Sphericity value was found ,2980 so the data was appropriate and meaningful. After that, the questionnaire was conducted with 226 students from the state university. After the data were collected and they were analyzed using SPSS, t-test, ANOVA.

The findings revealed that there was a relationship between teachers and the anxiety level of preparatory learners while speaking English. For example, even though they said that they were not anxious or nervous while speaking English in the classroom, they were not afraid that their English teacher was ready to correct every mistake they made, they also expressed that they got nervous when the English teacher asked questions which they had not prepared in advance, or they did not feel quite sure of themselves while speaking. They cared about their relationship with their teachers as they claimed that they felt more confident while speaking English when they shared a kind and warm relationship with their teachers, and when they knew that their English teacher valued his/her relationship with them, they felt quite pleased with speaking activities. Also, results showed that when the teachers praised the learners, they felt less nervous while speaking English. Regardless of their age, they needed positive reinforcement to lower negative feelings. These results showed that the teacher factor had a great impact on their learners' anxiety levels while speaking. Also, Turkish preparatory school learners felt anxious to some extent depending on the situation. In addition, although the difference was not significant, female, and male learners made a difference by feeling anxious or caring about their

emotional state. However, there was no relationship between English-speaking anxiety and age or academic majors since they were all in the same school, taking the same course, doing the same activities or tasks, and being exposed to the same language input.

The results have some pedagogical implications for language learning and teaching. Overall, the findings have proven that state university preparatory school learners somewhat feel anxious in English classes. The situations and the context depend on their anxiety level while producing the language. The fact that they feel anxious depending on some situations shows that their relationship with their teacher is quite significant. Thus, the situations should be arranged accordingly in order to lower negative feelings in the classroom. For example, most of the learners in the study express that they are not afraid to be laughed at when they speak English. It shows the classrooms are mostly friendly and errors are welcome. In the same vein, language classrooms should have a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. On the other hand, when the learners are not prepared in advance, they feel nervous or anxious and they start to panic while speaking English. Sometimes they have to speak without any preparation but even if the topic is unexpected, they may have a few minutes to think about the topic and take some notes on it. In this way, they will feel less anxious since they have a chance to get prepared. Also, the way teachers approach their students might change students' emotional state. Their attitudes towards the learners should not be strict or careless, since it will increase affective filter in the classroom, which will directly affect the learners' performance. Teachers should create a sense of trust and kindness with their learners. Both the learners and teachers should establish a classroom with cooperation rather than competition to encourage and motivate the learners in language classrooms. Also, teachers should motivate their learners with positive reinforcement as the learners are affected positively by their teachers' positive compliments. Teachers should support the output and the efforts of their learners which will help to create a positive classroom atmosphere. In addition, since female learners care more about their emotional state in the current study, the tasks and activities should be chosen according to both male and female learners' interests so that female learners can feel positive, too.

Regarding the study's limitations, the data were collected in a preparatory school, so the results cannot be generalized for the preparatory schools since only one state university, the School of Foreign Languages, is chosen to collect data because of several reasons mentioned previously. Second, since it is a quantitative study, the statements in the questionnaire are limited, so the researcher did not have the chance to ask follow-up questions. Thus, the cause-and-effect relationship cannot be claimed by this study. Also, due to the unfortunate earthquakes in Turkey, the universities had online classes after collecting the data for the current study. Since most of the participants left the city, there was no chance to interview to look for the reasons why female learners are affected emotionally more than males. With these in mind, broader research studies can be conducted with different purposes.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests and Ethics

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Appendix A. Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire

This questionnaire is prepared to collect information about your level of English language speaking anxiety that you experience in classroom atmosphere. After reading each statement, please circle the number which appeals to you most. There are no right or wrong answers for the items in this questionnaire. Thanks for your contribution.

‘1’: Strongly disagree. ‘2’: Disagree. ‘3’: Not sure. ‘4’: Agree. ‘5’: Strongly agree.

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

17. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I feel more confident while speaking English when I share a kind and warm relationship with my teacher in English classes.	1	2	3	4	5
20. When I know that my English teacher values his/her relationship with me, I feel quite pleased with speaking activities.	1	2	3	4	5
21. When my teacher praises me, I feel less nervous while speaking English.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I feel anxious when I have to spontaneously share information about myself in English classes.	1	2	3	4	5

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