



Speaking Anxiety of Learners of English in Turkey at Different Age Groups

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Abstract

Being the most widely spoken language in the world, English is everywhere in our lives nowadays especially when searching for a job, traveling the world and trying to access media and arts without needing translations. There are many factors affecting the language learning process. Foreign language speaking anxiety is something very common among language learners. Majority of the studies focused only on adult learners, whereas there is a very important deficiency of research focused on foreign language anxiety among children or teenagers. This study is intended to investigate the speaking anxiety of child, teenager and adult language learners in Turkey with regard to their age. This study was conducted using the survey design out of the quantitative research methods. Quantitative data was gathered from 4016 participants from different age groups. It was found that learners of English in Turkey have a moderate level of speaking anxiety and age is an undeniable factor affecting the language learning process. Younger age groups have lower level of speaking anxiety whereas older ones are more anxious, self-conscious and afraid of making mistakes while speaking. The study has implications for educators to develop different strategies attracting different age groups in order to raise motivation.

Research Article

Keywords: foreign language anxiety, English speaking anxiety, learners of English in Turkey, speaking anxiety level, anxiety level of children and adults

1. Introduction

Learning a new language might be a good idea due to several reasons. To begin with, it helps you communicate, meet with new people and see things from a different perspective. Moreover, it allows you to understand another culture deeply, and you become a better listener. Konrad (2017) also asserts that learning a language can even be beneficial for your health according to several studies showing that the minds of people who speak two or more languages turn out to be more active when they get old. We have various reasons to choose English to learn as a foreign language (FL). One of those reasons is the fact that it is the most widely spoken language in the world. This fact makes English inevitable to learn especially

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if you are searching for a job, want to travel the world and want to access media and arts without needing translations.

When it comes to the form in which people use the language, interacting orally is more common than using language in its written form. According to Efrizal (2012) and Pourhosein Gilakjani (2016) speaking is extremely important for interaction. It is the way to express ideas and opinions orally. It might get affected by factors such as performance conditions, listening skill, feedback during speaking tasks and affective factors (Tuan & Mai, 2015). Oxford (1990) stated that one of the significant factors in learning a language is the students' affective side. Various affective factors occur in second language acquisition and those are motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety (Krashen, 1982).

Being afraid of speaking English triggers some personality traits like anxiety. As Spielberger (1983, p. 1) states, anxiety is "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system". When anxiety is associated with learning a foreign language, it is defined as "second/foreign language anxiety" referring to the negative emotional reactions of the learners towards foreign language acquisition (Horwitz, 2001). When we consider four skills, speaking skill is affected most by anxiety (Wilson, 2006).

Foreign language anxiety is very common amongst language learners. Especially when they need to speak in order to express their ideas. With the help of this study, language teachers and lecturers will acknowledge different levels of anxiety their students from different age groups have in speaking English. The information this study includes will be beneficial for them when they want to design effective methods and materials that can provide them to reduce language anxiety and stress level in learning atmosphere.

In both global and Turkish context, majority of the studies focused only on adult learners, whereas there is a very important deficiency of research focused on foreign language anxiety among children or teenagers. This study is intended to investigate the speaking anxiety of child, teenager and adult language learners in Turkey with regard to their age employing inductive research approach. Data was gathered from all age groups in order to take observations and measures. Language learners were asked to fill a questionnaire so that their level of anxiety in speaking English could be detected. This way of research helps the researcher to shape an early provisional hypothesis that can be further examined. By doing so, the findings of the research might pave the way to general conclusions or theories. (Creswell, 2005) Accordingly, the results have pedagogic implications regarding affective features of learning which can help language learners trying to deal with anxiety in speaking English and teachers making an effort to provide a learning atmosphere with low anxiety level.

2. Literature Review

Language anxiety is defined by Horwitz et al. (1986) as "a distinct complex of self- perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). Also, MacIntyre (1999) explains language anxiety to be a feeling of stress, nervousness, emotional reaction and worry that is associated with second/foreign language learning (S/FLL). Additionally, according to Young (1991), speaking anxiety is the apprehension towards performing orally in front of other people. Learners experience an apprehension when they need to use a foreign language they are not fully proficient in, as Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) state. According to Horwitz and Young (1991), it has three kinds. Firstly, communication apprehension arises when the learner has insufficient mature communication skills whereas he/she wants to express mature thoughts and ideas in his/her mind. Secondly, being afraid of negative evaluation is an apprehension that happens when the learner lacks the capability of making a decent social impression. Finally, test anxiety is an apprehension happens when academic evaluation takes place and the learner feels worried about failing in tests. Language anxiety is also categorized as debilitating (harmful) anxiety and facilitating (helpful)

anxiety (Alpert & Haber, 1960). Some studies focus on debilitating anxiety, which is harmful for learners and affect their performance in a negative way (Brown, 2007; MacIntyre, 1999; Kim, 2000, Horwitz et al, 1986; Jones, 2004; Oxford, 1999). The impacts might be direct like not attending to class or indirect like fear, frustration, and worry (Oxford, 1999). On the other side, facilitating anxiety allows learners in a specific way to actually perform well in the language. Several researchers have adjusted facilitating anxiety, which could be a trait to support learners in handling their anxiety (Bailey, 1983; Ellis, 1994; Kleinmann, 1977).

The effects of foreign language anxiety are various when we consider the learning process, beneficial and harmful outcomes. Namely, even though research shows that foreign language anxiety has both facilitating and debilitating impacts on the learning process, there is no consensus on which states, situations or events have the above-mentioned effects on the process (Aydin, 2008). For example, while research indicates that foreign language anxiety obstruct oral and written production (Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986; Young, 1991), a medium level of anxiety could lead to perfect speaking performance (Gregersen, 2003). Some studies demonstrate that speaking skills are not affected by anxiety (Gardner et al., 1987; Matsumoto, 1989; Young, 1986), however, research also shows that foreign language anxiety has a debilitating effect on speaking skills among foreign language learners (Koch & Terrell, 1991; Phillips, 1992). Moreover, while foreign language anxiety reduces the accomplishment level in the learning process (Gardner et al., 1987), it provokes mistakes within learners (Gregersen, 2003).

Woodrow (2006) found out in his research that anxiety affects the oral performance of English learners negatively. Especially adult learners can be unnecessarily careful not to make mistakes while they are talking. For them, errors are a sign of lacking experience and this makes them nervous about speaking English in front of other people. Öztürk (2009) researched the effective factors of foreign language speaking anxiety and language learners' perceptions of it in a Turkish EFL context. The results revealed that pronunciation, immediate questions, fear of making mistakes, and negative evaluation caused the EFL speaking anxiety. What is more, according to most of those language learners, speaking skill is the principal cause of anxiety. Debreli and Demirkan (2016) investigated the level of EFL learners' speaking anxiety and reasons why they are anxious. The findings showed that the language learners do not have a high level of speaking anxiety in general and factors such as difficulty in pronunciations, being asked immediate questions by the teacher, and not understanding the question asked by the teacher caused anxiety. Choi (2016) researched the perceptions of university language learners on English speaking anxiety in a Hong Kong classroom. The quantitative findings revealed that spontaneous speaking activities turned out to provoke anxiety and practicing more beforehand and getting prepared could allow them to reduce the negative feeling about the speaking course. Additionally, results demonstrated that pedagogical and personal factors result in negative and positive feeling towards speaking activities and lastly, the behavior and manners of the teacher were significant features that could help to decrease apprehension feelings. Gürsoy and Korkmaz (2018) investigated the speaking anxiety levels of freshmen and senior ELT prospective teachers in Turkey. The results indicated that prospective ELT teachers had a medium level of speaking anxiety. It was also revealed that gender was a very important factor in terms of different levels of anxiety, furthermore, proficiency levels had a considerable effect on the level of speaking anxiety.

The present study was conducted in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the anxiety level of learners of English in Turkey while speaking?
2. To what extent is age effective on speaking anxiety of learners of English in Turkey?

3. Methodology

In this research, it was aimed to discover the level of anxiety of Turkish language learners in speaking English. Therefore, this study was conducted using the survey design out of the quantitative research methods. According to Frankel and Wallen (2006), survey is “a collection of information from a sample by asking questions in order to describe some aspects of the population of which the sample is a part”. Creswell (2014), on the other hand, states that “a survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. From sample results, the researcher generalizes or draws inferences to the population”. The survey design was favoured in this research because it allows the data to be gathered quickly and provides recognition of characteristics of a large population from a small group of people (Fowler, 2009).

3.1. Participants/Sampling

This study was conducted with 4016 learners of English in Turkey who were from all parts of the country, studying at/graduated from various school/university types and at all ages. Quantitative data was gathered from individuals who were aged between 8-12 (1.7%), 13-18 (63.6%) and 19+ (34.7%), elected through simple random sampling.

Table 1.

Participant groups

	Age	Number of sts	Percentage
Group 1	8 - 12	69	1.7%
Group 2	13 - 18	2574	63.6%
Group 3	19 +	1403	34.7%

3.2. Data Collection Instrument

The data were collected by the help of a questionnaire shared with all learners of English involved in this study. “English Speaking Anxiety Scale” (ESAS), which was developed by Orakçı (2018) in order to measure the anxiety levels of learners of English towards speaking skills, was used to collect the data. The instrument includes a five-point Likert Scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The scale consists of 16 items and it has a structure composed of two factors. ESAS was examined for the psychometric properties (validity-reliability). The questionnaire was used in this study because it is a valid and reliable tool. The results of exploratory factor analysis collected demonstrated that item-total correlations are between 0.387 and 0.794. The variance explained is 67% and this value is considered acceptable for the scale development studies in social sciences (Büyüköztürk, 2013). The examination also showed that this scale can be used to measure the students’ speaking anxiety in English.

3.3. Procedures

Google Forms was used in order for the participants to complete the questionnaire due to its facilitating features such as quickly gathering the data and making the analysis process easier. A simple instruction was given for the participants on how to do the questionnaire. In order to motivate the participants to give truthful answers, it was underlined that there were no right or wrong answers. To provide confidentiality, the names of the participants were not required. The participants were asked to read the statements carefully and select the answer that expresses their ideas the best. The questionnaire was originally prepared in Turkish, which is convenient for the purpose of preventing misunderstanding and raising the reliability of the study.

The questionnaire was piloted with 30 learners of English in Turkey. The pilot group was not involved in the main study. The reliability coefficient of the pilot study of ESAS was found to be .78 in this study. The reliability of the main study was found to be .94.

3.4. Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was carried out with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22. For analysis, nonparametric tests were applied because the data were not dispensed normally as stated in the normality tests. Items 1, 3 and 9 were reverse-coded. For the purpose of interpreting the analyzed data, the following criteria were determined:

- A mean score of 4.21 and above would demonstrate the highest level of anxiety
- A mean score of 3.41-4.20 would demonstrate high level of anxiety
- A mean score of 2.61-3.40 would demonstrate medium level of anxiety
- A mean score of 1.81-2.60 would demonstrate low level of anxiety
- A mean score of 1.81 and below would demonstrate the lowest level of anxiety

There was no equal distribution among the ages of the learners as the number of the participants of Group 1 was significantly lower compared to the number of the participants in Group 2 and 3. Therefore, in this study, instead of the parametric analysis of variance test, the non-parametric test of Kruskal-Wallis Test was carried out. "The Kruskal-Wallis test is the most powerful non-parametric test for investigating three or more independent groups. It has 95% of the power of the F statistics (i.e., ANOVA) to detect existing differences between groups." (Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, Daley, 1998). Lastly, to test the statistical significance of the difference between the age groups two by two, Mann-Whitney Test was conducted.

4. Results

Research question 1 was directed in order to explore the speaking anxiety level of learners of English in Turkey. The mean scores were calculated through descriptive statistics. The general mean of the questionnaire was found to be 2.97 which shows that the language learners in this study experience a medium level of speaking anxiety in general. On Table 1, the results of the frequency analysis of the instrument and the means for each item are presented.

Table 2.

Speaking anxiety levels of learners of English in Turkey

Items	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neither Agree nor Disagree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	M
1. I <i>do not</i> like to talk to foreigners in English.*	34.2	24.7	25.6	10.7	4.9	2.28
2. I get anxious whenever I'm obliged to speak in English classes without any preparation.	12.3	15.5	18.7	19.7	33.8	3.47
3. I <i>do not</i> feel confident about myself when speaking in English classes.*	12.9	21.8	28.5	21.8	14.9	3.04
4. I get concerned that other students will not understand me when speaking English.	25.6	20.0	20.2	17.5	16.7	2.80
5. I feel nervous when speaking in English.	8.9	17.4	23.4	25.3	25.0	3.40
6. I cannot be sure of myself when I need to talk about any subject in English classes.	11.3	18.6	21.6	23.8	24.8	3.32

7. I am concerned that other students will laugh at me when speaking English.	32.6	17.7	13.4	14.1	22.2	2.76
8. I think that other students speak English better than I do.	23.0	20.2	19.9	17.6	19.2	2.90
9. I <i>do not</i> trust myself in speaking English in front of other students.*	15.7	19.7	25.9	22.4	16.2	3.04
10. When I speak English, I feel uneasy when I translate words from my mother tongue to English one by one.	17.2	21.2	27.6	19.7	14.3	2.93
11. Voluntarily answering questions asked in the English lesson embarrasses me.	39.8	18.2	13.9	13.7	14.2	2.44
12. I am afraid of making mistakes when I speak in an English class.	17.3	18.4	18.4	21.6	24.2	3.17
13. I feel uneasy when I don't understand what the teacher says in English.	24.8	19.1	17.5	18.9	19.8	2.90
14. When my English teacher asks me questions, I feel nervous.	21.9	18.4	18.5	19.8	21.5	3.01
15. I feel afraid when speaking in English.	21.5	20.1	21.4	17.7	19.3	2.93
16. I feel worried that I will pronounce words incorrectly when <u>speaking English.</u>	15.6	18.7	17.8	21.6	26.2	3.24

Items marked with * were reversed for analysis. In the original instrument they were positive expressions. In the table, the reversed versions were used.

As stated in the results of the data, most of the items (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16) demonstrated medium level of means. The learners of English in Turkey are uncertain concerning the issues mentioned in these items. The level of their speaking anxiety is neither high nor low. In view of this, the results of item 5 show that a considerable amount of learners of English in Turkey (50.3%) feel nervous when they need to speak in English. Similarly, they (48.6%) cannot be sure of their abilities when they have to talk about any subject in English (Item 6), they (45.8%) are nervous of making mistakes during speaking (Item 12) and they (47.8%) feel uneasy about their pronunciation when they are speaking (Item 16).

According to the results of item 8, they (43,2%) think that other learners of English have better speaking skills than they do. However, some items (Item 4 and item 7) indicate that they (55,6%) do not worry much about being understood while speaking or they (50,3%) are not concerned that much if the others laugh at them. Some items have mean scores of low level of anxiety such as item 1 and item 11. The results of item 1 reveal that they (59,4%) actually like talking to foreigners. Also, voluntarily answering questions (Item 11) do not bother them (58%). On the other hand, the results of item 2 holds a mean score of high level anxiety. To sum up, 53.5% of the learners of English in Turkey (53,5%) feel anxious whenever they have to speak in English without any preparation.

4.1. The effect of age on speaking anxiety

Research question 2 was about the relationship between age and speaking anxiety level(s). In order to investigate the difference among the three different age groups of the learners of English in Turkey in terms of speaking anxiety, the Kruskal Wallis Test, which is similar to one-way ANOVA but is non-parametric, was employed for the analysis of the collected data. The SPSS output for Kruskal-Wallis test

is demonstrated in Table 2. The P value of .000 is less than .05 which indicates that the difference among the mean ranks of the three age groups was statistically significant and age makes a difference in the learners’ speaking anxiety level.

Table 3.

Results of Kruskal-Wallis Test for speaking anxiety

Items	Ranks		
	Age	N	Mean Rank
. I feel nervous when speaking in English.	8-12	68	1238,01
	13-18	2555	1905,73
	19+	1393	2234,61
	Total	4016	
15. I feel afraid when speaking in English.	8-12	68	1252,16
	13-18	2555	1902,97
	19+	1393	2238,98
	Total	4016	

Table 4.

Test Statistics

	<u>Item 5</u>	<u>Item 15</u>
Chi-Square	108,573	109,591
df		2
<u>Asymp. Sig.</u>	<u>,000</u>	<u>,000</u>

As shown in the results, learners in Group 1 feel least nervous while speaking in English compared to the other age groups (MR=1238,01, MR=1252,16). The most anxious age group while speaking in English is the group with people aged 19 and above. (MR=2234,61, MR=2238,98).

In order to test the statistical significance of the difference between the age groups two by two, Mann-Whitney Test was used. First of all, learners aged between 8-12 and learners who are 13-18 were compared. The results showed that statistically significant differences occurred in fifteen items (Table 4). Group 2 has higher speaking anxiety level than the younger group. They feel more nervous while speaking, they have less confidence in speaking in front of other people and are more afraid of making mistakes. However, according to the results of item 1, it is seen that there is no statistically significant difference which means that each group has the same level of anxiety when it comes to talking to foreigners.

In Table 5, age groups 13-18 and 19+ are compared. According to the results, there were statistically significant differences in all items. Again, learners in the older group feel more anxious while speaking English. However, these two groups have the closest results in terms of speaking anxiety level. It can be seen that during these ages anxiety level does not make very much difference.

In Table 6, which shows the SPSS output, the value P equals .000 which demonstrates that the differences among Group 2 and 3 were highly significant. It could easily be seen that the most different level of anxiety is between these groups. The results indicate that, there were statistically significant differences between them in fifteen items. Compared to the younger group, learners with the age of 19 and above are way more anxious, highly concerned about making mistakes and hesitant to speak spontaneously. Only in

item 1, mean ranks of the two groups were not statistically significant and they had a similar attitude toward talking to foreigners in English.

Table 5.

Speaking anxiety of 8-12 and 13-18 age groups

Items	Age	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
1. I <i>do not</i> like to talk to foreigners in English.*	8-12	68	1264,44	85982,00	
	13-18	2555	1313,27	3355394,00	
	Total	2623			
2. I get anxious whenever I'm obliged to speak in English classes without any preparation.	8-12	68	986,57	67087,00	
	13-18	2555	1320,66	3374289,00	
	Total	2623			
3. I <i>do not</i> feel confident about myself when speaking in English classes.*	8-12	68	1039,13	70660,50	
	13-18	2555	1319,26	3370715,50	
	Total	2623			
4. I get concerned that other students will not understand me when speaking English.	8-12	68	1138,95	77448,50	
	13-18	2555	1316,61	3363927,50	
	Total	2623			
5. I feel nervous when speaking in English.	8-12	68	878,65	59748,50	
	13-18	2555	1323,53	3381627,50	
	Total	2623			
6. I cannot be sure of myself when I need to talk about any subject in English classes.	8-12	68	973,92	66226,50	
	13-18	2555	1321,00	3375149,50	
	Total	2623			
7. I am concerned that other students will laugh at me when speaking English.	8-12	68	1095,62	74502,00	
	13-18	2555	1317,76	3366874,00	
	Total	2623			
8. I think that other students speak English better than I do.	8-12	68	1081,40	73535,50	
	13-18	2555	1318,14	3367840,50	
	Total	2623			
9. I <i>do not</i> trust myself in speaking English in front of other students.*	8-12	68	893,52	60759,50	
	13-18	2555	1323,14	3380616,50	
	Total	2623			
10. When I speak English, I feel uneasy when I translate words from my mother tongue to English one by one.	8-12	68	928,61	63145,50	
	13-18	2555	1322,20	3378230,50	
	Total	2623			
11. Voluntarily answering questions asked in the English lesson embarrasses me.	8-12	68	899,32	61153,50	
	13-18	2555	1322,98	3380222,50	
	Total	2623			
12. I am afraid of making mistakes when I speak in an English class.	8-12	68	967,68	65802,00	
	13-18	2555	1321,16	3375574,00	
	Total	2623			
13. I feel uneasy when I don't understand what the teacher says in English.	8-12	68	1005,89	68400,50	
	13-18	2555	1320,15	3372975,50	
	Total	2623			
14. When my English teacher asks me questions, I feel nervous.	8-12	68	883,29	60064,00	
	13-18	2555	1323,41	3381312,00	
	Total	2623			

15. I feel afraid when speaking English.	8-12	68	890,74	60570,00	
	13-18	2555	1323,21	3380806,00	
	Total	2623			,000
16. I feel worried that I will pronounce words incorrectly when speaking English.	8-12	68	1125,58	76539,50	
	13-18	2555	1316,96	3364836,50	
	Total	2623			,036

Table 6.

Speaking anxiety of 13-18 and 19+ age groups

Items	Age	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
1. I <i>do not</i> like to talk to foreigners in English.*	13-18	2555	1922,32	4911538,50	
	19+	1393	2070,20	2883787,50	
	Total	3948			,000
2. I get anxious whenever I'm obliged to speak in English classes without any preparation.	13-18	2555	1824,27	4661004,50	
	19+	1393	2250,05	3134321,50	
	Total	3948			,000
3. I <i>do not</i> feel confident about myself when speaking in English classes.*	13-18	2555	1835,50	4689711,00	
	19+	1393	2229,44	3105615,00	
	Total	3948			,000
4. I get concerned that other students will not understand me when speaking English.	13-18	2555	1854,44	4738089,00	
	19+	1393	2194,71	3057237,00	
	Total	3948			,000
5. I feel nervous when speaking in English.	13-18	2555	1860,20	4752806,00	
	19+	1393	2184,15	3042520,00	
	Total	3948			,000
6. I cannot be sure of myself when I need to talk about any subject in English classes.	13-18	2555	1866,75	4769542,00	
	19+	1393	2172,13	3025784,00	
	Total	3948			,000
7. I am concerned that other students will laugh at me when speaking English.	13-18	2555	1907,25	4873014,50	
	19+	1393	2097,85	2922311,50	
	Total	3948			,000
8. I think that other students speak English better than I do.	13-18	2555	1854,46	4738156,00	
	19+	1393	2194,67	3057170,00	
	Total	3948			,000
9. I <i>do not</i> trust myself in speaking English in front of other students.*	13-18	2555	1858,24	4747808,00	
	19+	1393	2187,74	3047518,00	
	Total	3948			,000
10. When I speak English, I feel uneasy when I translate words from my mother tongue to English one by one.	13-18	2555	1848,50	4722926,50	
	19+	1393	2205,60	3072399,50	
	Total	3948			,000
11. Voluntarily answering questions asked in the English lesson embarrasses me.	13-18	2555	1835,48	4689643,00	
	19+	1393	2229,49	3105683,00	
	Total	3948			,000
12. I am afraid of making mistakes when I speak in an English class.	13-18	2555	1887,40	4822300,00	
	19+	1393	2134,26	2973026,00	
	Total	3948			,000
13. I feel uneasy when I don't understand what the teacher says in English.	13-18	2555	1799,24	4597060,00	
	19+	1393	2295,96	3198266,00	
	Total	3948			

	Total	3948			,000
14. When my English teacher asks me questions, I feel nervous.	13-18	2555	1823,28	4658483,00	
	19+	1393	2251,86	3136843,00	
	Total	3948			,000
15. I feel afraid when speaking English.	13-18	2555	1857,76	4746576,00	
	19+	1393	2188,62	3048750,00	
	Total	3948			,000
16. I feel worried that I will pronounce words incorrectly when speaking English.	13-18	2555	1880,04	4803489,50	
	19+	1393	2147,76	2991836,50	
	Total	3948			,000

Items marked with * were reversed for analysis. In the original instrument they were positive expressions. In the table, the reversed versions are used.

Table 7.

Speaking anxiety of 8-12 and 19+ age groups

Items	Age	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
1. I <i>do not</i> like to talk to foreigners in English.*	8-12	68	651,39	44294,50	
	19+	1393	734,89	1023696,50	
	Total	1461			,099
2. I get anxious whenever I'm obliged to speak in English classes without any preparation.	8-12	68	398,90	27125,00	
	19+	1393	747,21	1040866,00	
	Total	1461			,000
3. I <i>do not</i> feel confident about myself when speaking in English classes.*	8-12	68	456,95	31072,50	
	19+	1393	744,38	1036918,50	
	Total	1461			,000
4. I get concerned that other students will not understand me when speaking English.	8-12	68	505,73	34389,50	
	19+	1393	742,00	1033601,50	
	Total	1461			,000
5. I feel nervous when speaking in English.	8-12	68	393,86	26782,50	
	19+	1393	747,46	1041208,50	
	Total	1461			,000
6. I cannot be sure of myself when I need to talk about any subject in English classes.	8-12	68	430,57	29278,50	
	19+	1393	745,67	1038712,50	
	Total	1461			,000
7. I am concerned that other students will laugh at me when speaking English.	8-12	68	539,55	36689,50	
	19+	1393	740,35	1031301,50	
	Total	1461			,000
8. I think that other students speak English better than I do.	8-12	68	473,19	32177,00	
	19+	1393	743,59	1035814,00	
	Total	1461			,000
9. I <i>do not</i> trust myself in speaking English in front of other students.*	8-12	68	387,72	26365,00	
	19+	1393	747,76	1041626,00	
	Total	1461			,000
10. When I speak English, I feel uneasy when I translate words from my mother tongue to English one by one.	8-12	68	404,18	27484,50	
	19+	1393	746,95	1040506,50	
	Total	1461			,000
11. Voluntarily answering questions asked in the English lesson embarrasses me.	8-12	68	357,60	24316,50	
	19+	1393	749,23	1043674,50	
	Total	1461			,000
12. I am afraid of making mistakes when I speak in an	8-12	68	453,32	30826,00	

English class.	19+	1393	744,55	1037165,00	
	Total				,000
		1461			
13. I feel uneasy when I don't understand what the teacher says in English.	8-12	68	392,57	26694,50	
	19+	1393	747,52	1041296,50	
	Total	1461			,000
14. When my English teacher asks me questions, I feel nervous.	8-12	68	352,12	23944,00	
	19+	1393	749,50	1044047,00	
	Total				,000
		1461			
15. I feel afraid when speaking English.	8-12	68	395,93	26923,00	
	19+	1393	747,36	1041068,00	
	Total	1461			,000
16. I feel worried that I will pronounce words incorrectly when speaking English.	8-12	68	536,12	36456,00	
	19+	1393	740,51	1031535,00	
	Total	1461			,000

Items marked with * were reversed for analysis. In the original instrument they were positive expressions. In the table, the reversed versions are used.

5. Discussion

Research question 1 was about overall anxiety level of Turkish language learners. As indicated by the results, a medium level of English language speaking anxiety or nervousness does take place among learners of English in Turkey who participated in this study. This finding is similar with the study of Heng et al. (2012) where the findings suggested that majority of the students had a moderate level of oral communication nervousness, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. At the same time, Mari et al. (2012) found out in their research that in Pakistani context, students' speaking anxiety level was medium. However, it is different with Öztürk and Gürbüz's (2014) and Agudo's (2013) research. Most of the Turkish students in Öztürk and Gürbüz's (2014) have a low level of speaking anxiety in general. Conversely, the Spanish language learners in Agudo (2013) showed high levels of speaking anxiety even though they had been learning English for a long time. The researcher concluded that foreign language speaking anxiety "is not necessarily characteristic or exclusive to beginners because experienced learners also suffer it" (p. 842). Similarly, Wang (2005) explored in his research that the Chinese students who were involved in the study experienced a high level of anxiety.

In the situations where real use of language takes place, feeling anxiety might be normal among language learners. As Hadley (1992) suggested, medium level of anxiety in foreign language learning might actually be helpful for learners to get motivated to learn and accept the fact that they need to study harder to speak in the target language. However, if learners have low level of anxiety, they might get too relaxed and they do not actually learn any new things and consequently, language learning process might fail. Also, for learners who undergo high level of anxiety, they might see a foreign language learning process as ominous to them and might react to this situation by poor learning performance. The idea that anxiety affects a learner's learning performance is promoted by MacIntyre and Gardner (1989). They revealed that learners with high oral communication anxiety are more likely to score lower on oral and written vocabulary tests.

Research question 2 addresses the age factor and how it affects the level of foreign language speaking anxiety. The analytical results in this study indicated a significant relationship between age and English speaking anxiety. According to the findings, young learners are less anxious than older ones. As the age increases, anxiety level goes up similarly. Older learners are more afraid of having to speak without any preparation, being asked questions suddenly and they are less confident when it comes to speaking. On the contrary, younger learners have much lower level of anxiety when they have to speak at that time, without being prepared. This result is similar with the findings of Onwuegbuzie, Baily and Daley (1999).

They found out that younger students had the lowest levels of foreign language anxiety and that anxiety levels raised linearly with the age. The old learners held greater linguistic concern than younger students. Furthermore, Krashen and Terrell (1983) and also, again, Krashen (1985) stated that young learners in language classes are likely to achieve better at learning languages than adolescents. It is considered that young learners have lower level of affective filter and therefore their anxiety level is tend to be lower as well. In this study, analysis of the speaking anxiety of the adolescent group where the participants' ages are between 13 and 18 showed that they have a moderate level of anxiety. Their anxiety level is higher than Group 1 but lower than people in Group 3. This indicates that in adolescence period, they might start to feel a little more self-conscious as in the critical age period, where they experience the beginning effects of adolescence, language learning might become harder and lead to anxiety. This idea is supported by Lee (2014) who suggested that experiencing a dramatically transitional period where self-identity is formed, adolescent learners are likely to be more shy about their self-concepts. It triggers their nervousness about communicating with their friends or teachers. Language learners at the same time undergo foreign language classroom anxiety and it obviously affects their learning process negatively. The opinions of other people, especially their peers, become more and more important. Therefore they might hesitate and become afraid while speaking. Accordingly, Gürbüz (2014) emphasized that the fear of negative evaluation from peers might be one of the main reasons of speaking anxiety of the students.

Among all items, the ones that were about having to speak in front of other students and speaking without preparation had the highest mean scores of anxiety. This shows that along with the anxiety students have while speaking, they become even more anxious when it is in front of a number of people and sudden. Hadley (1992) suggests that majority of students might have performance anxiety if they are obliged to perform in front of other people. When they feel afraid they might struggle to find words and eventually stay silent. Namely, students with speaking anxiety might feel self-conscious when others ask them to risk reveal themselves by speaking in a foreign language with other people watching them. Therefore, according to Mak (2011), enough time should be given for students to get prepared for their speaking performances or presentations and they should be allowed to think about their answer to a question for enough time.

6. Conclusion

In the past years, as interest and necessity in learning a foreign language -especially English- increased, some issues emerged with it. One of those issues is the struggle that the learners have in overcoming anxiety of speaking English. Particularly in Turkey, it is a problem that is very common among language learners. It is also one of the biggest obstacles that teachers have in language classrooms. The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of English speaking anxiety of Turkish language learners. It was revealed via a questionnaire completed by 4016 participants.

This study suggests that learners of English in Turkey have a moderate level of speaking anxiety and age is an undeniable factor which has considerable effects on the language learning process. According to the results, younger age groups have lower level of speaking anxiety whereas older ones are more anxious, self-conscious and afraid of making mistakes while speaking. With the help of this study, being aware of how anxious their students are, educators could organize their lessons accordingly. Furthermore, acknowledging different levels of speaking anxiety that different age groups have gives hint about how anxious their students are going to be.

In view of the results of this study, some implications for pedagogy could be proposed for teachers and lecturers in order to raise awareness about speaking anxiety level of mentioned age groups. While younger learners might not feel as anxious, learners from older age groups tend to be more self-conscious and hesitant when it comes to speaking. Different strategies attracting different age groups could be discussed and developed to raise the motivation of the students and accordingly, decrease their anxiety levels. Curriculum developers and teachers could work collaboratively in order to improve the approaches

and methods. Considering the higher level anxiety of older groups, some special strategies could be developed for the purpose of preventing possible problems.

Speaking anxiety levels of different age groups is something that should be focused on and researched as it is obvious that every group is different and could require different types of teaching methods and strategies. For future studies, this study suggests that reasons of these anxiety levels could be investigated. Also, some research could be conducted in order to explore the preferences and strategies these age groups like using while speaking so that their anxiety levels reduce.

7. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

A number of limitations of this study should be acknowledged while interpreting the results. One of them is the uneven distribution of number of age groups. While thousands of learners participated in age groups of 13-18 and 19+, the number of students in the group of 8-12 was only 68. Another one might be the excessive number of female participants when compared to the male learners. The percentage of the female participants was 89.9%.

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