Speaking Anxiety of Freshmen and Senior Prospective ELT Teachers

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Birinci ve Dördüncü Sınıf İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının Konuşma Kaygısı

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Abstract

Rapid developments in technology around the globe brought people closer which promoted English as a common language and created a need for adaptation to the requirements of the new world. However, affective factors, along with many others, seem to hinder the efforts to learn and speak a new language. Anxiety, as one of these affective factors, has an important role in the language learning process. Most of the research on language learning anxiety investigated language learners; however, prospective teachers' speaking anxiety is rarely studied. Thus, the present study aims to investigate speaking anxiety levels of prospective ELT teachers at a state university in Turkey. Designed as a sequential mixed method research, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from freshmen and senior prospective teachers. The quantitative data was collected via a questionnaire from 117 participants, 10 of which were interviewed afterwards. Dual and multiple comparisons were made to analyse the numerical data. The qualitative data was analysed via content analysis. The results showed that prospective ELT teachers had a moderate level of speaking anxiety, freshmen having higher level of anxiety. There were significant differences between female and male prospective teachers as well as the type of high schools' prospective teachers graduated from. It was also found that proficiency levels had a significant effect on the level of speaking anxiety and there was a negative correlation between them. The interview results revealed the causes of speaking anxiety from the perspective of prospective teachers. The study has implications for teacher trainers and trainees, not only to help prospective teachers to reduce their speaking anxiety but also to enable them develop awareness regarding the causes of anxiety to help their future students.

Birinci ve Dördüncü Sınıf İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının Konuşma Kaygısı

Öz	**Makale Bilgisi**

Teknoloji alanındaki hızlı gelişmeler dünyanın her tarafından insanları birbirine daha da yaklaştırdı. Bu yakınlaşma İngilizce'yi ortak bir dil olmaya terfi ettirdi ve yeni dünyanın gereklerine uyum sağlama ihtiyacını doğurdu. Ancak, birçok faktörün yanı sıra duyuşsal faktörler yeni bir dil öğrenmenin ve konuşmanın önünde engel teşkil etmektedir. Bu duyuşsal faktörlerden bir olan kaygının dil öğrenim sürecinde önemli bir rolü bulunmaktadır. Dil öğrenme kaygısı üzerine yapılan araştırmaların çoğu dil öğrencilerini ele almaktadır; fakat İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının konuşma kaygısı nadiren olarak çalışılmıştır. Bu yüzden, bu çalışma Türkiye'de bir devlet üniversitesinde öğrenim gören İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının kaygı seviyelerini araştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Sıralı karma-yöntem olarak desenlenen araştırmada nitel ve nicel veriler birinci ve dördüncü sınıf öğretmen adaylarından toplanmıştır. Nicel veriler 117 katılımcıdan bir anket yoluyla toplanmış daha sonra bunların içerisinden 10 kişi ile karşılıklı görüşme yoluyla nitel veriler elde edilmiştir. Sayısal veriyi analiz ederken ikili ve çoklu karşılaştırmalardan yararlanılmıştır. Nitel veriler ise içerik analizi ile analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının konuşma kaygısının orta seviyede olduğunu ama birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin kaygı seviyesinin dördüncü sınıflardan daha yüksek olduğunu göstermiştir. Cinsiyete ve mezun olunan lise tipine göre öğretmen adayları arasında istatistiksel farklar bulunmuştur. Dil yeterlilik seviyelerinin de konuşma kaygısı üzerinde istatistiksel olarak önemli bir etkisi olduğu ve dil yeterlik seviyesi azaldıkça konuşma kaygısının arttığı görülmüştür. Görüşme sonuçları öğretmen adaylarının bakış açısından konuşma kaygısının nedenlerini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları sadece öğretmen yetiştiriciler için öğretmen adaylarının konuşma kaygılarını azaltmalarına yardım etmek için değil aynı zamanda öğretmen adaylarının konu ile ilgili farkındalık geliştirip ileriteki öğrencilerine yardım edebilmeleri açısından da önem taşımaktadır.

Introduction

With rapidly changing and developing technology, people all around the world have an opportunity to get in contact with each other to make friends, to do business, to join international competitions etc. regardless of where they live.

These changes have necessitated a common language for all people. There is an undeniable fact that in the past century, English as a lingua-franca has taken over this important task. One cannot even travel far nowadays without knowing English (Northrup, 2013). So, it has become an obligation to know English well to adapt to the globalization of the world, which has been turned to an inevitable "global village" (McLuhan, 1967) with internet and information technologies (Köksal, 2000).

With globalization, people feel an obligation to learn English and master it, and countries are also aware of this fact (Rohmah, 2005). That is why, the age of learning English was lowered to primary school and even to kindergarten. However, learning a language is not about only knowing the structural rules but the ability to speak (Taysi, 2015). The crucial point for learners has been to be able to speak language proficiently, but this time some affective factors like motivation, intelligence, attitude, anxiety, aptitude etc. seem to play a role on language learning negatively or positively (Senemoğlu, 2004 as cited in Baş, 2013). Anxiety, as one these factors, has been of great concern to many researchers (Gürsoy & Akın, 2013; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Hu & Wang, 2013; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Wörde, 1998; Young, 1990) as both high and low anxiety might have a negative effect on learning (Baş, 2013).

According to Horwitz et al. (1986), "Anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with and arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (p.125). On the other hand, language anxiety, which is a complicated phenomenon with its various dimensions (Young, 1990), is a kind of fear or worry appeared when a learner is expected to show performance in the target language (Hu & Wang, 2013). Thus Horwitz et al. (1986) state that, "language anxiety is a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process." (p.128).

There has been a plethora of research about foreign language anxiety from different point of views. Most of them have shown that there is a negative impact of anxiety on spoken performance and also achievement (Aida, 1994; Phillips, 1992; Saito & Samimy, 1996; Woodrow 2006). On the other hand, as mentioned by Krashen (1982) in the *affective filter hypothesis*, anxiety might have helpful and harmful effects on learning process (Hu & Wang, 2013). Helpful anxiety can make students have responsibility to learn and to get high grades, but harmful anxiety is the one mentioned more frequently because it results in low motivation, poor language performance, unfavourable attitudes etc. (Hu & Wang, 2013). In their study with 948 students in Korea, Park and French (2013) found that female students have relatively higher anxiety. However, this study also revealed, that students with high anxiety got higher grades than the students with low anxiety. A similar result was also found in Bailey's study (1983), suggesting that anxiety is one of the most important keys to success.

In terms of four skills, speaking skill is influenced most by anxiety (Wilson, 2006). Young (1991) explained speaking anxiety as fear over spoken language usage in front of others. In studies focusing on speaking anxiety, gender differences have been one of the most researched issues. In these research studies, different results have been found. Aida (1994), Çubukçu (2008), and Luo (2014) reached that there is no significant difference between two genders in terms of language anxiety. On the other hand, Huang (2004), Tercan and Dikilitaş (2015), Çağatay (2015) and Gerencheal (2016) found that female students' anxiety level is higher than male students because female students are more grade-conscious.

The effect of anxiety on proficiency of students is another concern for researchers. As one of these researchers, Liu (2006) found out that less proficient students are more likely to feel anxious while speaking in the classroom, whereas more proficient students do not feel nervous during speaking. Similarly, Woodrow (2006) and Chiang (2012) found negative correlation between proficiency and anxiety level in their studies. Djigunovic (2006) conducted a study about the effects of language anxiety on language learning process. Participants were EFL students at a university in Croatia. According to his findings, the students with higher language anxiety are more likely to make pauses while speaking and they could not produce long speech. On the other hand, students with low anxiety level can utter their sentences more fluently. Tercan and Dikilitaş (2015) conducted a study with 159 Turkish students to find an answer to the same question. They found significant differences in proficiency levels. In contrast, Balemir (2009)

conducted a study with 234 students to reveal the relationship between anxiety level and proficiency level; however, the researcher could not find any significant effects of speaking anxiety on the proficiency level.

As far as the above mentioned studies revealed, there could be a lot of reasons to increase anxiety level. Aydın (2001) classified the causes of speaking anxiety into four groups: personal reasons, the teachers' manner in the classroom, learners' beliefs, and testing and teaching procedures. In the lights of research by Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014), it can be said language classes today require students to be more active by demonstrating oral performance in front of the class, making presentations and also involving in discussions with their peers, which may create or increase anxiety. Young (1991) stated that speaking in front of other students is cited as the most anxiety-provoking factor in the classroom. From the perspective of students, speaking anxiety is a result of some causes like lack of vocabulary, fear of mispronunciation, grammatical perfectionism, as well as negative evaluation and incomprehensibility by others (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). Also, interlanguage grammar (Mahmoodzadeh, 2012), the interaction between students and teachers (Al-Saraj, 2014) can also have an important effect on students' level of anxiety. According to Kitano (2001), students' anxiety levels were positively interrelated with their fear of negative evaluation by others, and underestimated ability in the target language. In his study with 234 students, Balemir (2009) found that the major anxiety increasing factors were testing procedures, the fear of negative evaluation, and other personal reasons.

Kapıkıran, İvrendi and Adak (2006) stated that anxiety is one of the variables that has been studied for a long time and is still an important one for researchers to investigate. However, most of the anxiety research focused on the language learners yet, prospective ELT teachers' speaking anxiety is rarely studied (Tüm & Kunt, 2013; Mede & Karaırmak, 2017). Although a few, there are some research studies investigating pre-service teachers' anxiety. In one research conducted by Hammad and Ghali (2015) with 279 participants, prospective teachers were found very anxious. According to their results, anxiety was triggered by factors such as teachers' improper procedures, students' incapability to use only English in English courses, fear of negative evaluation, and error correction by teachers. In the Turkish context, Tüm and Kunt (2013) carried out a study to investigate prospective teachers' speaking anxiety. The findings indicated that speaking anxiety have negative effects on two important areas as: (1) the implementation of grammar rules, and (2) application of speaking skills. In addition, Mede and Karaırmak (2017) identified a strong positive correlation between classroom anxiety and speaking anxiety of prospective teachers.

When considering both sides of the medal, both as learners and teacher candidates, investigation of prospective ELT teachers speaking anxiety is important so as to shed some light on the phenomenon. After all, the present study aims at investigating the speaking anxiety levels of freshmen and senior ELT prospective teachers in Turkey by focusing on the effects of various variables.

Method

Designed as a sequential mixed-method research, the study gathered both quantitative and qualitative data to find answers to the following research questions;

1. What is the speaking anxiety level of freshmen and senior prospective ELT teachers? Is there a difference between the two?
2. Do such factors such as gender, educational background make a difference on their speaking anxiety level?
3. Is there any correlation between proficiency level and speaking anxiety level of the participants? If yes, how?
   a. How does speaking anxiety correlate with provoking factors such as fear of interaction, lack of confidence, fear caused by language proficiency, and error correction and fear of negative perception of people around?
4. What are the factors causing speaking anxiety from the perspective of prospective teachers?

Participants

This study was carried out with 117 ELT prospective teachers who were either freshmen (57%) or seniors (43%) at a state university in Bursa, Turkey. Quantitative data was collected from male (37%) and female (63%) prospective teachers, selected via cluster random sampling. Ages of the participants varied from 18 to 22. Participants were also

asked to self-report their proficiency exam scores that they took upon enrolling the university (for freshmen) or to go on an Erasmus+ study (seniors). Both exams, required the same proficiency level and are prepared and conducted by the School of Foreign Languages of the same state university.

Data Collection Tools and Procedure

Designed as a sequential mixed method research, in this study two kinds of data collection tools were employed. A modified version of "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale" (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986), by Melouah (2013) was used to collect quantitative data. Additionally, to help prospective teachers to identify the causes of their speaking anxiety; five items (6, 11, 16, 19, and 24) were added to the Melouah's (2013) scale. The instrument was prepared as a five-point Likert Scale with responses changing from strongly disagree (SD) to strongly agree (SA). The final version of the instrument had 27 items which were divided into four groups to identify anxiety provoking causes. These groups are: lack of self-confidence (1, 2, 5, 7, 14, 15, and 21), fear of interaction (3, 12, 13, 22, and 26), language proficiency (4, 6, 10, 11, 16, 19, and 24), error correction and fear of negative perception (fear of audience) (8, 17, and 25). Five experts evaluated the instrument for content validity. The questionnaire was piloted on 32 prospective teachers who were not involved in the main study. The reliability coefficient of the pilot study was found to be .89, indicating a good internal consistency.

As a first step, the questionnaire was applied to both groups (freshmen and seniors) of prospective teachers. Freshmen completed the questionnaire in the classroom, whereas, seniors answered it on an online platform due to their tight schedule including department classes, internship, and private courses etc. The reliability of the main study was found to be .94. Next, interviews were conducted on online video calls via Skype, due to location and time-wise constraints, with 10 participants responding the questionnaire. The interviewees were chosen among the participants having higher speaking anxiety via non-random purposeful sampling method. In this process, participants were asked 3 questions regarding the causes of their anxiety (Do you think you feel anxious while speaking in English?; If yes, what is the reason of your anxiety?: You or your environment; What are the anxiety provoking factors for you?). Each interview took 5-8 minutes based on the responses of prospective teachers. The interview calls were video-recorded from the Skype screen, and then content analysed.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analysed by using SPSS 23. Nonparametric tests were employed for analysis as the data were not normally distributed according to the normality tests. Items 2, 5, 13, 15, 20, 21, and 27 were reverse items, thus they were reverse-coded during analysis. The items with means above 3.5 were considered to indicate anxiety on those issues. However, if the mean was between 2.5 and 3.5 the anxiety level was considered to be moderate. The means below 2.5 showed low level of anxiety. Mann-Whitney U test was used for dual comparisons and Kruskall-Wallis test was used for multiple comparisons. Spearman's rank correlation was employed to find any possible relationship between speaking anxiety and other factors. The content of the interviews were analysed by noting repetitive expressions in the data and coding them.

FINDINGS

To identify the speaking anxiety level of freshmen and senior prospective ELT teachers (Research Question 1(RQ1)) descriptive statistics were used. The overall mean of the instrument was found to be 2.71, indicating a moderate level of speaking anxiety. Table 1 shows the results of the frequency analysis of the questionnaire and the means for each item.

According to the results of the data, some items (2, 6, 7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, and 26) revealed moderate level of means indicating that the prospective teachers were dubious regarding these issues. Accordingly, some of the prospective teachers (44.4 %) feel anxious due to the fear of making mistakes while speaking (Item 1). Some prospective teachers (47.8%) were found that they feel nervous because they cannot be sure of their vocabulary (Item 6). On the other hand, some of them (36.8%) found themselves thinking about things that have nothing to do with the lesson (Item 7). 38.4% of the participants stated that they panic when they have to speak without preparation; and also they are afraid of making grammatical mistakes while speaking. According to the result of item 16, the participants have also fear of making mistakes in the syntax of sentences (44.4%). Prospective teachers get excited

when their names are called (43.6%) (Item 18). They do not enjoy speaking without preparation. As items 19 and 24 displayed, 41.4% of the participants are scared of mispronouncing the words. 45.3% of them feel pressure when preparing for the speaking lesson (Item 20). When compared to other lessons, almost half of the prospective teachers feel more tense and nervous in the speaking lessons according to results of item 22 (48.8%). As a last anxiety-provoking situation in the scale, they feel more anxious when they have to reply questions of teachers in English (Item 26).

Table 1. Prospective teachers' level of the speaking anxiety

Items	Disagree %	Undecided %	Agree %	*M*
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I speak in the speaking lesson.	49.6	18.8	31.6	2.67
2. I worry about making mistakes in the speaking lesson.*	38.5	17.1	44.4	3.03
3. I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in the speaking lesson.	55.5	15.4	29.1	2.48
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher says in the speaking lesson.	53	11.1	35.9	2.60
5. It bothers me at all to take more English speaking lessons per week.*	76	12	12	1.86
6. I feel nervous while speaking because I cannot be sure of my vocabulary.	26.7	15.4	47.8	3.12
7. During the speaking class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	37.6	25.6	36.8	2.96
8. I always feel that other prospective teachers speak the English language better than I do.	52.1	16.2	31.7	2.65
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English.	38.4	13.7	47.9	3.06
10. In the speaking lesson, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	62.4	15.4	22.2	2.31
11. I am very afraid of making grammatical mistakes while speaking.	38.4	9.4	52.1	3.10
12. It embarrasses me to volunteer for answers in my speaking lesson.	49.5	17.1	33.3	2.67
13. I feel nervous while speaking English with native speakers.*	54.7	14.5	30.7	2.58
14. I often feel like not going to the speaking lesson.	59	13.7	27.4	2.47
15. I do not feel confident when I speak in the speaking lesson. *	44.4	28.2	27.4	2.72
16. It makes me worried put the words into wrong places in a sentence while speaking.	42.8	12.8	44.4	2.99
17. I am afraid my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make while speaking.	65.8	14.5	19.7	2.33
18. I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in the speaking lesson.	44.4	12	43.6	2.93
19. It makes me nervous to pronounce words incorrectly while speaking English.	42.5	14.5	47	3.05
20. I feel pressure to prepare very well to my speaking lesson.*	38.5	16.2	45.3	3.13
21. I cannot feel self-confident about speaking English in front of other prospective teachers.*	44.7	20.5	24.8	2.59
22. I feel more tense and nervous in the speaking lesson than in my other classes.	40.1	11.1	48.8	3.11
23. I get nervous and confused when I speak English in speaking lessons.	51.9	13.7	32.4	2.58
24. I am afraid of making pronunciation mistake while speaking English.	47	17.1	35.9	2.74
25. I am afraid the other prospective teachers will laugh at me when I speak English.	77	11.1	11.9	2.03
26. I feel nervous in the speaking lessons when the teacher asks me questions and I must reply.	47.1	15.4	37.6	2.82
27. I do not feel confident during speaking lesson.*	50.4	14.5	35	2.69

*These items were positively stated in the original instrument. For analysis they were reversed. Thus the reversed meanings are stated in the table.

The relationship between grade and speaking anxiety

The second part of the first research question inquired about a possible relationship between freshmen and senior prospective teachers. Mann-Whitney U test was used for the comparison of two groups. According to the results, there were statistically significant differences between freshmen and seniors' speaking anxiety level in thirteen items (Table 2).

Table 2. Speaking anxiety of freshmen and seniors

Items	Grade	N	Mean Rank	*p*
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in the speaking lesson.	Freshmen	66	65.13	.023
	Seniors	51	51.07	
2. I worry about making mistakes in the speaking lesson.*	Freshmen	66	64.59	.036
	Seniors	51	51.76	
3. I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in the speaking lesson.	Freshmen	66	65.17	.021
	Seniors	51	51.01	
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the speaking lesson.	Freshmen	66	64.91	.027
	Seniors	51	51.35	
6. I feel nervous while speaking because I cannot be sure of my vocabulary.	Freshmen	66	66.15	.007
	Seniors	51	49.75	
8. I always feel that the other prospective teachers speak the English language better than I do.	Freshmen	66	64.82	.030
	Seniors	51	51.47	
10. In the speaking lesson, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	Freshmen	66	69.67	.000
	Seniors	51	45.19	
12. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my speaking lesson.	Freshmen	66	65.38	.018
	Seniors	51	50.75	
15. I do not feel confident when I speak in the speaking lesson.*	Freshmen	66	64.38	.044
	Seniors	51	52.02	
16. It makes me worried put the words into wrong places in a sentence while speaking.	Freshmen	66	67.74	.030
	Seniors	51	51.57	
18. I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in the speaking lesson.	Freshmen	66	54.80	.011
	Seniors	51	50.21	
20. I feel pressure to prepare very well to the speaking lesson.*	Freshmen	66	62.40	.019
	Seniors	51	54.60	
25. I am afraid the other prospective teachers will laugh at me when I speak English.	Freshmen	66	65.30	.015
	Seniors	51	50.85	

*The items were reversed into negative meaning to be interpreted more easily.

According to the results, it can be said that freshmen have higher speaking anxiety than seniors (*U*= 1254.5, *p*=.021).

Speaking Anxiety and Gender

The second research question aimed to identify the effects of certain factors such as gender and high school that participants graduated from, on anxiety level. Mann-Whitney U test was used to find out whether there was a gender difference on anxiety level.

Table 3. The relationship between speaking anxiety and gender

Items	Gender	N	Mean Rank	*p*
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English.	Male	43	48.49	.008
	Female	74	65.11	
13. I would be nervous while speaking English with native speakers.*	Male	43	48.69	.010
	Female	74	64.69	
18. I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in the speaking lesson.	Male	43	49.98	.024
	Female	74	64.24	
21. I cannot feel self-confident about speaking English in front of other prospective teachers.*	Male	43	51.06	.045
	Female	74	63.61	

*The items were reversed into negative meaning to be interpreted more easily.

Table 3 indicates that in 4 items (9, 13, 18, and 21) female prospective teachers feel more anxious than male prospective teachers in four conditions: speaking without preparation; speaking with native speakers; speaking when their names are called; and speaking in front of other prospective teachers. (*U*= 1185.8, *p*= 0.021)

The relationship between speaking anxiety and school type

In order to find if the type of the high school that the prospective teachers graduated made a statistically significant difference on their level of speaking anxiety, Kruskall-Wallis test was used. Four high schools (Anatolian Teacher Training High School, Anatolian High School, Science High School, and Technical High School) were compared, but significant differences were found only between two high schools, Anatolian Teacher Training High School (ATTH) and Anatolian High School (AH), on two items (Table 4).

Table 4. Speaking anxiety level of prospective teachers graduated from ATTH and AH

Items	High school	N	Mean Rank	*p*
6. I feel nervous while speaking because I cannot be sure of my vocabulary.	ATTH	32	41.73	.005
	AH	76	59.88	
10. In the speaking lesson, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	ATTH	32	45.09	.035
	AH	76	58.46	

As seen, prospective teachers who graduated from Anatolian High Schools feel more anxious ($x^2(2) = 7726$, *p*=.02). According to their answers, prospective teachers from AH feel more nervous because they could not be sure of their vocabulary (*MR*= 59.88), and their nervousness cause them to forget things they know (*MR*= 58.46).

Correlations between proficiency level and anxiety provoking factors

In order to answer 3rd RQ, Spearman's correlation coefficient was calculated to see whether participants' proficiency levels were linked to their overall speaking anxiety levels. Anxiety provoking factors were also correlated with proficiency level.

Table 5. Correlations between proficiency level and anxiety provoking factors

		Proficiency Level	Fear of Interaction	Lack of Confidence	Fear caused by Language Proficiency	Error Correction /Fear of Negative Perception	Overall anxiety level
Proficiency Level	Correlation Coefficient		-.24	-.27	-.38	-.42	-.35
Fear of Interaction	Correlation Coefficient			.79	.71	.61	.89
Lack of Confidence	Correlation Coefficient				.74	.54	.92
Fear caused by Language Proficiency	Correlation Coefficient					.69	.90
Error Correction /Fear of Negative Perception	Correlation Coefficient						.72

Note: All correlations are significant at p< .01. (Two-tailed)

As can be seen in Table 5, all of the correlations are statistically significant, indicating that all of the factors and also overall anxiety level are correlated with proficiency level. According to the results, proficiency level is negatively correlated with the overall speaking anxiety level (*rs*= -.35, p<.01). It means that the more proficient the prospective teacher is, the less anxious s/he feels. On the other hand, other factors are also correlated with each other. They were found to correlate positively. Overall speaking anxiety is seen to have a strong correlation with (*rs*= .89, p<.01) fear of interaction which suggests that as they fear to interact, they experience more and higher anxiety. Besides, lack of confidence correlates strongly and positively (*rs*= .92, p<.01) with overall anxiety. Similarly, fear

caused by language proficiency was found to have a positive and strong correlation (*rs*= .90, p<.01) with overall speaking anxiety which clearly shows the role played by language proficiency on speaking anxiety.

Causes of speaking anxiety from the perspective of prospective teachers

The fourth RQ aimed to find probable reasons causing speaking anxiety. To do this, items in the scale were categorized by researchers according to what they refer to. Thus, sources of anxiety were brought together in four groups as reported in Table 6.

Table 6. Factors correlating negatively with speaking anxiety

Source of speaking anxiety	No. Items	Agreement (%)	*M*
Lack of self-confidence	1, 2, 5, 7, 14, 15, 21, 23, 27	29	2.73
Fear of interaction	3, 12, 13, 22, 26	36.1	2.62
Language Proficiency	4, 6, 10, 11, 16, 19, 24	43.6	2.84
Error correction and the fear of negative perception (fear of audience)	8, 17, 25	21.7	2.34

According to the results, the prospective teachers' speaking anxiety was at a moderate level, still, it can be said that the most anxiety provoking category was language proficiency (*M*=2.84). In detail, the participants are worried about making grammatical (*M*= 3.10) and syntactical mistakes (*M*= 2.99), and not to be able to find right words while speaking (*M*= 3.12). Also, pronunciation is an anxiety provoking factor for prospective teachers (*M*= 3.05). However, these anxiety levels are at a moderate level.

The relationships between anxiety provoking factors and other variables like grade, gender, or high school were also analysed. According to the results there are no statistically significant differences between genders, and also type of high schools, but it was seen that there was a statistically significant difference between grade levels and three of the anxiety provoking factors (Table 7).

Table 7. The relationship between grade and anxiety provoking factors

Source of speaking anxiety	Grade	N	Mean Rank	*p*
Lack of self-confidence	Freshmen	66	64.86	.033
	Seniors	51	51.42	
Language Proficiency	Freshmen	66	66.74	.005
	Seniors	51	48.98	
Error correction and the fear of perception	Freshmen	66	66.15	.009
	Seniors	51	49.75	

According to Table 7, freshmen get more anxious than seniors in terms of self-confidence (*MR*= 64.86), they were also more worried and confused about language proficiency (*MR*= 66.74) and error correction/the fear of negative perception (*MR*= 66.15).

To support and enrich what was found through the quantitative data, the prospective teachers were also interviewed online. They stated various causes of their anxiety. Half of the prospective teachers (5 of 10) complained about *the Turkish education system* because they were not given any speaking or listening courses in their previous education until university. Especially, interviewee 3 (I3) said that *"I had language education which focused on learning grammatical rules and memorising more English words, but no one tried to teach us how to use these words in contexts."*. I7 claimed that Turkish education system did not teach students how to express themselves in the target language. I2 said that *"We will suffer from speaking anxiety as long as we are taught language only for exams"*.

On the other hand, 9 of 10 prospective teachers who were interviewed mentioned that they care about *perceptions of people around them*. For example I1 said, *"Sometimes I would like to say something, but I feel that other prospective teachers will find it weird or wrong"* or I3 said that *"I think that students who are better than me can make fun of me when I start to speak"*. I4 claimed that *"I am afraid that the instructor will look down on me by saying 'he was enrolled at a university but could not speak' this makes me anxious"*. Besides, a few prospective teachers (2 of 10) are worried about making eye contact with their friends or instructors. One of them said that *"our instructors always suggest us to make eye contact with our audience while speaking, but when I make eye contact with someone, his/her condemnatory looks makes me distracted and anxious because I forget the things I know then"*.

The other important factor mentioned frequently was *fear of making mistakes*. 8 of 10 prospective teachers stated that fear of making mistakes while speaking makes them anxious. So they don't want to speak. Most of these mistakes were about vocabulary, pronunciation and also grammatical issues. For instance, *"I hesitate to speak English because I cannot be sure of my vocabulary and pronunciation, also sometimes grammar"* (I6) or *"I prefer to avoid speaking in English because I do not trust my pronunciation and vocabulary"* (I10). As it is seen in these examples, most of them are afraid of *making mistakes in pronunciation* or *choosing word* or *grammatical rules*. These factors were also given places in the scale. The items (items 6, 10 and 19) about these factors had higher means when compared to the most of the items in the scale.

It was found that prospective teachers feel anxious because of *lack of confidence* too. They (3 of 10) said that *"sometimes I feel I do not believe in myself to speak"* (I2), I10 stated that *"I am mostly afraid that our instructor might ask me a question and I would have to speak in English."*. The last factor was mentioned by four prospective teachers, which is related to *lack of practice*. According to most of them, in Turkey students could not find a chance to practice target language so they feel worried and confused when they have to speak in English in front of other students in the classroom. I9 said that *"In Turkey, speaking-focused language education is not given, and also people, including me, are not enthusiastic to compensate this deficiency on their own, unfortunately."* There was also an interesting answer pointing out the limited practice they have *"I do not know how my voice would sound while speaking English. I do not hear it often."* (I10).

Discussion and Conclusion

In the Turkish context, one of the major concerns regarding foreign language education is the learners' limited ability to interact in the target language. Although there are several reasons for this concern, the consequence of this problem creates a 'chicken or egg' dilemma, as whatever the reason is, the outcome of the problem causes anxiety in language learners. The present research aimed to find answers to questions related with the prospective ELT teachers' speaking anxiety.

The answer to the first RQ showed that the overall speaking anxiety level of prospective ELT teachers was at a moderate level. This result is similar with the findings of Balemir (2009) in the same context, suggesting that although the participants experience a certain degree of anxiety, there are some issues such as 'fear of making mistakes' that seem to provoke anxiety more than the others. On the other hand, in their study, Hammad and Ghali (2015) found prospective teachers to be very anxious. The difference in the results might be due to educational context in these two countries, instruments used in data collection, educational background as well as the self-perceptions of participants in both studies.

The results for the second RQ showed significant differences between freshmen and seniors in terms of foreign language speaking anxiety. As claimed by some participants in the interview, considering the fact that the prospective teachers graduate from high schools with limited or lack of practice in oral skill and with inadequate ability to communicate in L2, the first year at the university, during which all the courses require L2 production, might increase their anxiety levels. The level of speaking anxiety seems to get lower as the participants get more practice throughout their university education.

With regard to the gender differences, in line with the previous research (Çağatay 2015; Gerencheal, 2016; Huang, 2004; Park & French, 2013; Şener, 2015; Tercan & Dikilitaş, 2015) females are found to experience anxiety more than males in some of the items (9, 13, 18, 21) as displayed in Table 3. On the other hand, as these differences cannot be generalized to the whole questionnaire, the areas of such differences should be projected on carefully. Considering the present research, for females speaking in the presence of others or with native speakers seems to increase anxiety more than these factors affect males. A possible answer to the situation might lie under the fact that in traditional and patriarchal societies like Turkey, females are restrained more than males in social conventions, which might also reflect to L2 speaking and thus, result in anxiety.

When the speaking anxiety level and the type of high school prospective teachers graduated from is compared, statistically significant differences were found in two items (6 and 10) as shown in Table 4. Prospective teachers who graduated from Anatolian Teacher Training High Schools (ATTH) are found to be less anxious while speaking. There can be some reasons for these differences between two high schools. Students in ATTH schools were enrolled by

getting higher scores in high school entrance exams. As these students are specifically trained to be teachers, it is possible that their self-esteem is higher and anxiety is lower than others. Although ATTH schools were closed in 2014, the teachers in these schools had been chosen specifically, which might also have a positive influence on ATTH graduates. However, as the difference was only seen in two of the items, the results should be interpreted cautiously.

Most of the studies looking for a correlation between language speaking proficiency and speaking anxiety (Chiang, 2012; Djigunovic, 2006; Liu, 2006; Woodrow, 2006; Tercan & Dikilitaş, 2015) have found a negative correlation similar to the current research. Thus, less proficient students are more likely to feel anxious compared to more proficient ones. It is possible to say that the more proficient prospective teachers have more confidence about their knowledge of the foreign language, which in turn, might help them reduce their anxiety.

As for the causes of speaking anxiety, the education system, fear of negative perceptions, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and lack of practice are identified. Some of these factors seem to be contextual rather than general such as the education system and lack of practice. However, fear of making mistakes and negative perceptions of others corresponds with previous studies (Hammad & Ghali, 2015; Kitano, 2001; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Young, 1991). In terms of the differences between freshmen and seniors in anxiety provoking factors, it is found out that freshmen are more anxious than seniors due to self-confidence, language proficiency, and error correction and fear of negative perceptions of people around. As prospective teachers gain experience in language as well as content areas offered in the department, they build their confidence as they proceed to graduation. Similarly, due to their language studies and practice throughout their education, it could be expected that they develop language proficiency.

The reason for the differences among various variables (gender, high school graduation) as well as the causes of anxiety points out some contextual factors. Although Turkish education system in teaching English as a foreign language has been improving since 2005 towards a more communicative approach to teaching, the participants' accusations of the system seem to stem from the teachers' implementation of the curriculum. The curriculum renovation in 2005 suggested the use of communicative approach and aimed to develop learners' communicative competence. In 2013, along with the systemic changes launched in 2012, the English Language Teaching Program (ELTP) was changed. The new program not only emphasized the speaking and listening skills, but also action-oriented activity based learning. Despite the government's efforts to improve the foreign language education at the policy level, the lack of or limited support the teachers received throughout the process undermined these endeavours. Moreover, although the ELTP has improved taking the global changes and learners' needs into consideration, the current exam-oriented nature of the education system remained the same, which has led the teachers to train their students for *the exam* rather than the learners' future communicative needs. For that matter, for any curriculum change to be successful, the teachers need to be provided with adequate in-service training to understand the underlying features of any curriculum change. Moreover, these should also be reflected in the teacher education process.

Prospective ELT teachers' speaking anxiety is a topic worth studying as it could affect their future teaching. Moreover, to prevent anxiety raising factors to come into play in the language classrooms, prospective teachers need to be given opportunities to reflect on their feelings and ideas. Such studies with prospective teachers, pave the way for such reflection. For teacher trainers, it is important to understand anxiety provoking factors to help prospective teachers to reduce their anxiety. Classroom methodologies as implemented by teacher trainers would also set as a model for the prospective teachers to use in their future career as well.

As with most studies, the present research is not without its limitations. When interpreting the results, it should be kept in mind that the data was collected from only one university, thus the generalizability of the findings is limited to this context. Further studies are needed to delve more into the reasons for speaking anxiety. Finally, the effects of cultural and contextual factors should be hold under the microscope to analyse context-specific outcomes.

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