

**BASKENT UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES**  
**MASTER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING**

**AN INVESTIGATION OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT STUDENTS'  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY LEVELS AND THEIR CAUSES**

**PREPARED BY**

**DİLSAT ATAN**

**MASTER THESIS**

**ANKARA, 2024**

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**MASTER THESIS**

**THESIS ADVISOR**

**Asst. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Remzi ULUŞAN**

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**BAŞKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ**  
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*To my beloved family, Avni, Mine, Dilara and Duru*

# ÖZET

**Dilşat ATAN**

## **GENÇ ERGEN ÖĞRENCİLERİN YABANCI DİL KAYGISI DÜZEYLERİNİN VE NEDENLERİNİN İNCELENMESİ**

**Başkent Üniversitesi**

**Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü**

**Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Ana Bilim Dalı**

**İngiliz Dili Öğretimi Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı**

**2024**

Bu tez, genç ergen öğrencilerin yaşadığı yabancı dil kaygısını araştırmayı ve altında yatan nedenleri keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu araştırmanın nihai hedefi, öğretmenlere genç öğrencilerinin yabancı dil kaygısını anlama ve etkili bir şekilde yönetme konusunda değerli iç görüler sunarak, olumsuz duygusal etkileri hafifletmeye yardımcı olmaktır. Araştırma, 2022-2023 akademik yılının ilkbahar döneminde Ankara'daki hem özel hem de devlet okullarında gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma metodolojisinde daha derinlemesine ve kapsamlı sonuçlar elde etmek için karma bir yöntem kullanılmıştır.

Nicel veri toplama işlemi, Horwitz ve diğerleri (1996) tarafından geliştirilen ve Aydın (1999) tarafından Türkçe 'ye çevrilen Yabancı Dil Sınıfı Kaygı Ölçeği (FLCAS) kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiş olup, 5. ila 8. sınıf arasından 414 öğrenciyi içermiştir. Aynı zamanda, nitel veriler, FLCAS sonuçlarına göre yüksek düzeyde kaygı gösteren 12 öğrenciyle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla elde edilmiştir. Sonuçları analiz ettikten sonra, genç ergenlerin yaşadığı yabancı dil kaygısının yaş, ebeveyn beklentileri, cinsiyet, öğrenme deneyimleri, okul türü ve akademik başarı gibi faktörlerden etkilendiği açıkça ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu değişkenlerin yabancı dil kaygısı üzerindeki etkileri detaylı bir şekilde tartışılmış ve analiz edilmiştir. 12 kaygılı öğrenciyle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerin ardından,

kaygılarının nedenleri konuşma etkinlikleri, öğretmen tutumları, akran tepkileri, ebeveyn baskısı ve sınavlarda düşük not alma korkusu olarak belirlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, tüm bulgular kapsamlı bir şekilde tartışılmış ve özetlenmiş ve öğretmenler ve gelecekteki çalışmalar için olası öneriler sunulmuştur.

Bu çalışmanın değerli iç görüler sunmasına rağmen, kapsamının Ankara'daki tek bir devlet okulundan 226 öğrenci ve bir özel okuldan 188 öğrenciyle sınırlı olduğunu belirtmek önemlidir. Bu nedenle, bulguların bu belirli bağlamın ötesine genelleştirilmesinde dikkatli olunmalıdır. Gelecekteki araştırma girişimleri, veri toplama araçlarını çeşitlendirerek, öğretmenlerin katkılarını içerecek şekilde, yabancı dil kaygısını anlama ve öğrenci kaygısını dil öğrenme ortamlarında ele almak için kapsamlı stratejiler geliştirmek için ek bakış açılarını keşfedebilir.

***Anahtar Kelimeler:*** Dil kaygısı, genç ergen öğrencilerin kaygı düzeyi, kaygının nedenleri, yabancı dil öğrenme

## **ABSTRACT**

**Dilşat ATAN**

### **AN INVESTIGATION OF YOUNG ADOLESCENT STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY LEVELS AND THEIR CAUSES**

**Başkent University  
Institute of Educational Sciences  
Department of Foreign Languages  
Master Program of English Language Teaching with Thesis  
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This thesis endeavors to delve into the foreign language anxiety experienced by young adolescent students and explore its underlying causes. The ultimate goal of this research is to provide valuable insights that can aid teachers in comprehending and effectively managing the foreign language anxiety of their young learners, thereby mitigating negative emotional impacts. The study was conducted across both private and public schools in Ankara during the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. A mixed method was used in the research methodology to obtain more in-depth and comprehensive results.

Quantitative data collection utilized the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al., (1996) and translated into Turkish by Aydın (1991) and involved 414 students from 5th to 8th grades. Simultaneously, qualitative data were acquired through semi-structured interviews conducted with 12 students exhibiting high levels of anxiety according to FLCAS results. After analyzing the results, it was evident that young adolescents exhibited a moderate level of foreign language anxiety, which was influenced by factors such as age, parental expectations, gender, learning experiences, school type, and academic

achievement. The effects of these variables on foreign language anxiety were thoroughly discussed and analyzed. Following semi-structured interviews with 12 anxious students, the causes of their anxiety were identified as speaking activities, teacher manners, peer reactions, parental pressure, and fear of receiving low grades in exams. Consequently, all the findings were comprehensively discussed and summarized, and potential suggestions were offered for teachers and future studies.

It is important to note that while this study offers valuable insights, its scope is limited to 226 students from a single public school and 188 students from a private school in Ankara. Therefore, caution must be exercised in generalizing the findings beyond this specific context. Future research endeavors may benefit from diversifying data collection tools, including input from teachers to enrich the understanding of foreign language anxiety, and exploring additional perspectives to develop comprehensive strategies for addressing student anxiety in language learning environments.

**Keywords:** Language anxiety, the anxiety level of young adolescent students, causes of anxiety, foreign language learning

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                      |            |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>                         | <b>v</b>   |
| <b>ÖZET.....</b>                                     | <b>vii</b> |
| <b>ABSTRACT .....</b>                                | <b>i</b>   |
| <b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>                          | <b>ii</b>  |
| <b>CHAPTER 1 .....</b>                               | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>                             | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>1.1. Background of the study.....</b>             | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>1.3. Purpose of the study.....</b>                | <b>5</b>   |
| <b>1.4. Significance of the study .....</b>          | <b>6</b>   |
| <b>1.5. Limitations of the study .....</b>           | <b>6</b>   |
| <b>CHAPTER 2 .....</b>                               | <b>7</b>   |
| <b>LITERATURE VIEW .....</b>                         | <b>7</b>   |
| <b>2.1. Definitions of Anxiety.....</b>              | <b>7</b>   |
| <b>2.2. Language Anxiety.....</b>                    | <b>8</b>   |
| <b>2.3. Categories of Anxiety .....</b>              | <b>10</b>  |
| 2.3.1. Trait anxiety .....                           | 10         |
| 2.3.2. State Anxiety .....                           | 11         |
| 2.3.3. Situation-specific anxiety .....              | 11         |
| 2.3.4. Facilitating and debilitating anxiety .....   | 11         |
| <b>2.4. Foreign language anxiety .....</b>           | <b>12</b>  |
| 2.4.1. Communication Apprehension.....               | 15         |
| 2.4.2. Fear of negative evaluation .....             | 16         |
| 2.4.3. Test anxiety .....                            | 18         |
| <b>2.5. Causes of Foreign Language Anxiety .....</b> | <b>19</b>  |
| 2.5.1. Other variables .....                         | 22         |
| 2.5.1.1. Gender .....                                | 22         |
| 2.5.1.2. Age .....                                   | 24         |

|                                                                                                      |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 2.5.1.3. Proficiency level.....                                                                      | 25        |
| 2.5.1.4. Academic achievement .....                                                                  | 26        |
| 2.5.1.5. Learning experience .....                                                                   | 27        |
| <b>CHAPTER 3 .....</b>                                                                               | <b>30</b> |
| <b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>                                                                              | <b>30</b> |
| <b>3.1. Research Design.....</b>                                                                     | <b>30</b> |
| <b>3.2. Setting and Participants.....</b>                                                            | <b>30</b> |
| <b>3.3.Sampling.....</b>                                                                             | <b>32</b> |
| <b>3.4. Data Collection Tools .....</b>                                                              | <b>32</b> |
| 3.4.1. Foreign Language Anxiety Scale .....                                                          | 32        |
| 3.4.2. Semi-structured interview .....                                                               | 34        |
| <b>3.5. Data Analysis Process .....</b>                                                              | <b>35</b> |
| <b>CHAPTER 4 .....</b>                                                                               | <b>37</b> |
| <b>FINDINGS .....</b>                                                                                | <b>37</b> |
| <b>4.1. Findings of Quantitative Data.....</b>                                                       | <b>37</b> |
| 4.1.1. What are the anxiety levels of young adolescents?.....                                        | 37        |
| 4.1.2. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to age?.....                      | 38        |
| 4.1.3. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to gender? .....                  | 40        |
| 4.1.4. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to learning experience?<br>.....  | 41        |
| 4.1.5. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to academic<br>achievement? ..... | 43        |
| 4.1.6. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to school type? .....             | 45        |
| 4.1.7. Does the anxiety level of students vary according to parental expectations? .....             | 46        |
| <b>4.2. Findings of Qualitative Data .....</b>                                                       | <b>48</b> |
| <b>CHAPTER 5 .....</b>                                                                               | <b>61</b> |
| <b>DISCUSSION .....</b>                                                                              | <b>61</b> |
| <b>5.1. Discussion of the Research Questions.....</b>                                                | <b>61</b> |
| 5.2.1. What are the anxiety levels of young adolescents?.....                                        | 62        |
| 5.2.1.1. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to age?.....                    | 64        |
| 5.2.1.2. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to gender? .....                | 66        |

|                                                                                                                    |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 5.2.1.3. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to learning experiences? .....                | 68  |
| 5.2.1.4. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to academic achievement? .....                | 69  |
| 5.2.1.5. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to school type? .....                         | 71  |
| 5.2.1.6. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to parental expectations? .....               | 72  |
| <b>5.2.2. What are the leading causes of young adolescent students' anxiety toward the Foreign Language?</b> ..... | 74  |
| <b>CHAPTER 6</b> .....                                                                                             | 79  |
| <b>CONCLUSION</b> .....                                                                                            | 79  |
| <b>6.1. The Summary of the Results</b> .....                                                                       | 79  |
| <b>6.2. Pedagogical Implications</b> .....                                                                         | 82  |
| <b>6.3. Suggestions for further studies</b> .....                                                                  | 83  |
| <b>REFERENCES</b> .....                                                                                            | 84  |
| <b>APPENDICES</b> .....                                                                                            | 96  |
| <b>APPENDIX 1: Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire</b> .....                                                    | 97  |
| <b>APPENDIX 2: Semi-Structured Interview Questions in Turkish</b> .....                                            | 101 |
| <b>APPENDIX 3: Semi-structured Interview Questions in English</b> .....                                            | 102 |
| <b>APPENDIX 4: Permission Letters</b> .....                                                                        | 103 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|                                                                                            | Page |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| <b>Table 1.</b> Demographic Distribution of the Participants .....                         | 31   |
| <b>Table 2.</b> Reliability Analysis Results .....                                         | 33   |
| <b>Table 3.</b> Anxiety Score Range .....                                                  | 34   |
| <b>Table 4.</b> Test of Normality .....                                                    | 35   |
| <b>Table 5.</b> Descriptive Findings of FLCAS and Sub-Dimensions .....                     | 37   |
| <b>Table 6.</b> Descriptive Findings of FLCAS Categories.....                              | 38   |
| <b>Table 7.</b> FLCAS AND Sub-Dimensions Scores by Age of Students .....                   | 39   |
| <b>Table 8 .</b> FLCAS and Sub-Dimensions Scores by Gender of Students.....                | 40   |
| <b>Table 9.</b> FLCAS and Sub-Dimensions Scores by Learning Experiences of Students .....  | 41   |
| <b>Table 10.</b> FLCAS and Sub-Dimensions Scores by Academic Achievement of Students ..... | 43   |
| <b>Table 11.</b> FLCAS and Sub-Dimensions Scores by school type of students.....           | 45   |
| <b>Table 12.</b> FLCAS and Sub-Dimensions Scores by Parental Expectations of Students..... | 46   |
| <b>Table 13.</b> The Feelings of Students toward English Lessons .....                     | 48   |
| <b>Table 14.</b> Students' Preferences .....                                               | 49   |
| <b>Table 15.</b> Students' dislikes .....                                                  | 50   |
| <b>Table 16.</b> The causes of Students' anxiety .....                                     | 51   |
| <b>Table 17.</b> Coping with Anxiety .....                                                 | 55   |
| <b>Table 18.</b> Pleasant Moments English Class.....                                       | 58   |

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the background of the study of the foreign language anxiety levels among young adolescent students. Additionally, it describes the study's purpose and significance, followed by its limitations.

### **1.1. Background of the study**

Learning a foreign language impacts an individual emotionally and psychologically, leading to the emergence of numerous studies investigating the relationship between foreign language learning and affective factors (Chastain, 1975; Schumann, 1999; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993; Young, 1990; Ely, 1986; Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986; Samimy and Tabuse, 1992; Zhanibek, 2001). The findings from these studies underscore the substantial influence of affective variables on the process of foreign language learning. These variables, including emotions, self-respect, empathy, and introversion as, defined by Brown (2014), play a crucial role in shaping the language acquisition journey. Learning a new language is not merely a cognitive task but also involves emotional and psychological aspects for the learner. Therefore, it is essential to approach this learning process systematically and with coordination to address and leverage these affective factors effectively.

Numerous challenges can impede language acquisition, causing discomfort and hindering learning progress. Among these challenges, anxiety stands out as a significant factor. Anxiety manifests in various forms during the language learning journey, stemming from diverse causes. Its detrimental effects on students' performance and overall success in acquiring a new language are well-documented. The anxiety-inducing factors in language learning are distinct from psychological factors that evoke negative emotions, highlighting the complexity and multifaceted nature of anxiety in this context. An anxious student who does not know what they are learning while learning a foreign language will logically feel stressed and uneasy. As a result, the student cannot carry out the language acquisition process positively, and a positive learning environment does not occur. Students who learn

a foreign language perceive their classroom activities as complex and stressed (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). In classrooms, students often avoid taking part in discussions, hesitate to approach the teacher, feel reluctant to communicate with their peers, and may struggle to express their thoughts and feelings. This is often accompanied by a fear of making mistakes during class activities. So, what is it that causes students to be so stressed? Students feel nervous during the lesson because of anxiety. Anxiety can arise from disappointment, a fear of making errors, and negative emotions. Language learning anxiety can hinder a student's ability to communicate effectively in a second language. Due to factors such as a lack of self-confidence among students, it is crucial to conduct a comprehensive examination of language learning anxiety (Rashid & Alias, 2018). This emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing the emotional and psychological barriers that students may face during the language acquisition process.

Tanveer (2007) emphasizes the significance of examining how learners respond when experiencing anxiety. Learners' reactions to anxiety are crucial because it enables teachers to offer the necessary support for learners to achieve their performance objectives in the target language. For this reason, a reliable relationship between teacher and student is very important for the creation of a healthy learning environment. Once the students trust the teacher, they will be ready to provide the necessary support. At the same time, the student's self-belief and confidence are closely related to language anxiety. They should be aware of their performance, and they should aim for achievable goals and pursue realistic aspirations.

Anxiety about foreign languages in classrooms can be classified into four categories. These are based on learners' beliefs, teachers' concerns, and the school's testing and teaching procedures (Aydın, 2001). At the same time, self-confidence, comparing yourself with others, and past experiences are some of the personal reasons that cause anxiety. If we are to explain them individually, self-confidence is the emergence of the strengths and weaknesses of the student's communication skills. Comparing one's abilities and success with others can lead to increased levels of anxiety. Instead of identifying the reasons for one's failures and addressing them, individuals may constantly believe they are inferior to others. In this scenario, a lack of self-confidence is likely to develop. Negative experiences can lead to anxiety in students, particularly when they are concerned about making the same mistakes again in the future. To avoid repeating the same negative experience in the future,

the student avoids correcting the mistake. When encountering the same experience again, her anxiety level becomes much higher.

Upon reviewing numerous studies, it becomes apparent that learners often experience feelings of anxiety and apprehension stemming from various origins. Worde (2003) suggests that teachers can be a potential source of anxiety in language classes, as they have the potential to establish a negative classroom atmosphere, and they often hold a dominant position as speakers in front of learners (Zhao, 2009). Additionally, various elements including classroom activities, learning approaches, cultural disparities, and apprehension of negative evaluation, learners' educational backgrounds, and attitudes may impact the language learning process. There could be numerous other factors contributing to language anxiety as well (Aydın, 2008; Aydın, 2013; Balemir, 2009; Yan & Horwitz, 2008; Young, 1991). Furthermore, in addition, anxiety manifests itself physically in students, alongside the psychological factors mentioned previously. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), psycho-physiological symptoms associated with anxiety can significantly hinder the language learning process. When anxiety manifests intensely across physical, behavioral, and physiological levels, it tends to distract students from focusing on course material, thereby complicating the learning experience. Learners grappling with such heightened anxiety levels may struggle to achieve effective learning outcomes and academic success. The excessive energy expended in managing these anxiety-related concerns can lead to a decrease in performance, falling short of their actual capabilities. Therefore, understanding and addressing these psycho-physiological symptoms of anxiety are crucial for fostering a conducive learning environment for language learners.

Language learning anxiety, known as "second/foreign language anxiety" in the context of acquiring a new language, can significantly hinder the learning process. Cope, Horwitz, and Horwitz (1986) characterize "foreign language anxiety" as including a spectrum of adverse emotions encountered specifically in language learning settings, such as classrooms. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) define it as an emotional state characterized by fear, hesitation, and apprehension during second language acquisition. Scholars employ a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), frequently utilizing instruments like the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) created by Horwitz et al. (1986) and elaborated upon by Aydın (2001). This scale assesses elements like test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and

communication apprehension. Additionally, qualitative techniques like diaries and interviews, as noted by Aydın (2001), offer valuable insights into the nuanced progression of foreign language anxiety. These research methods collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of the emotional challenges faced by language learners and aid in developing strategies to mitigate language learning anxiety.

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) has undergone scrutiny from various viewpoints, underscoring its potential to pose significant challenges for language learners. As highlighted by Andrade and Williams (2009), there is an ongoing need for researchers to conduct thorough investigations into the phenomenon of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) to achieve a more comprehensive understanding. While Horwitz et al. (1986) have made significant progress in identifying FLA, there is still a crucial necessity to delve deeper into its effects on the foreign language acquisition process. Additionally, Aydın (2001) advocates for conducting extensive studies on FLA due to persistent uncertainties regarding the impact of anxiety on language learning. This emphasizes the importance of continued research efforts to unravel the complexities surrounding FLA and its implications for language learners.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Foreign language learning encompasses cognitive processes such as comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, as well as emotional experiences (Wang, 2010; Brown, 1994). Numerous studies have explored various factors influencing the foreign language learning journey, with anxiety emerging as a particularly impactful aspect (Aydın, 2001; Brown, 1994; Chastain, 1975; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986; Scovel, 1978; Young, 1990). Considering all these variables, anxiety has been accepted as one of the most effective and important factors (MacIntyre, 1998). MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) highlight that language anxiety negatively impacts foreign language learning, distinct from its effects on one's native language. This anxiety becomes a common challenge for students engaged in foreign language learning, leading to the conceptualization of "foreign language anxiety" (FLA). The presence of anxiety during language learning not only demotivates learners but also hampers their success in classroom activities, underscoring the need to address and manage anxiety effectively in language education contexts (Azher, Anwar & Naz, 2010; Batumlu & Erden, 2007). It is obvious that foreign language anxiety has an effect on language learning, but according to Horwitz et al (1987),

its effect on language acquisition should be investigated in more detail. Previous studies have primarily concentrated on foreign language anxiety in adults and university students (Aida, 1994; Andrade & Williams, 2009; Çağatay, 2015; Elkhafaifi, 2005; Kitano, 2001; Young, 1986) while research on young adolescents in this context is limited (Alshahrani & Alandal, 2015; Aydın, 2013; Aydın et al., 2017a; Chan & Wu, 2004). Hence, the primary aim of this study is to focus on young adolescents and conduct a comprehensive investigation into the phenomenon of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) within this particular demographic. The study endeavors to quantitatively assess the prevalence of FLA among young adolescents and qualitatively expound upon its underlying sources.

### **1.3. Purpose of the study**

This study delves into the anxiety levels and root causes among young adolescent students, particularly focusing on secondary school students, including those in private and public schools. Through the utilization of the Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) scale and conducting interviews, the research aims to gauge and understand the anxiety experienced by these students. By analyzing the data gathered from participants, the study endeavors to provide insights that will enable teachers to comprehend and address the anxiety prevalent among young adolescents effectively. The overarching goal is to find solutions to help students manage negative emotions encountered during language lessons. This study is guided by specific research questions aimed at unraveling the complexities surrounding anxiety in language learning contexts among secondary school students, thereby contributing to the development of strategies to support their emotional well-being and academic success:

1. What are the anxiety levels of young adolescents?

- 1.1. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to age?

- 1.2. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to gender?

- 1.3. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to learning experiences?

- 1.4. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to academic achievement?

1.5. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to parental expectations?

1.6. Does students' foreign language anxiety vary according to school type(public-private)?

2. What are the leading causes of young adolescent students' anxiety toward the Foreign Language?

#### **1.4. Significance of the study**

Anxiety affects the learners negatively during the learning process and creates negative emotions in learners (Dewaele, 2009; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002 Horwitz et al., 1986;). Many language learners and teachers complain about anxiety during the language learning process, and they need to know which variables affect this process. This study seeks to investigate the extent of variation in anxiety levels among young adolescent students concerning several variables including age, gender, school types, academic achievement, parental expectations, and learning experiences. It aims to explore how Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) impacts the language learning process across different age groups, emphasizing the significance of understanding and addressing anxiety-related challenges in language education. However, a review of past studies reveals that the majority focus on adults' foreign language learning anxiety (Aida, 1994; Andrade & Williams, 2009; Elkhafaifi, 2005; Young, 1986). Studies examining the anxiety state among young students are pretty limited (Alshahrani & Alandal, 2015; Aydın, 2013; Chan & Wu, 2004). For this reason, it is crucial to prioritize and expand research on foreign language learning from early childhood, aiming to ensure lasting and improved language acquisition.

#### **1.5. Limitations of the study**

This study is limited to secondary schools in Çankaya, Ankara, Türkiye. Consequently, the study's findings might not be generalizable to all language learners. Additionally, to obtain detailed information from participants, data collection tools need to be more widely accepted. Data collection tools can be diversified to investigate anxiety problems in students more deeply, and teachers' perceptions can be incorporated since teachers may be good observers of these problems. In addition, the same study might be conducted in multiple regions of Ankara or Türkiye to collect data from various areas.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE VIEW**

This chapter provides an overview of the literature in six key sections. Initially, it defines anxiety, followed by a comprehensive discussion on language anxiety to provide a broader perspective. The subsequent section delves into the various categories of anxiety, while the fourth part specifically addresses foreign language anxiety and its components. Moving forward, the fifth section explores the causes of foreign language anxiety along with other related variables. The final chapter concludes with a review of studies focused on foreign language anxiety among young adolescent students, highlighting research conducted across different countries including Türkiye.

#### **2.1. Definitions of Anxiety**

Anxiety is an extensive and significant problem, so it has several definitions according to different researchers and studies. Researchers and academics have struggled to define anxiety precisely since it is a complicated construct with numerous elements (Balemir, 2009). As a result of its complex structure, anxiety has been characterized in a variety of ways. For example, Balemir (2009) explained that anxiety is a psychological and emotional stimulus in humans. Spielberger (1983) describes anxiety as a state characterized by feelings of nervousness, tension, and apprehension that arise due to the activation of the autonomic nervous system. In another definition, Tas (2006) states that anxiety is a situation in which a person's bodily, mental, and psychological alterations act as a triggering role in their mind when they are exposed to signals. Zengin and Aydın (2008) categorize anxiety based on three contexts: personality factors, status-related triggers, and specific situational cases. These perspectives offer varied insights into anxiety, highlighting its physiological responses and diverse situational influences. Leary (1983), on the other hand, emphasized anxiety as a sensation of dread over a potentially lousy outcome that a person thinks cannot be avoided. For example, the body begins to signal when a person is in a stressful circumstance by making them feel uneasy and uncomfortable. For this reason, most people

may experience anxiety when speaking in front of a crowd at school, at work, or at a job interview (Holland, 2022).

Moreover, Reber (1985) described anxiety as a generalized, unpleasant feeling that includes apprehension, fear, anguish, and uneasiness. Combining insights from different definitions, anxiety within the realm of language learning typically refers to a state characterized by unease, fear, and negative sentiments regarding the learning environment, all of which are closely intertwined. These shared characteristics underscore the impact of anxiety on the learning atmosphere and its inhibiting effect on the learning journey.

## **2.2. Language Anxiety**

Language anxiety represents a psychological phenomenon that exerts a negative impact on an individual's life and serves as a significant obstacle to language acquisition. This anxiety not only complicates the process of learning a new language but also acts as a hindrance throughout. Horwitz (2001) defines anxiety within language learning as a blend of attitudes, behaviors, and self-perception, emphasizing its extensive research in psychology and education due to its detrimental effects on various forms of learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) identify language anxiety as a complex interplay of personal perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and attitudes specific to language learning environments. Scholars such as Horwitz and Young (1991) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) argue that anxiety during the learning journey adversely impacts learners' motivation, achievement, and attitudes toward the target language, thus significantly influencing the language acquisition process for students. Language anxiety is attributed to various factors, with Horwitz et al. (1986) asserting that a primary cause is a deficiency in communicative skills within foreign language learning contexts. Unlike interactions in one's native language, where understanding is typically straightforward, communication in a second language involves higher risk levels for learners, leading to feelings of self-consciousness, fear, and sometimes even panic. This notion of negative emotions in language learning is not novel; Krashen (1982) highlighted anxiety's detrimental impact on language learners, noting its influence on the affective filter and subsequent low linguistic performance. According to Krashen, heightened anxiety elevates the affective filter, resulting in student struggles in language classes. Horwitz et al. (1986) further acknowledge anxiety's adverse effects on broader areas such as academic performance, yet it is crucial that research delves into the

intricate connection between language anxiety and specific aspects of language acquisition and communication.

When delving into the historical aspects of anxiety in language learning, Oxford (1999) explored whether language anxiety yielded beneficial or detrimental effects. The consensus from his analysis revealed that anxiety predominantly exerted negative impacts on language acquisition. This was evident through Aida's (1994) research on grades in language courses, Young's (1986) investigations into learners' performance in skill-based studies, and Gardner and MacIntyre's (1993) study on self-confidence levels. Building upon this perspective, Djigunovic (2006) further investigated the consequences of anxiety during the language learning journey, highlighting the escalation of challenges under high-pressure environments.

Anxiety in language learners is considered a "learned emotional response" because learners typically do not experience anxiety at the outset; instead, it develops over the course of the learning process, as stated by MacIntyre and Gardner (1989). The initial impression a student forms in language learning holds significant importance. This is because a negative first impression can potentially trigger the onset of anxiety. Initially, the teacher might not readily detect students who are experiencing anxiety. This situation arises in tandem with the students' attitudes toward learning as they progress. Moreover, this underscores the pivotal role teachers play in shaping students' anxiety levels throughout the language learning journey. Addressing the impact of anxiety from early childhood is another critical factor that contributes to the effectiveness and permanence of language learning. Early experiences with language anxiety can significantly impact learners' proficiency levels, highlighting the importance of early intervention strategies. Research focusing on children's language acquisition processes is crucial, especially considering the potential benefits of learning a foreign language from a young age in enhancing language skills. However, there is a notable gap in well-developed teaching approaches for very young learners in English-exclusive classrooms (Kiaer et al., 2021). Consequently, unaddressed language anxiety not only hampers language proficiency but also poses risks to psychological well-being.

## **2.3. Categories of Anxiety**

Anxiety manifests in diverse forms, and while literature on foreign language learning explores several types, not all are exclusive to language acquisition contexts. These varied anxiety forms are often described using different criteria and can be grouped into categories that show some overlap. Research on anxiety in language learning typically adopts four key perspectives: state anxiety, trait anxiety, situation-specific anxiety, and facilitating-debilitating anxiety. These perspectives provide comprehensive insights into the multifaceted nature of anxiety experienced by language learners.

### **2.3.1. Trait anxiety**

Trait anxiety, as described by Spielberger (1966), refers to a persistent behavioral tendency where individuals perceive non-threatening situations as potentially threatening and tend to overreact to challenges. This form of anxiety is closely associated with one's personality traits and suggests that individuals with high-trait anxiety may experience anxiety across various situations due to their inherent behavioral disposition. In some cases, anxiety may decrease, but in trait anxiety, language anxiety never decreases. As students continually link their anxiety with their language performance, it tends to become ingrained and persistent (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993). Once anxiety reaches this permanent state, it significantly impacts the language learning journey as a whole (Arnold, 1999). These effects can be summarized as deterioration of cognitive functions in the individual, deterioration of memory, and avoidance behaviors (Eysenck, 1979). However, some researchers, including Mischel & Peak (1982) and Endler (1980) argue that trying to establish a direct connection between learning a foreign language and trait anxiety is not meaningful. They suggest that anxiety tends to manifest differently depending on the specific situation and the individual involved. For instance, even if two people have similar levels of trait anxiety, one person might experience anxiety in social situations, while the other could feel apprehensive specifically during tests.

### **2.3.2. State Anxiety**

State anxiety, as defined by Spielberger (1983), refers to the feeling of apprehension experienced in response to a specific, identifiable situation, such as exam anxiety. This type of anxiety, as explained by MacIntyre & Gardner (1991), is transient and situational, triggered by perceived threats that can vary over time. State anxiety is not a permanent disposition like trait anxiety; instead, it fluctuates based on circumstances. When learners feel at ease with their environment, such as having a supportive teacher, state anxiety can even be advantageous. Young (1990) also emphasizes that state anxiety is context-specific and does not persist beyond the immediate situation. It affects individuals emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally, leading to physical symptoms like a rapid heartbeat and sweaty palms, as noted by MacIntyre (1999). In summary, while trait anxiety can manifest across various situations, state anxiety arises in response to specific circumstances at particular times, impacting individuals both mentally and physically.

### **2.3.3. Situation-specific anxiety**

Situation-specific anxiety, as elucidated by MacIntyre & Gardner (1991), pertains to anxiety that is distinctly tied to a particular situation or event. This perspective highlights the unique circumstances surrounding an individual's experience, offering insights into the specific triggers of anxiety within that context. Unlike trait and state anxiety perspectives, which focus on broader dispositions or transient reactions, situation-specific anxiety requires individuals to identify and address the specific causes of their anxiety within a given situation. This viewpoint is particularly relevant in understanding anxiety within the language learning process, as noted by Zhanibek (2001), who emphasizes its recurrence in language use scenarios for learners. Balamir (2009) also stated that there is a relationship between foreign language anxiety and the tasks that need to be done during language learning; therefore, it is shaped as a situation-specific form of anxiety. Situational anxiety can manifest during various academic tasks such as tests, presentations, or writing examinations, reflecting the situational nature of anxiety experiences in educational settings.

### **2.3.4. Facilitating and debilitating anxiety**

Scovel (1978) distinguished between two types of anxiety: facilitating and debilitating, each with distinct impacts on language learning. Facilitating anxiety, also known as beneficial anxiety, plays a positive role by motivating students to engage more

deeply in learning a second or foreign language. For instance, feeling anxious before exams can prompt learners to study harder and strive for better performance, as noted by Brown (1994). This form of anxiety contributes positively to the language learning process by enhancing motivation and dedication.

In contrast, debilitating anxiety hinders rather than helps learners in acquiring a second or foreign language, leading to decreased motivation and performance. For example, experiencing anxiety while presenting in front of an audience can be debilitating, especially if met with negative reactions such as people leaving the room. Such instances of anxiety detract from the learning experience and impede progress, highlighting the detrimental effects of debilitating anxiety on learners. Thus, while facilitating anxiety supports learners' efforts, debilitating anxiety poses challenges and obstacles to successful language acquisition.

#### **2.4. Foreign language anxiety**

Anxiety is recognized as a crucial factor influencing various forms of learning, including the acquisition of foreign languages. This connection has led to the emergence of the concept known as 'foreign language anxiety,' which necessitates reliable measurement tools. To address this need, Horwitz et al. (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a widely recognized scale for assessing foreign language anxiety. The FLCAS has gained significant traction in research related to anxiety in foreign language learning due to its high reliability and successful validation in measuring anxiety constructs (Ganschow & Spark, 1996; Aida, 1994; McIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Kitano, 2001; Price, 1988; Chang, 1999).

Foreign Language Learning (FLL) is an incredibly distressing psychological circumstance threatening learners' views of themselves and the world (Guiora, 1983). According to Oxford (1999), language anxiety manifests as a temporary feeling of unease or fear when learners are called upon to use a second language actively. This form of anxiety, termed foreign language anxiety, plays a crucial role in students' experiences during classroom interactions and lessons. Also, according to Horwitz et al. (1986), anxiety causes insufficient communicative abilities in the foreign language process. While learners can easily understand and communicate with each other when they use their mother tongue,

foreign language communication reveals a risk for learners, and they feel apprehension, uneasiness, and self-doubt.

Hammer (1991) outlines various motivations for learning English as a foreign language, ranging from academic requirements to personal interests in different cultures. Proficiency expectations encompass linguistic skills, conversational abilities, grammar, and vocabulary knowledge upon completion of the learning journey. However, individual differences such as attitudes, learning styles, motivation levels, and emotional states significantly impact this process. These unique traits actively influence language learning outcomes, with some individuals experiencing anxiety during certain language-related activities. Horwitz and Young (1991) characterize this anxiety as state anxiety, which commonly arises during exams, classroom participation, and public speaking engagements. These individual differences play a pivotal role in foreign language acquisition and its associated challenges. Therefore, foreign language anxiety negatively impacts learners' motivation, performance, and attitude toward a particular topic. The low level of performance causes learners' anxiety (Horwitz & Young, 1991; McIntyre & Gardner, 1991). For instance, situations such as apprehension about speaking, making errors in speech, struggling with vocabulary and sentence structure, and speaking in public are identified as common concerns for anxious language learners (Koch & Terrell, 1991).

Tobias (1979) proposed a framework that divides foreign language anxiety into three distinct stages: input, processing, and output. At the input stage, anxiety may arise when learners encounter spoken or written language beyond their comprehension level, leading to difficulties in understanding. The processing stage involves organizing, storing, and expanding upon the acquired knowledge, which can be hindered by anxiety, resulting in fragmented learning and overreliance on memorization. Finally, the output stage hinges on the effectiveness of the previous stages, where successful output production is contingent upon well-organized thoughts and efficient recall abilities. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) further elaborate on the significance of these stages in understanding how anxiety impacts the language learning process. Learners may display a variety of anxiety-related behaviors, particularly in language classes. For example, when their teachers ask questions, students may need help answering them. At the same time, learners may not want to participate in any classroom activities. When they come to class unprepared, they may not want to speak in a foreign language.

Williams and Andrade (2008) emphasize that although anxiety can hinder learning, it can also serve as a positive catalyst for students. When maintained at an appropriate level, anxiety can motivate learners and enhance their engagement in the learning process. Teachers play a crucial role in identifying students' levels of interest and anxiety regarding participation in class activities. By collaborating with colleagues, teachers can adopt strategies and exercises aimed at mitigating anxiety levels among students. This includes tailoring course content and teaching methods to suit students' proficiency levels. Furthermore, the choice of classroom activities and their alignment with course objectives are key factors in managing anxiety and promoting effective learning experiences. Teachers should create a supportive and encouraging classroom environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves and engaging in learning activities. For example, Al-Murtadha (2019) suggested that visualized activities could enhance students' motivation to engage in communication with peers. In addition, teachers should design activities that all students can participate in. At the beginning of the lesson, teachers can share the anxiety situation in students with the whole class and make systematic plans to solve this situation. Additionally, Liu and Jackson (2008) emphasized that peer communication in the classroom is very important. Because they suggested that students who communicate comfortably with each other can express themselves easily in the classroom. As a result of this situation, the student's anxiety level will decrease.

Foreign language anxiety is a multifaceted challenge that impacts various language skills differently. Ay (2010) highlights that language anxiety initially surfaces in receptive skills such as listening and reading, particularly noticeable at beginner levels. However, as learners progress and their proficiency increases, this anxiety becomes more pronounced in productive skills like speaking and writing. This progression suggests a dynamic relationship between anxiety levels and language proficiency across different language skills. This is attributed to the initial emphasis on fluency over accuracy in the early stages of foreign language education. As students' progress, their receptive skills improve, leading them to strive for proficiency in productive skills. This simultaneous pursuit at an advanced level creates a fear of failure in the student. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), speaking and listening skills are most affected while learning a foreign language. This situation was observed as follows, learners were expected to speak at an unpredictable moment and as a result, it was observed that this situation became anxiety-provoking. This was primarily because oral performance emerged as the main trigger for their anxiety.

Moreover, Young's (1991) research emphasizes that students often experience anxiety when speaking in front of their peers, indicating challenges in foreign language communication. Ur (1996) identifies key factors contributing to these difficulties, including the fear of making errors, the inclination to revert to the native language due to uncertainties, and a lack of motivation to express oneself in the target language. Importantly, foreign language anxiety transcends educational stages, affecting learners across primary, high school, and university levels. Horwitz et al. (1986) further characterize foreign language anxiety as a unique syndrome stemming from underlying anxieties related to communication, negative evaluation fears, and test-related anxieties.

#### **2.4.1. Communication Apprehension**

Learning a foreign language inherently involves communication, making it a fundamental aspect of the learning journey. For individuals aspiring to acquire proficiency in a new language, active engagement in various forms of communication becomes indispensable. However, this necessity for communication also gives rise to a psychological phenomenon known as communication apprehension, as outlined by Horwitz et al. (1986). This phenomenon predominantly manifests during oral communication activities in the process of acquiring a foreign language. Certain personality traits such as shyness, reticence, or a tendency toward silence often contribute significantly to communication apprehension among language learners. As noted by Brown (1980), the development of such anxiety is frequently observed when learners struggle to articulate their thoughts or ideas effectively to their peers or instructors.

Ergün (2011) underscores the unavoidable nature of communication in the language acquisition process, which often leads to heightened tension during language lessons due to the fear of not comprehending the target language. This sentiment is echoed by Horwitz et al. (1984), who note that even individuals who are typically talkative in their social interactions may experience anxiety and exhibit reserved behavior in language learning environments. Adding to this perspective, Noormohamadi (2009) introduces the concept of metacognitive awareness within communication apprehension, highlighting the inherent difficulty faced by speakers or listeners in fully grasping messages conveyed in a foreign language. Consequently, anxiety dominates the process, leading to frustration for learners. Communication apprehension in language classes can manifest itself during speaking exercises, with students feeling out of control in the communicative setting and as if they are

constantly being observed. This anxiety arises from students' realization that they may struggle to understand and comprehend others (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). In Daly's (1991) comprehensive exploration of communication apprehension, genetic makeup is highlighted as a significant factor. Research in behavioral genetics indicates that traits such as shyness, introversion, and social anxiety, which contribute to communication apprehension, can be inherited. This means that some individuals may be predisposed to experiencing higher levels of communication fear due to their genetic inheritance. This genetic predisposition can affect neurotransmitter activity and stress responses, making some people naturally more inclined to feel anxious in communication settings. Another crucial factor in alleviating communication fear is positive reinforcement of communication actions. Aydın (2001) emphasizes that individuals are more likely to be willing to communicate if their behaviors receive positive encouragement.

On the other hand, negative communication experiences during early childhood can contribute to the development of communication anxiety in individuals. If children consistently receive negative feedback about their communication, they may be more susceptible to experiencing communication anxiety later in life. According to Daly (1991), much of the research indicates that children lacking support during communication are more likely to develop communication apprehension. Tanveer (2007) addresses this issue from a behavioral perspective, highlighting that when instructors react negatively to students' mistakes, it tends to increase their fears. Furthermore, anxiety tends to rise in situations where students are exposed to a competitive classroom environment or when the teacher emphasizes such competition. Bekleyen (2009) also identified linguistic challenges, teacher attitudes, and crowded classrooms as potential sources of this fear.

#### **2.4.2. Fear of negative evaluation**

Horwitz (1986) delineates the fear of negative evaluation as encompassing several aspects such as avoiding evaluative situations, assuming that one will be negatively judged by others, and experiencing anxiety due to the fear of negative assessment. This fear is rooted in concerns about how one's performance or actions will be perceived and evaluated by others, leading to apprehension and discomfort in various contexts. This includes the fear of receiving an unfavorable review from others, avoiding circumstances that could serve as an evaluation, and anticipating such an evaluation (Watson & Friend, 1969). Individuals experiencing this feeling often hesitate to speak in front of their peers and fear being the

center of attention (Young, 1990). In this context, evaluation, as defined by Noormohamadi (2009), refers to the assessment of learners' performance and abilities, both academically and individually. Consequently, students feel anxious about academic and personal assessments conducted by teachers and peers. Likewise, Aydın (2008) stated that this situation arises as a result of the learner's relationships with peers, and, therefore, the evaluation received by the learner from their peers is the main cause of anxiety.

The intensity of the fear of negative evaluation may vary depending on the age of the learners. For instance, in their study, Aydın, Harputlu, Çelik, Uştuk, and Güzel (2017a) observed that older students tend to experience more anxiety than younger students when their peers mock them while speaking English. Moreover, Horwitz and Gregersen (2002) found that students with high anxiety levels experienced fear of negative evaluation, realizing that they felt distressed when evaluated by both their peers and teachers. According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1991), anxiety about communication is strongly linked to the fear of negative evaluation among students. This fear stems from concerns about receiving low grades or apprehension about being poorly received when uncertain about their speech. Consequently, these students often become passive in class and avoid participating in activities due to their fear of making mistakes and receiving negative assessments. Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009) further emphasize that students who are preoccupied with negative judgment do not see grammatical errors as a normal part of language learning but rather as a threat to their image and a potential source of criticism from peers or instructors. Consequently, the fear of negative evaluation can severely hinder the language learning process and may even cause some students to withdraw completely from engaging in language activities (Ay, 2010).

The fear of negative evaluation shares similarities with test anxiety but extends beyond test situations, encompassing various social contexts such as job interviews and participating in foreign language discussions. This broader scope highlights that anxiety related to negative evaluation is not limited to specific assessment scenarios but can arise in diverse interpersonal interactions and communicative settings. Furthermore, some language learners perceive the act of using the language as a form of evaluation. They are concerned about creating a negative social impression when lacking the necessary language skills to express themselves (Aydın, 2001). Consequently, their participation is minimal, and they tend to avoid communication.

### 2.4.3. Test anxiety

The third component is test anxiety, which involves apprehension toward academic assessments. It is a common concern among students about making mistakes on tests and having negative experiences. Test anxiety refers to a broad range of performance anxieties brought on by the fear of failing in a testing or evaluation situation. Test anxiety may manifest if students have performed inefficiently in previous tests. Some students in foreign language classes believe they 'know' a given grammatical point but 'forget' it when it comes time for an exam or an oral exercise, requiring them to remember and produce it. Performance evaluation is a consistent feature in foreign language classes, affecting a majority of students who experience test anxiety. Unlike in other academic subjects, foreign language classes frequently rely on quizzes and tests, contributing to heightened test anxiety among diligent students. This emphasis on assessments can lead to increased stress levels, impacting students' overall performance and learning experiences in language courses.

Cicek (2015) highlighted that learners often face challenges in comprehending the exam material, contributing to test anxiety. The process of test anxiety can be delineated into four stages: test anticipation, test preparation, the test-taking phase, and test reaction (Covington, 1985, as cited in Aydin, 2001). Initially, students evaluate their readiness, review their prior knowledge, and gauge the test's difficulty to anticipate their potential success or failure. Anxiety typically begins to emerge when students perceive a likelihood of failure despite their preparations (Aydin, 2001). This progression reflects the psychological and emotional shifts students experience throughout the exam process. As students progress to the second stage, they engage in exam preparation, assessing their level of readiness and the quality of their preparation efforts. Particularly for perfectionists, any performance below perfection may be perceived as a failure (Covington, 1985). This heightened anxiety often leads to inhibition and frustration during the actual test, culminating in the realization of their negative expectations during the final phase (Aydin, 2001). Thus, the anxiety experienced during exam preparation and testing can significantly impact students' performance and emotional state.

Oral exams have a huge impact on both test anxiety and communication apprehension because they require students to use a variety of skills. Additionally, test anxiety can adversely affect success, academic performance, and self-esteem. Young (1991:427) argued that low-level oral proficiency students might be more affected by test

anxiety than high-proficiency students. As a result, test-anxious students will undoubtedly experience stress and anxiety regularly. As previously discussed, the connection between test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation is evident. However, the fear of negative evaluation encompasses a broader scope compared to test anxiety. While test anxiety specifically manifests during exam situations, the fear of negative evaluation extends to various scenarios involving assessment. For instance, it can surface during job interviews or when speaking a foreign language, where individuals are evaluated or judged based on their performance or communication skills. This broader perspective highlights how the fear of negative evaluation can impact individuals in diverse social and professional settings beyond academic exams.

As mentioned before, three important factors contributed to foreign language anxiety. These factors were classified as test anxiety, language anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. However, Horwitz et al. (1986) argue that these factors, while important, do not provide a complete explanation for foreign language anxiety. They emphasize that foreign language anxiety stems from a complex interplay of learners' beliefs, attitudes, and personal perceptions developed during the unpredictable nature of the language learning journey. In essence, while specific anxieties and evaluation concerns are significant factors, the broader psychological and cognitive aspects also significantly influence the development and experience of foreign language anxiety among learners.

## **2.5. Causes of Foreign Language Anxiety**

Research in this area primarily aims to pinpoint the underlying factors responsible for triggering foreign language anxiety. As a result, language educators and researchers have dedicated their efforts to uncovering the causes behind language anxiety. Various factors or causes may influence learners' anxiety during the study of a foreign language. According to Sparks and Gangschow (1996), if a learner's first language development is impaired, it will substantially impact the development of FLA. Insufficient proficiency in one's native language can lead to challenges in foreign language learning environments. This inadequacy can cause learners to feel anxious about acquiring a foreign language. However, these views of Sparks and Gangschow about foreign language anxiety have been criticized by many experts. Later research revealed that anxiety in language learners could also be brought on by other variables, including personality, other individual factors, and poor classroom

experiences (Chen & Chang, 2004). In addition, upon examining Young's (1991) study, Young identified at least six potential causes of language anxiety, and these are;

- a) Personal and interpersonal anxieties,
- b) Learner beliefs about language learning,
- c) Instructor beliefs about language teaching,
- d) Instructor-learner interactions,
- e) Classroom procedures, and
- f) Language testing.

These items are explained as follows: low self-esteem emerges as the most significant source of personal and interpersonal anxiety. The beliefs held by students, such as their desire to achieve fluency in a foreign language and their perception of others' superior language learning abilities, are significant factors contributing to the formation of language anxiety. These beliefs can greatly influence how students perceive their own language learning process and can contribute to feelings of anxiety during the process. The behavior of teachers, who adopt a more authoritative role rather than that of helpers and facilitators in the classroom, significantly contributes to students' language anxiety. Insufficient positive communication and interaction between instructors and learners can also trigger anxiety. Additionally, the activities carried out as part of classroom procedures are crucial. For example, requiring students to speak in front of the class can induce anxiety.

Zhang and Zhong (2012) categorize anxiety into four primary factors: "learner-induced, classroom-related, skill-specific, and society-imposed". Their study highlights that the predominant cause of language anxiety stems from "learners' unrealistic or incorrect assumptions about language learning" (Zhang & Zhong, 2012). For instance, Price (1991) observes that many students initially perceive their language learning abilities as inadequate, while others hold the misconception that fluency can be achieved within a short timeframe, such as two years (Horwitz, 1988). These misconceptions and unrealistic expectations contribute significantly to inducing anxiety among language learners.

Yan and Horwitz (2008) identify two key factors that affect FL anxiety: classroom activities and language learning practices. Definable reasons for learners' anxiety include an intimidating and competitive learning environment, a lack of student participation in class

discussions, overcrowded EFL classes, strict classroom regulations, and evaluation methods. Additionally, Na (2007) listed other contributing variables to anxiety in English classes, including cultural customs, a dearth of English-language communication possibilities, the environment in the classroom, and parents' high expectations for their children.

Learners' perception of their language proficiency is another factor in language anxiety. At times, language learners fail to realize that they can acquire the language and perform various tasks like native speakers. They often underestimate their capacity to learn a foreign language, leading to anxiety. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), the anxiety experienced by most language learners is rooted in their perception of their capacity. Additionally, they tend to compare themselves against native speakers, although students learning a language may not possess the same abilities. The students are made to feel ashamed that their pronunciation differs from that of the native speakers due to this comparison. On the other side, educational approaches, assessment strategies, student-teacher relationships, and curriculum structure are the elements that cause FL learners to experience anxiety, according to Trang, Baldauf, and Moni (2013). In addition, Subaşı (2010) looked into the primary causes of students' anxiety, which included personal factors, speaking performance, instructor attitude, instructional methods, and prior experience, as reported in the interviews.

The studies discussed above highlight that language anxiety can also be influenced by the teacher's role and the classroom atmosphere. An example of this is how addressing students by their names in language classes can evoke anxiety among them. Thus, it is evident that various factors within the classroom setting, and the teaching approach can impact students' anxiety levels during language learning. As stated by Aydın (2008) in his research, the teacher correcting a student in the class and the feedback given for incorrect answers are factors that trigger anxiety. Additionally, according to Abu-Rabia and Argaman(2002), teachers' personalities and attitudes significantly influence students' language anxiety levels. When teaching a foreign language, educators must act as bridges connecting students with the language. Establishing a strong rapport with students is crucial, extending beyond the classroom environment to foster a supportive relationship outside of formal lessons. This approach helps create a conducive and comfortable learning atmosphere, positively impacting students' language learning experiences and reducing anxiety levels. If necessary, the teacher should coordinate students' family relations and

support the student's language skills (Dastpak & Sadighi, 2017, p. 112). Another important reason for anxiety is that students cannot understand the target language well enough (Horwitz et al., 1986). Anxious foreign language students find it challenging to distinguish between the sounds and structures introduced by the teacher in a language classroom. For example, one study found that throughout the class, students often had difficulty comprehending what their teachers were saying, and one male student claimed to hear nothing but a loud buzzing sound (Horwitz et al., 1986). Horwitz has also noted that children with language learning anxiety frequently claim to understand little of what their teachers are saying.

In conclusion, the exploration of foreign language anxiety encompasses a multitude of interconnected factors that significantly impact the language learning experience. The complexity of these factors, ranging from learners' perceptions and unrealistic assumptions to classroom dynamics, teacher behaviors, and societal influences, underscores the multifaceted nature of language anxiety.

### **2.5.1. Other variables**

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) introduced test anxiety, communication anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation as foundational concepts for understanding foreign language anxiety. However, recognizing the complex nature of language learning, they also acknowledged the influence of attitudes, self-perceptions, feelings, and behaviors within classroom language learning environments. Consequently, various additional factors or sources could impact how students learn languages in a classroom.

#### **2.5.1.1. Gender**

Several studies have explored variations in anxiety levels between males and females. However, findings regarding the correlation between anxiety and gender have been inconsistent. While certain researchers have identified a significant relationship between gender and anxiety, others have not found consistent evidence to support this claim. (Kitano, 2001; Park & French, 2013 Ozturk & Gurbuz, 2013), some researchers have shown that gender is not related to anxiety (Aida, 1994; Matsuda & Gobel; 2004 Kimura, 2008).

Research findings indicate that female students often experience higher levels of anxiety than their male students during the foreign language learning journey. (Abu-Rabia,

2004; Bensoussan & Zeidner, 1989). This difference is often associated with the common perception that women tend to be more reserved or shy compared to men, which contributes to elevated anxiety levels among female learners. For example, Abu-Rabia (2004) focused on the impact of gender differences among Jewish students learning English in his study. Students of two different genders participated in the study, and it was found that female students exhibited higher anxiety levels when acquiring a language compared to male students. Abu-Rabia (2004) posits that this trend may stem from the fact that female students are generally more open in expressing their concerns and emotions, fostering a clearer communication of their anxieties. Conversely, male students may not readily disclose their experiences of anxiety while learning a foreign or second language, often keeping their emotions guarded. Further insights from Bernat and Lloyd (2007) shed light on how gender impacts EFL learners' perceptions of language acquisition. Their study revealed that males exhibit a greater tendency to enjoy conversing in English with native speakers compared to females. This observation aligns with research by Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham (2008), which highlighted that female students experience heightened anxiety levels when required to engage in public speaking in a foreign language context. Similar conclusions were drawn in studies conducted by Ezzi (2012) and Mesri (2012), both indicating a pattern where female students consistently report higher anxiety levels than their male students during language learning activities. Delving deeper into specific demographics, Kamarulzaman et al. (2013) explored anxiety among gifted students at UKM, Malaysia, with a focus on gender differences. Their findings echoed previous research, illustrating that women tend to experience more pronounced anxiety levels compared to men in language learning contexts. Overall, these research endeavors underscore the nuanced role of gender in shaping emotional responses, particularly highlighting how female students tend to exhibit a more expressive connection with their emotional experiences throughout the foreign language learning journey.

On the contrary, several studies have presented a different perspective, indicating that male students may actually experience higher levels of anxiety compared to their female studentss (Azhar, Anwar, & Naz, 2010; Fariadian, Azizifar, & Gowhary, 2014; Na, 2007). These studies have highlighted notable disparities, especially concerning reading skills among male and female students. The discrepancy is often attributed to the superior performance of female students on English assessments alongside their lower reported levels of anxiety in language learning contexts. For instance, research findings from various studies

point to a marked difference in reading proficiency between male and female students. This disparity aligns with reports showcasing higher levels of proficiency and confidence among female students, particularly in reading activities within foreign language environments, as evidenced in studies focusing on Chinese female students. Furthermore, insights from Campbell and Shaw (1994) emphasize that men frequently grapple with higher levels of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) within classroom settings compared to their female students. These findings consistently suggest that male students commonly experience more hesitation and anxiety during language learning endeavors, while female students tend to display a greater sense of self-assurance in similar contexts. These nuanced observations shed light on the multifaceted relationship between gender, language proficiency, and anxiety levels in language learning domains. Furthermore, Yan and Horwitz (2008) introduce the perception that women are inherently more talented and industrious, contributing to their purported superiority in language acquisition.

Upon examination of the aforementioned studies, a prevailing consensus emerges regarding the substantial impact of gender on foreign language anxiety, although findings exhibit variation. While certain studies accentuate higher anxiety levels among men, others posit a predisposition for anxiety in women. Conversely, a subset of studies challenges these perspectives, contending that gender yields no significant influence on anxiety outcomes. For instance, Aida (1994) found that anxiety levels do not significantly differ between Japanese female and male students. Similarly, Rosenfeld and Berko (1990) argue that across specific language classroom settings, all genders exhibit similar reactions, thereby reducing the influence of gender differences on anxiety levels. These findings suggest that while gender may play a role in language learning experiences, it may not be a decisive factor in determining anxiety levels within language learning contexts.

#### **2.5.1.2. Age**

The literature on the influence of age on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) in young learners is relatively sparse, primarily due to its predominant association with older learners. Nevertheless, a subset of studies has demonstrated a discernible impact of age on FLA. For instance, Dewaele's (2007) recent research posits age as a potential moderating factor for linguistic anxiety, revealing that older students exhibit heightened levels of anxiety. Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner's study aligns with this perspective, indicating an increase in FLA as learners age. Conversely, Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham's (2008) research

presents contrasting findings, indicating a nuanced relationship between learners' age and anxiety in foreign language communication. Their study revealed that older students tended to experience lower levels of anxiety when communicating in a foreign language. This nuanced perspective challenges previous assumptions about the direct correlation between age and language anxiety, suggesting that other factors may also play a significant role in shaping individuals' anxiety levels during language interactions. Consequently, despite the divergence in study outcomes, the body of literature implies that age may indeed play a role in shaping the anxiety associated with foreign language learning. On the contrary, certain studies, such as those conducted by Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) and Saito & Samimy (1996), have reported no significant correlation between learner age and anxiety related to foreign language acquisition.

#### **2.5.1.3. Proficiency level**

Many studies present contradictory findings regarding the relationship between proficiency level and language anxiety. For instance, Magnan and Frantzen (2005) found that individuals classified as true beginners in Spanish and French exhibited elevated levels of anxiety, which corresponded to lower final proficiency scores. These findings challenge the assumption that higher proficiency levels always correlate with lower levels of anxiety, suggesting a more complex interaction between anxiety and language learning outcomes. This study indicates an inverse relationship between competence level and anxiety, as anxiety tends to increase as the level of competence decreases. Moreover, Marwan (2016) found that lower intermediate students struggled with self-confidence due to potential limitations in their foreign language proficiency, resulting in higher anxiety levels compared to upper intermediate students. Additionally, Na (2007) identifies English competence as a cause of anxiety in English lessons, as students experience worry and anxiety when their proficiency level is insufficient for effective and free expression. MacIntyre and Dewaele (2014) studied the relationship between FL mastery and FLCA and found lower anxiety levels in the high intermediate and advanced groups. The progressive group also exhibited lower FLCA levels than the high intermediate group, indicating reduced anxiety in classrooms with more upper-level students.

On the other hand, Garau and Llinas (2009) conducted a study that revealed a different perspective, indicating that advanced-level students often experience the highest levels of anxiety. Similarly, Aydın's (2013) research focused on high school students and highlighted

that compared to lower-grade peers, these students tend to demonstrate increased anxiety levels, particularly during foreign language tests. The conflicting results highlight the intricate and subtle connection among language anxiety, levels of proficiency, and the particular environments where language evaluations take place. It suggests that the interaction between anxiety and language proficiency is influenced by various factors and may not follow a straightforward pattern across different proficiency levels.

In contrast to some findings, Balemir (2009) found that levels of anxiety among learners did not correlate with their proficiency. Furthermore, Batumlu and Erden (2007) supported this result in their study, suggesting that proficiency level has a limited impact on anxiety.

#### **2.5.1.4. Academic achievement**

English language anxiety poses a substantial challenge to language learning and has direct repercussions on students' academic performance. Various research investigations have delved into the complex connection between academic achievement and language anxiety, consistently demonstrating a negative correlation between the two factors. Bailey and Daley (1999) observed a modest but discernible negative connection between achievement and language anxiety. Moreover, Dalkılıç (2001) affirmed that foreign language anxiety detrimentally influenced academic success, and reciprocally, achievement levels. For example, Zhao (2007) studied the effect of anxiety on students' performance, highlighting that individuals with high levels of anxiety often achieve lower academic results. This underperformance then contributes to an increase in their anxiety levels during the language learning process. Furthermore, Awan et al. (2010) asserted that heightened anxiety during foreign language education correlates inversely with students' academic success. Amiri & Ghonsooly (2015) highlighted the substantial influence of elevated anxiety levels on students' achievement.

In contrast, Tuncer and Dogan's (2015) study initially suggested that foreign language anxiety did not significantly predict academic achievement at the commencement of the instructional program. However, as the program progressed, anxiety emerged as a significant predictor, playing a crucial role in academic outcomes, including instances of academic failure. On the other hand, Aydın, Harputlu, Çelik, Uştuk, and Güzel (2017a) found that students who came to class unprepared and received low grades experienced more academic

anxiety. As a result, they concluded that anxiety increased as academic success decreased. Additionally, Erden and Batumlu (2007), in their study, found a negative relationship between academic success and anxiety. They concluded that as students' achievements decrease, their anxiety levels increase.

It is crucial to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the complex interplay between English language anxiety and academic achievement. This is because there is a widely held belief that anxiety related to English language learning can negatively impact students' ability to acquire language skills and their overall performance in academic endeavors.

#### **2.5.1.5. Learning experience**

The amount of time students invest in learning a foreign language plays a crucial role in their anxiety levels during the learning process. Research by Petrides, Dewaele, and Furnham (2008) highlights that experienced foreign language learners who allocate more time to practicing listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills tend to report lower levels of foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA). Similarly, Wong (2009) conducted a comparison between students with high language anxiety (HLA) and those with low language anxiety (LLA). Wong observed that HLA students, who have not yet developed their English skills, spend less time learning the language compared to LLA students, who dedicate more time and effort to language learning. As a result, LLA students generally experience reduced levels of anxiety compared to their HLA students. These findings underscore the significant impact of time allocation on students' language learning experiences and anxiety levels.

#### **2.6. Related Studies**

Numerous studies examining foreign language anxiety and its implications for the learning process have been conducted worldwide, including in Turkey and other countries. Liu and Jackson's (2008) study specifically investigated anxiety levels and reluctance to speak among Chinese students learning English as a foreign language. Their findings highlighted that over one-third of the students in English language classes experienced anxiety related to fear of negative evaluation and apprehension about public speaking. These

studies collectively shed light on the pervasive nature of language anxiety across different cultural and linguistic contexts.

Matsuda and Gobel (2004) conducted a study utilizing the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to investigate the relationship between general anxiety and specialized anxiety, as categorized by Horwitz et al. (1986). Their research outcomes hinted at possible correlations between overall anxiety experienced in foreign language classrooms and specific anxiety related to reading in foreign languages. These results indicate a complex interaction among types of anxiety in the context of learning and understanding foreign languages.

Dalkılıç (2001) delved into the relationship between students' anxiety levels and their performance in speaking courses while learning a foreign language. Employing a sample of 126 first-year Turkish students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the study employed both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods. The results of the study highlighted a strong connection between students' anxiety levels and their proficiency in speaking tasks within the course. Similarly, Ay (2010) observed heightened anxiety levels among students, particularly evident during activities demanding productive language skills. Participants expressed significant apprehension when speaking in front of groups, particularly without sufficient prior practice. These findings highlight the substantial impact of anxiety on students' language performance, especially in communicative and speaking-oriented tasks.

Subaşı (2010) delved into a related investigation aiming to pinpoint potential causes of anxiety among Turkish English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The study concentrated on two primary factors: the fear of negative evaluation as a personality trait and individual speaking proficiency in the target language. Results from this research revealed an empirical correlation between these factors, emphasizing their notable contributions to anxiety levels within the EFL classroom.

In a study conducted by Liu (2006), anxiety levels among Chinese students were examined across three distinct proficiency levels. Through the use of interviews, observational journals, and reflective journals, the study revealed that students across all competency levels often experience anxiety when required to speak English in class. Interestingly, the findings indicated that students with higher proficiency levels tended to

exhibit lower levels of anxiety. It was observed that students felt most uneasy when responding directly to the teacher, while they experienced comparatively less anxiety when working in pairs. Furthermore, as students were progressively exposed to more spoken English during their learning journey, their anxiety about speaking the language gradually diminished. These findings highlight the dynamic nature of language anxiety and its correlation with proficiency levels and classroom interactions.

Additionally, Saltan (2003) investigated EFL speaking anxiety from the perspectives of both students and teachers. The results indicated that although students experienced some level of anxiety when speaking English as a foreign language, it did not reach a significantly distressing level according to the participants' viewpoints.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter centers on aspects such as research design, setting, individuals involved, participant selection criteria, thorough examination of data collection tools and methodologies, and data interpretation processes.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

In this study, a mixed methods approach was employed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, which were then integrated for analysis. For the analysis of quantitative data, the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al., (1986) and translated into Turkish by Aydın (2001) was used while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher, drawing insights from previous studies on foreign language learning anxiety (Balemir, 2009; Çermik, 2015; Özkan, 2019; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Worde, 2003). Additionally, semi-structured interviews with participants were conducted to gain deeper insights into students' foreign language anxiety (FLA) experiences and to explore coping strategies. The data collected from these interviews underwent content analysis to derive meaningful interpretations and insights.

#### **3.2. Setting and Participants**

The study took place during the first term of the 2022-2023 academic year and involved students from various grade levels attending both private and public secondary schools in Ankara, Turkey. Specifically, the target group comprised 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. A total of 414 students from Çankaya, Ankara participated in the study, with 188 students from private schools and 226 students from public schools. The distribution of students across grade levels was as follows: 151 students in the fifth grade, 160 in the sixth grade, 60 in the seventh grade, and 43 in the eighth grade. The questionnaire was randomly administered to all students within these grades. Detailed demographic information regarding student participation can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

## Demographic Distribution of the Participants

| <b>Variables.</b>                 | <b>Items</b>   | <b>N</b> | <b>%</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------|----------|
| <b>Age</b>                        | 10 Age         | 40       | 9,7      |
|                                   | 11 Age         | 146      | 35,3     |
|                                   | 12 Age         | 145      | 35,0     |
|                                   | 13 Age         | 53       | 12,8     |
|                                   | 14 Age         | 30       | 7,2      |
| <b>Gender</b>                     | Female         | 212      | 51,2     |
|                                   | Male           | 202      | 48,8     |
| <b>Class</b>                      | Fifth          | 151      | 36,5     |
|                                   | Sixth          | 160      | 38,6     |
|                                   | Seventh        | 60       | 14,5     |
|                                   | Eighth         | 43       | 10,4     |
| <b>Learning Experience (Year)</b> | 1-3            | 63       | 15,2     |
|                                   | 4-7            | 271      | 65,5     |
|                                   | 8-11           | 74       | 17,9     |
|                                   | 12-15          | 6        | 1,4      |
| <b>Academic Achievement</b>       | 85-100         | 348      | 84,1     |
|                                   | 70-84          | 43       | 10,4     |
|                                   | 60-69          | 10       | 2,4      |
|                                   | 50-59          | 10       | 2,4      |
|                                   | 0-49           | 3        | 0,7      |
| <b>School Type</b>                | Public School  | 188      | 45,4     |
|                                   | Private School | 226      | 54,6     |
|                                   |                |          |          |
| <b>Parental Expectation</b>       | High           | 303      | 73,2     |
|                                   | Medium         | 106      | 25,6     |
|                                   | Low            | 5        | 1,2      |

As demonstrated in the table above, the students participating in the research were between 10 and 14 years old. 9,7% of them were 10 years old, 35,3% were 11 years old, 35% were 12 years old, 12,8% were 13 years old, and 7,2% were 14 years old. The students were 51,2% female and 48,8% male.

Of these students, 36.5% of them were 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 38.6% were 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 14.5% were 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 10.4% were 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Among the student cohort, 15.2% possessed 1-3 years of learning experience, while the majority, comprising 65.5%, had 4-7 years of educational background. Furthermore, 17.9% exhibited a learning tenure ranging from 8 to 11 years, with a minority subset of 1.4% indicating 12-15 years of academic engagement. Regarding academic performance, an overview delineates that 84.1% achieved scores within the range of 85 to 100, followed by

10.4% who obtained scores between 70 and 84. Moreover, 2.4% of students secured scores between 60 and 69, while an additional 2.4% fell within the bracket of 50 to 59. Additionally, merely 0.7% garnered scores below 49.

In terms of the type of educational institutions, the student populace is divided between 45.4% attending public schools and 48.8% attending private schools. Notably, parental expectations regarding their offspring's English language proficiency demonstrate a significant trend, with 73.2% expressing high expectations, 25.6% holding moderate expectations, and a marginal 1.2% expressing low expectations.

### **3.3.Sampling**

Sampling is a crucial research technique that involves selecting a subset of individuals from a larger population to collect data. This approach allows researchers to generalize about the entire population based on the sample, eliminating the need to survey every individual. Doherty (1994) classifies sampling into two primary categories: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. In this study, convenience sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, was utilized. Convenience sampling involves choosing participants based on their ease of accessibility rather than employing a random selection method. For this study, the researcher used her professional contacts and networks to gather data from various schools in Turkey. This included reaching out to specific teachers who were more likely to participate in the interviews, thus simplifying and facilitating the sampling process.

### **3.4. Data Collection Tools**

The primary data sources for the study were the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, created by Horwitz et al. (1986), and semi-structured interviews. Detailed descriptions of these research instruments are provided in subsequent sections of the study.

#### **3.4.1. Foreign Language Anxiety Scale**

The study utilized the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) and translated into Turkish by Aydın (1999) to assess the

participants' foreign language anxiety levels. This scale comprises 33 items that gauge four key components: communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and general English proficiency. Specifically, eight items focus on communication apprehension, five items on fear of negative evaluation, nine items on test anxiety, and eleven items on general English skills. Participants rated these items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) to reflect their agreement with each statement.

The questionnaire was administered to 414 young adolescent students to capture a comprehensive view of foreign language anxiety among this age group. To ensure accurate responses and cultural relevance, the FLCAS was translated into Turkish before administration. This step aimed to prevent potential misinterpretations of the questionnaire due to language barriers, especially considering the students' intermediate language proficiency level.

The original study by Horwitz et al. (1986) reported a high internal reliability of the FLCAS with an alpha coefficient of 0.93. In the present research, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the entire FLCAS scale was determined to be .92, demonstrating strong internal consistency. These reliability measures, as indicated in Table 2, confirm the FLCAS's reliability and suitability for measuring foreign language anxiety levels among students in this study.

Table 2

Reliability Analysis Results

| <b>Scale and Sub-Dimensions</b> | <b>Cronbach's Alpha</b> | <b>Item Number</b> |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| FLCAS Total                     | ,935                    | 33 Items           |
| Communication Apprehension      | ,840                    | 8 Items            |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation     | ,836                    | 9 Items            |
| General English                 | ,765                    | 11 Items           |
| Test Anxiety                    | ,717                    | 5 Items            |

The current study was categorized as high, medium, and low anxiety according to the FLCAS scores determined by Kovaç (2017) (Table 3).

*Table 3*

Anxiety Score Range

| <b>FLCAS Categories</b> | <b>FLCAS Score Range</b> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Low                     | 0 – 68,31                |
| Medium                  | 68,32 – 120,15           |
| High                    | 120,16 – 165,00          |

### **3.4.2. Semi-structured interview**

To investigate the underlying reasons for foreign language anxiety among school students, the study incorporated semi-structured interviews with twelve participants for the qualitative segment. These twelve anxious students were selected based on their anxiety score range as determined by Kovac (2017). The participants included six students from public schools and six students from private schools to ensure a diverse representation of educational backgrounds. During these interviews, five open-ended questions were posed to explore the participants' perspectives on foreign language anxiety (FLA), its potential causes, effects, and coping strategies. These interview questions were developed based on previous studies examining anxiety in language learning contexts (Balemir, 2009; Çermik, 2015; Özkan, 2019; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Worde, 2003) and were available in both Turkish and English. Additionally, the questions were reviewed and validated by an expert in language learning anxiety to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.

A parental consent form was sent to the parents of the twelve anxious students, and permission to participate was obtained from their parents. The semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face in Turkish, scheduled according to the students' appropriate times to ensure a comfortable and open dialogue. The aim was to gain insights directly from the students regarding the primary factors contributing to language anxiety as perceived by them. Subsequently, the interview responses were translated into English, and a second rater reviewed the translations for accuracy and consistency. The qualitative data gathered from these interviews provided valuable insights into coping mechanisms for language anxiety and complemented the quantitative data obtained through the

questionnaire. This comprehensive approach helped in gaining a deeper understanding of the complex nature of foreign language anxiety among students.

### 3.5. Data Analysis Process

In this study, data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data analysis involved utilizing Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLCAS, and the IBM SPSS 26 software package was employed for analysis purposes. The study encompassed 414 students, and prior to analysis, it was ensured that the FLCAS data and its sub-dimensions exhibited a normal distribution, as indicated by Skewness and Kurtosis values within the range of +1 to -1. This criterion for normal distribution, as suggested by Hair et al. (2013) and Gürbüz ve Şahin (2016), guided the selection of parametric analysis methods to test the study hypotheses effectively, considering the data's normal distribution (refer to Table 4 for details). This approach ensured the appropriateness of statistical tests for hypothesis testing in the study.

Table 4  
Test of Normality

| Scale and Sub-Dimensions    | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|
| FLCAS Total                 | ,715     | -,141    |
| Communication Apprehension  | ,632     | -,345    |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | ,694     | -,342    |
| General English             | ,737     | ,172     |
| Test Anxiety                | ,524     | -,582    |

The study assessed the reliability of the FLCAS and its sub-dimensions by examining Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which indicated a very high level of reliability. Demographic and school life characteristics of students were analyzed using frequency analysis. Descriptive analysis was then conducted to provide an overview of students' average scores on the FLCAS and its sub-dimensions. To explore potential score differences based on demographic and school life factors, independent sample t-tests and ANOVA analysis were utilized. Subsequent to the ANOVA analysis, the Tukey test was applied to identify significant differences between groups. In reporting the research findings, a 95% confidence interval with a significance level of  $p < .05$  was employed to determine statistical significance.

This comprehensive approach allowed for a detailed examination of the relationships between various factors and foreign language anxiety levels among students.

The qualitative data obtained from 12 anxious students' responses underwent content analysis following Creswell's (2014) procedures. Initially, the students' answers were transcribed and translated into English for comprehension. The researcher then interpreted the data, identifying common themes based on frequency. These themes were elaborated upon to elucidate the sources of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) among young learners.



## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

This section presents parts of the qualitative and quantitative research. The first section shows the FLCAS results and explains the extent to which students' anxiety differs according to age, gender, academic achievement, parental expectations, school type, and learning experience. The second section explains the reasons for FLA among students with high levels of anxiety and the results of the interviews are presented.

#### 4.1. Findings of Quantitative Data

##### 4.1.1. What are the anxiety levels of young adolescents?

The objective of this study was to assess the extent of foreign language anxiety (FLA) among young adolescent learners enrolled in both public and private schools using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which comprises three sub-dimensions. Participants responded to the questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale. The analysis aimed to determine the average scores of the participants on the FLCAS and its sub-dimensions, as detailed in Table 5. This approach provided insights into the FLA levels experienced by students across different school settings and contributed to understanding the nuances of FLA in educational contexts.

Table 5

Descriptive Findings of FLCAS and Sub-Dimensions

| Scale and Sub-Dimensions    | $\bar{X} \pm Sd.$ | Taken<br>Min-Max. | Can be<br>Taken<br>Min-Max. |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| FLCAS Total                 | 75,06 $\pm$ 24,95 | 36 – 149          | 33 – 165                    |
| Communication Apprehension  | 18,57 $\pm$ 7,29  | 8 – 38            | 8 – 40                      |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | 19,63 $\pm$ 7,84  | 9 – 41            | 9 – 45                      |
| General English             | 24,81 $\pm$ 7,88  | 11 – 51           | 11 – 55                     |
| Test Anxiety                | 12,06 $\pm$ 4,71  | 5 – 25            | 5 – 25                      |

It is seen that the FLCAS average score of the participants is 75,06. While the FLCAS score can vary between 33 and 165, the participants received a FLCAS score between 33 and 149.

Information on FLCAS categories arranged according to the FLCAS score is shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Descriptive Findings of FLCAS Categories

| FLCAS Categories        | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Low (0 – 68,31)         | 189       | 45,7    |
| Medium (68,32 – 120,15) | 196       | 47,3    |
| High (120,16-165)       | 29        | 7,0     |

The students have 45,7% low, 47,3% medium, and 7% high levels of FLCAS. Moreover, the study delved into various dimensions of foreign language anxiety among participants, including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, general English anxiety, and test anxiety. Analysis of the data revealed moderate levels of anxiety across multiple dimensions. Specifically, participants exhibited a moderate level of communication apprehension, as evidenced by a mean score of 18.57 on a scale ranging from 8 to 40. Similarly, fear of negative evaluation was found to be moderate, with a mean score of 19.63 on a scale ranging from 9 to 45. Participants also demonstrated a moderate level of general anxiety related to English language learning, with a mean score of 24.81 on a scale ranging from 11 to 55. However, test anxiety was comparatively low, with a mean score of 12.06 on a scale ranging from 5 to 25.

The results indicate that most students experience low to medium levels of foreign language classroom anxiety. Specifically, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and general English anxiety were all found to be moderate, while test anxiety was comparatively low. This suggests that while students generally feel some level of anxiety in various aspects of language learning, their anxiety related to tests is less pronounced.

#### 4.1.2. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to age?

The results of the analysis conducted to test whether the FLCAS and sub-dimensions scores differ according to the age of the students are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

## FLCAS AND Sub-Dimensions Scores by Age of Students

| Scale and Sub-Dimensions    | Ages   | n   | Mean  | SD    | F Test | p            |
|-----------------------------|--------|-----|-------|-------|--------|--------------|
| FLCAS Total                 | 10 Age | 40  | 72,82 | 22,77 | 3,621  | <b>,006*</b> |
|                             | 11Age  | 146 | 79,49 | 25,99 |        |              |
|                             | 12 Age | 145 | 74,77 | 23,82 |        |              |
|                             | 13Age  | 53  | 73,00 | 24,59 |        |              |
|                             | 14 Age | 30  | 61,53 | 24,15 |        |              |
| Communication Apprehension  | 10 Age | 40  | 17,53 | 6,68  | 2,167  | ,072         |
|                             | 11Age  | 146 | 19,2  | 7,82  |        |              |
|                             | 12 Age | 145 | 18,44 | 6,82  |        |              |
|                             | 13Age  | 53  | 14,42 | 7,11  |        |              |
|                             | 14 Age | 30  | 15,70 | 7,34  |        |              |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | 10 Age | 40  | 18,75 | 7,15  | 2,650  | <b>,033*</b> |
|                             | 11Age  | 146 | 20,82 | 8,40  |        |              |
|                             | 12 Age | 145 | 19,59 | 7,69  |        |              |
|                             | 13Age  | 53  | 19,19 | 7,07  |        |              |
|                             | 14 Age | 30  | 16,00 | 6,96  |        |              |
| General English             | 10 Age | 40  | 23,93 | 7,95  | 4,160  | <b>,003*</b> |
|                             | 11Age  | 146 | 26,48 | 7,88  |        |              |
|                             | 12 Age | 145 | 24,76 | 7,62  |        |              |
|                             | 13Age  | 53  | 23,11 | 8,04  |        |              |
|                             | 14 Age | 30  | 21,10 | 7,05  |        |              |
| Test Anxiety                | 10 Age | 40  | 12,63 | 4,71  | 4,507  | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | 11Age  | 146 | 12,58 | 4,58  |        |              |
|                             | 12 Age | 145 | 11,99 | 4,55  |        |              |
|                             | 13Age  | 53  | 12,28 | 4,82  |        |              |
|                             | 14 Age | 30  | 8,73  | 4,77  |        |              |

\*p&lt;.05

Upon analyzing the data, it was observed that students' ages ranged from 10 to 12 years old. Examination of Table 7 revealed significant variations in the average scores of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) among students based on their ages ( $F=3.621$ ;  $p<.05$ ). Specifically, the Tukey test results indicated that 14-year-old students ( $\bar{X}=61.53$ ) had lower FLCAS total scores compared to 11-year-old students ( $\bar{X}=79.49$ ).

When considering the sub-factors of the FLCAS, it was noted that the average scores for communication apprehension did not exhibit a significant difference based on students' ages ( $F=2.167$ ;  $p>.05$ ). However, there was a statistically significant difference in the average fear of negative evaluation scores across different age groups ( $F=2.650$ ;  $p<.05$ ). The Tukey test results indicated that 14-year-old students ( $\bar{X}=16.00$ ) had lower fear of negative evaluation scores than 11-year-old students ( $\bar{X}=20.82$ ).

Moreover, the average scores for general English proficiency showed a statistically significant difference based on students' ages ( $F=4.160$ ;  $p<.05$ ). According to the Tukey test, 14-year-old students ( $\bar{X}=21.10$ ) had lower general English scores compared to 11-year-old students ( $\bar{X}=26.48$ ). Similarly, the average scores for test anxiety exhibited a statistically significant difference across age groups ( $F=4.507$ ;  $p<.05$ ), with 14-year-old students ( $\bar{X}=8.73$ ) displaying lower test anxiety scores compared to other age groups.

The results indicate that older students, particularly those aged 14, tend to experience lower overall foreign language classroom anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, general English anxiety, and test anxiety compared to younger students, especially those aged 11.

#### 4.1.3. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to gender?

The results of the analysis conducted to test whether the FLCAS and sub-dimensions scores differ according to the gender of the students are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

FLCAS and Sub-Dimensions Scores by Gender of Students

| Scale and Sub-Dimensions    | Gender | n   | Mean  | SD    | t-Test | p            |
|-----------------------------|--------|-----|-------|-------|--------|--------------|
| FLCAS Total                 | Female | 212 | 77,53 | 26,19 | 2,080  | <b>,038*</b> |
|                             | Male   | 202 | 72,47 | 23,35 |        |              |
| Communication Apprehension  | Female | 212 | 19,58 | 7,54  | 2,918  | <b>,004*</b> |
|                             | Male   | 202 | 17,51 | 6,89  |        |              |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | Female | 212 | 20,20 | 8,16  | 1,530  | ,127         |
|                             | Male   | 202 | 19,02 | 7,46  |        |              |
| General English             | Female | 212 | 25,34 | 8,17  | 1,404  | ,161         |
|                             | Male   | 202 | 24,25 | 7,55  |        |              |
| Test Anxiety                | Female | 212 | 12,42 | 4,77  | 1,572  | ,117         |
|                             | Male   | 202 | 11,69 | 4,62  |        |              |

**\* $p<.05$**

Upon reviewing Table 8, it was evident that the study comprised 202 male students and 212 female students, totaling 414 participants. An analysis of the data revealed a significant difference in the average scores of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

Scale (FLCAS) based on students' gender ( $t=2.080$ ;  $p<.05$ ). Specifically, female students ( $\bar{X}=77.53$ ) exhibited higher FLCAS total scores compared to male students ( $\bar{X}=72.47$ ).

Further examination of Table 8 indicated a statistically significant difference in the average communication apprehension scores between male and female students ( $t=2.918$ ;  $p<.05$ ). Female students ( $\bar{X}=19.58$ ) reported higher communication apprehension scores than male students ( $\bar{X}=17.51$ ). However, no significant differences were observed in the average fear of negative evaluation scores ( $F=1.530$ ;  $p>.05$ ), general English proficiency scores ( $F=1.404$ ;  $p>.05$ ), or test anxiety scores ( $F=1.572$ ;  $p>.05$ ) based on students' gender.

The results suggest that female students tend to experience higher overall foreign language classroom anxiety and communication apprehension compared to male students, while there are no significant gender differences in fear of negative evaluation, general English anxiety, or test anxiety.

#### 4.1.4. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to learning experience?

To explore the impact of learning experience on students' foreign language anxiety (FLA), the study considered the variable of English learning duration. Participants were asked to indicate how long they had been learning English. A Tukey Test was conducted to examine the differences in students' FLA scores based on their years of English education, as detailed in Table 9. This analysis aimed to uncover any potential variations in FLA levels among students with different lengths of English learning experience. Understanding these differences can provide insights into the relationship between learning duration and FLA, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of language anxiety in educational settings.

Table 9

FLCAS and Sub-Dimensions Scores by Learning Experiences of Students

| Scale and Sub-Dimensions | Learning Experience | n   | Mean  | SD    | F Test | p     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-----|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| FLCAS Total              | 1-3 Years           | 63  | 88,58 | 28,93 | 10,808 | ,001* |
|                          | 4-7 Years           | 271 | 74,72 | 23,23 |        |       |
|                          | 8-11 Years          | 74  | 65,29 | 21,58 |        |       |

|                             |             |     |       |       |        |              |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----|-------|-------|--------|--------------|
|                             | 12-15 Years | 6   | 68,83 | 36,28 |        |              |
| Communication Apprehension  | 1-3 Years   | 63  | 21,68 | 8,53  | 6,190  | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | 4-7 Years   | 271 | 18,45 | 6,83  |        |              |
|                             | 8-11 Years  | 74  | 16,50 | 6,79  |        |              |
|                             | 12-15 Years | 6   | 16,67 | 10,40 |        |              |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | 1-3 Years   | 63  | 23,90 | 8,98  | 11,531 | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | 4-7 Years   | 271 | 19,58 | 7,38  |        |              |
|                             | 8-11 Years  | 74  | 16,36 | 6,65  |        |              |
|                             | 12-15 Years | 6   | 17,17 | 10,10 |        |              |
| General English             | 1-3 Years   | 63  | 28,86 | 9,09  | 9,776  | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | 4-7 Years   | 271 | 24,71 | 7,59  |        |              |
|                             | 8-11 Years  | 74  | 21,78 | 6,14  |        |              |
|                             | 12-15 Years | 6   | 24,17 | 10,34 |        |              |
| Test Anxiety                | 1-3 Years   | 63  | 14,14 | 4,96  | 6,747  | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | 4-7 Years   | 271 | 11,99 | 4,55  |        |              |
|                             | 8-11 Years  | 74  | 10,65 | 4,41  |        |              |
|                             | 12-15 Years | 6   | 10,83 | 6,24  |        |              |

**\*p<.05**

Upon reviewing Table 9, it was evident that there is a statistically significant difference in the average scores of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) among students based on their learning experience ( $F=10.808$ ;  $p<.05$ ). The Tukey test results revealed a trend where FLCAS total scores tended to decrease as learning experience increased, with the exception of students with 12-15 years of experience.

Similarly, analysis of communication apprehension scores ( $F=6.190$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and fear of negative evaluation scores ( $F=11.531$ ;  $p<.05$ ) showed significant differences based on learning experience. Higher learning experience correlated with decreased communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation scores, except for the 12-15 years of experience group.

Additionally, significant differences were observed in general English scores ( $F=9.776$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and test anxiety scores ( $F=6.747$ ;  $p<.05$ ) based on learning experience. Generally, higher learning experience was associated with lower general English proficiency scores and reduced test anxiety levels, except for the group with 12-15 years of experience.

The analysis reveals that, overall, anxiety decreases, and proficiency increases with learning experience, except for students with 12-15 years of experience who may still exhibit high anxiety levels and lower proficiency.

#### 4.1.5. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to academic achievement?

Academic success is another variable examined in the study. The results of the analysis conducted to test whether the FLCAS and sub-dimensions scores differ according to the school type of the students are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

FLCAS and Sub-Dimensions Scores by Academic Achievement of Students

| Scale and Sub-Dimensions    | Academic Achievement | n   | Mean  | SD    | F Test | p            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----|-------|-------|--------|--------------|
| FLCAS Total                 | 85-100               | 348 | 71,71 | 23,44 | 13,789 | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | 70-84                | 43  | 87,58 | 22,77 |        |              |
|                             | 60-69                | 10  | 95,40 | 24,79 |        |              |
|                             | 50-59                | 10  | 101,0 | 29,18 |        |              |
|                             | 0-49                 | 3   | 130,0 | 20,07 |        |              |
| Communication Apprehension  | 85-100               | 348 | 17,79 | 7,09  | 8,319  | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | 70-84                | 43  | 21,33 | 6,29  |        |              |
|                             | 60-69                | 10  | 23,80 | 7,84  |        |              |
|                             | 50-59                | 10  | 25,10 | 7,37  |        |              |
|                             | 0-49                 | 3   | 30,33 | 9,07  |        |              |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | 85-100               | 348 | 18,67 | 7,48  | 10,182 | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | 70-84                | 43  | 23,49 | 7,08  |        |              |
|                             | 60-69                | 10  | 25,50 | 8,24  |        |              |
|                             | 50-59                | 10  | 26,60 | 9,72  |        |              |
|                             | 0-49                 | 3   | 32,67 | 7,63  |        |              |
| General English             | 85-100               | 348 | 23,97 | 7,40  | 10,866 | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | 70-84                | 43  | 27,44 | 7,95  |        |              |
|                             | 60-69                | 10  | 29,40 | 8,70  |        |              |
|                             | 50-59                | 10  | 32,10 | 9,52  |        |              |
|                             | 0-49                 | 3   | 44,67 | 5,50  |        |              |
| Test Anxiety                | 85-100               | 348 | 11,29 | 4,32  | 19,417 | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | 70-84                | 43  | 15,33 | 4,65  |        |              |
|                             | 60-69                | 10  | 16,70 | 3,77  |        |              |
|                             | 50-59                | 10  | 17,20 | 4,34  |        |              |
|                             | 0-49                 | 3   | 22,33 | 1,15  |        |              |

**\*p<.05**

According to the results of the Tukey test, academic achievement was categorized into ranges of 100-85, 84-70, 69-60, 59-50, and 49-0. Upon examining Table 10, it was evident that the average Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) total scores

of the students exhibited a statistically significant difference based on their academic achievement ( $F=13.789$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Notably, students with academic achievements ranging from 85 to 100 ( $\bar{X}=71.71$ ) demonstrated lower FLCAS total scores compared to their counterparts with different academic achievements. This suggests an inverse relationship between academic achievement and FLCAS total scores, indicating that as academic achievement increased, FLCAS total scores decreased. Such findings shed light on the potential impact of academic performance on language anxiety levels among students, aligning with existing literature on this subject.

It was determined that the average communication apprehension scores ( $F=8.319$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and the average fear of negative evaluation scores ( $F=10.182$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) of the students showed a statistically significant difference according to the academic achievement of students. When academic achievement increased, communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation scores decreased.

Additionally, it was demonstrated that the average general English scores of the students exhibited a statistically significant difference based on their academic achievement ( $F=10.866$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Further analysis using the Tukey test revealed that students with academic achievements ranging from 85 to 100 ( $\bar{X}=23.97$ ) obtained lower general English scores compared to students with other academic achievements. Similarly, a statistically significant difference in students' average test anxiety levels was found to be dependent on their academic performance ( $F=19.417$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Specifically, students achieving academic scores between 85 and 100 ( $\bar{X}=11.29$ ) reported lower levels of test anxiety compared to their counterparts with different academic achievements.

The analysis revealed that higher academic achievement is associated with lower levels of language anxiety, as indicated by lower scores on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), reduced communication apprehension, decreased fear of negative evaluation, lower general English proficiency scores, and lower levels of test anxiety. These findings suggest that academic performance plays a significant role in shaping students' language-related experiences and perceptions, impacting their levels of anxiety and proficiency.

#### 4.1.6. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to school type?

The results of the analysis conducted to test whether the FLCAS and sub-dimensions scores differ according to the school type of the students are shown in Table 11.

Table 11

FLCAS and Sub-Dimensions Scores by school type of students

| Scale and Sub-Dimensions    | School Type | n   | Mean  | SD    | t-Test | p            |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----|-------|-------|--------|--------------|
| FLCAS Total                 | Public      | 188 | 77,68 | 25,87 | 1,956  | <b>,050*</b> |
|                             | Private     | 226 | 72,88 | 23,99 |        |              |
| Communication Apprehension  | Public      | 188 | 19,21 | 7,66  | 1,630  | ,104         |
|                             | Private     | 226 | 18,04 | 6,95  |        |              |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | Public      | 188 | 20,80 | 8,25  | 2,790  | <b>,006*</b> |
|                             | Private     | 226 | 18,65 | 7,36  |        |              |
| General English             | Public      | 188 | 25,59 | 8,16  | 1,831  | ,068         |
|                             | Private     | 226 | 24,16 | 7,60  |        |              |
| Test Anxiety                | Public      | 188 | 12,10 | 4,53  | 0,139  | ,889         |
|                             | Private     | 226 | 12,03 | 4,86  |        |              |

**\*p<.05**

In the study, there were two different types of schools. When Table 11 was examined, the average FLCAS total scores of the students showed a statistically significant difference according to school type of students ( $t=1,956$ ;  $p<,05$ ). It was seen that public school students ( $\bar{X}=77,68$ ) had a higher FLCAS total score than private school students ( $\bar{X}=72,88$ ).

The average fear of negative evaluation scores of the students showed a statistically significant difference according to school type of students ( $t=2,790$ ;  $p<,05$ ). It was seen that public school students ( $\bar{X}=20,80$ ) had a higher fear of negative evaluation scores than private school students ( $\bar{X}=18,65$ ).

However, the average communication apprehension scores ( $F=1,630$ ;  $p>,05$ ), the average general English scores ( $F=1,831$ ;  $p>,05$ ), and the average test anxiety scores ( $F=0,139$ ;  $p>,05$ ) of the students didn't show a statistically significant difference according to school type of students.

The study found that public school students had higher scores in both the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and fear of negative evaluation compared to private school students. However, there were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of communication apprehension, general English scores, or test anxiety.

#### 4.1.7. Does the anxiety level of students vary according to parental expectations?

The findings from the Tukey test, which analyzed foreign language learning anxiety scores in relation to parents' expectations regarding their students' English learning, are presented in Table 12. This analysis aimed to uncover any potential relationships between parental expectations and students' anxiety levels in language learning contexts.

Table 12

FLCAS and Sub-Dimensions Scores by Parental Expectations of Students

| Scale and Sub-Dimensions    | Parental Expectation | n   | Mean   | SD    | F Test | p            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----|--------|-------|--------|--------------|
| FLCAS Total                 | High                 | 303 | 71,05  | 22,42 | 21,529 | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | Medium               | 106 | 84,39  | 27,56 |        |              |
|                             | Low                  | 5   | 120,40 | 16,34 |        |              |
| Communication Apprehension  | High                 | 303 | 17,60  | 6,62  | 13,044 | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | Medium               | 106 | 20,88  | 8,34  |        |              |
|                             | Low                  | 5   | 28,20  | 4,91  |        |              |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | High                 | 303 | 18,37  | 7,11  | 18,777 | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | Medium               | 106 | 22,67  | 8,62  |        |              |
|                             | Low                  | 5   | 31,20  | 7,19  |        |              |
| General English             | High                 | 303 | 23,66  | 7,16  | 20,764 | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | Medium               | 106 | 27,34  | 8,46  |        |              |
|                             | Low                  | 5   | 40,80  | 8,92  |        |              |
| Test Anxiety                | High                 | 303 | 11,42  | 4,44  | 16,431 | <b>,001*</b> |
|                             | Medium               | 106 | 13,51  | 4,88  |        |              |
|                             | Low                  | 5   | 20,20  | 1,78  |        |              |

**\*p<.05**

Table 12 presented that according to the English learning expectations of the parents from their students, FLCAS total scores of the students showed a statistically significant difference according to parental expectation ( $F=21,529$ ;  $p<,05$ ). According to the results of the Tukey test, it was seen that as parental expectation increased, FLCAS total score decreased.

Also, it was determined that the average communication apprehension scores of the students showed a statistically significant difference according to parental expectation ( $F=13.044$ ;  $p<.05$ ). According to the results of the Tukey test, it was observed that as parental expectations increased, the communication apprehension score decreased. Notably, the fear of negative evaluation scores exhibited a statistically significant difference based on parental expectations ( $F=18.777$ ;  $p<.05$ ). The subsequent Tukey test results underscored a clear trend: as parental expectations increased, the fear of negative evaluation scores decreased. This intriguing finding suggests that higher parental expectations may contribute to a reduced fear of negative evaluation among students.

Similarly, the investigation into general English scores uncovered a statistically significant difference associated with parental expectations ( $F=18.777$ ;  $p<.05$ ). The Tukey test results elucidated a consistent pattern, revealing that as parental expectations rose, general English scores exhibited a corresponding decrease. This insight implies a potential impact of parental expectations on students' performance and proficiency in the English language.

Additionally, the study explored the realm of test anxiety, revealing a statistically significant difference based on parental expectations ( $F=16.431$ ;  $p<.05$ ). The Tukey test outcomes highlighted a noteworthy inverse relationship – an increase in parental expectations correlated with a decrease in test anxiety scores. This finding suggests that heightened parental expectations may contribute to a more positive emotional state for students during tests, potentially influencing their overall academic experience.

In conclusion, the study revealed that higher parental expectations corresponded to lower levels of anxiety, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and general English proficiency among students. Additionally, increased parental expectations were associated with reduced test anxiety, potentially indicating a positive influence on students' emotional well-being during assessments. The study provides valuable insights into how parental expectations may influence students' perceptions, emotions, and performances in different academic contexts.

## 4.2. Findings of Qualitative Data

In this section of the research, the findings obtained through semi-structured interviews, a qualitative method, are presented. As stated earlier, semi-structured follow-up interviews were conducted with 12 anxious students to identify the reasons for the foreign language anxiety observed in the students. The answers provided by the students were recorded and subsequently transcribed. These transcribed responses underwent coding and were thoroughly examined using the content analysis method. The results obtained are presented below.

### Question 1: How do you feel about English lessons?

Question 1 aimed to reveal the participants' feelings toward English lessons. Each of the participants gave various answers to the question. The answers reported by the participants are listed as good, bad, anxious, excited, and normal.

Table 13

The Feelings of Students toward English Lessons

| Codes   | Frequency |
|---------|-----------|
| Bad     | 3         |
| Good    | 2         |
| Anxious | 3         |
| Excited | 2         |
| Normal  | 2         |

Upon examining the responses of anxious students to the first question, it was revealed that some students experienced negative emotions, while others expressed positive emotions despite their anxiety.

### Question 1.1: What things do you like in English lessons?

The aim of Question 1.1 is to identify students' preferences regarding English lessons. Anxious students provided various answers to this question, with some offering more than one option. The reported preferences included activities such as speaking activities, games, videos, reading, as well as writing activities.

Table 14  
Students' Preferences

| Codes               | Frequency |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Games               | 3         |
| Videos              | 4         |
| Reading             | 3         |
| Writing activities  | 4         |
| Speaking activities | 1         |

As indicated in Table 14, students provided multiple options for the aspects they enjoyed in English lessons. Among these options, writing activities, and videos were the most frequently mentioned, followed by games, and reading activities. The least reported option was speaking activities. The reason why writing is the most preferred activity among anxious students is that they are less active in these writing activities and do not need to participate actively in class. In addition, they feel more confident during writing activities, as they believe that the information, they learn becomes more permanent:

**Student 1:** *“I enjoy doing writing exercises in English classes because I don't need to be physically active in the classroom while doing them, and there's no requirement to attend the class.”*

**Student 2:** *“I love the writing activities we do in class, But I don't like reading things I write out loud. I prefer to read silently.”*

**Student 3:** *“I become happier when I write about the things I learn because writing makes the information more permanent for me.”*

Additionally, students stated that they had more fun when watching course-related videos. This situation pleases the students because they don't have to actively participate in the lesson while watching the video, similar to the experience in writing activities. They feel more comfortable and this way they make the information they have learned permanent.

**Student 2:** *“The teacher sometimes shows videos about the subjects. In this way, I both understand the subject better and have a lot of fun while watching the video.”*

**Student 6:** *“I love video quizzes in English lessons. After studying the subject, I like to watch videos related to the subject.”*

**Student 5:** *“I like the videos that the teacher shows on the subject in English lessons. Because when I learn about different cultures and things I don't know, the subject attracts my attention more.”*

### **Question 1.2: What things don't you like in English lessons?**

The purpose of Question 1.2. is to identify aspects that students do not like in English lessons. Anxious students provided various answers to this question. The options offered by the students were classified into speaking activities, writing activities, English lesson hours, group activities, and staying in front of the blackboard.

Table 15

Students' dislikes

| <b>Codes</b>                | <b>Frequency</b> |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Speaking activities</b>  | 6                |
| <b>Writing activities</b>   | 3                |
| <b>English lesson hours</b> | 1                |
| <b>Group activities</b>     | 3                |

As indicated in Table 15, students provided multiple options for the aspects they don't enjoy in English lessons. Among these options, speaking activities (**f=6**) were the most frequently mentioned, followed by writing activities, and group activities. The least reported option was English lesson hours. Most of the participants explained that they did not like to express themselves during the lesson. Because of this situation, they were shy and more reluctant in speaking activities. Based on the students' responses, most expressed negative feelings about speaking in front of classmates and teachers, feeling uncomfortable with the reactions of both teachers and friends when expressing themselves in the target language.

**Student 2:** *“I do not like expressing myself out loud in class. Because I'm afraid of how my friends will react if I say something wrong.”*

**Student 4:** *“I don't like talking and being active during class. Because the teacher wants us to speak English in the lesson, and for this reason, I think I will make the wrong pronunciation. I think my friends will make fun of me.”*

**Student 6:** *“I don't like the speaking activities in English classes.”*

**Student 1:** *“I do not like participating in speaking activities in class because I don't enjoy talking in crowded places.”*

Although students have fun playing games, they do not enjoy the **group activities (f=3)** within these games because they say they cannot understand the lesson well due to the noise and chaos that occur during these activities.

**Student 8:** *“I do not like group activities in the classroom because there is a lot of noise in the classroom during the activity. This situation prevents me from learning.”*

**Student 12:** *“ I do not like large group activities during class. Because there is a noise in the classroom, and I cannot learn at this moment.”*

**Question 2: Do you ever feel anxious during English lessons? Which situations cause you to feel anxious or stressed?**

The purpose of the second question is to analyze whether students feel anxious during the English lesson and, consequently, to reveal the situations that cause their anxiety. Since all the interviewed students had high anxiety levels, 12 students answered 'yes' to the first question. Regarding the second question, which asks about situations causing anxiety in students, many provided more than one reason.

Table 16

The causes of Students' anxiety

| Codes               | Frequency |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Speaking activities | 5         |
| Parental Pressure   | 2         |
| Peer reactions      | 4         |

|                                              |   |
|----------------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Fear of receiving low grades in Exams</b> | 2 |
| <b>Teachers' manners</b>                     | 4 |

When Table 16 is examined, students listed many reasons that cause anxiety and stress. These reasons include speaking activities, test anxiety, fear of making mistakes, teachers' manners, peer reactions, lack of self-confidence, and parental expectations. Looking at the table, it can be seen that the frequencies of the situations are very close to each other. Regarding the students' responses, **speaking activities (f=6)** could be considered as primary causes of foreign language anxiety:

**Student 9:** *“As I said before, I feel anxious about speaking activities in English classes. I came from a public school, so I don't think I'm proficient in English.”*

**Student 10:** *“I feel anxious when the teacher asks a question about a subject I do not know.”*

**Student 2:** *“When the teacher gives me the chance to speak or mentions my name in class, it triggers anxiety. I am not comfortable with expressing myself in crowded environments, and as a result, when the teacher provides the opportunity to speak, my cheeks often turn red, and my heart beats faster. Consequently, I find it challenging to comprehend the questions the teacher asks.”*

**Student 1:** *“ I feel nervous and anxious during speaking activities. When the teacher suddenly asks questions during the lesson, it causes me anxiety. Whether I know the answer to the question or not, being asked a question suddenly causes me anxiety and stress.”*

**Student 3:** *“I don't like speaking English. Even if I know the answer to the question, I don't like speaking it.”*

**Student 4:** *“The teacher wants us to speak English in the lesson, and for this reason, I think I will pronounce it wrong. I'm afraid of making mistakes.”*

**Student 11:** *“I feel anxious when the teacher asks a question. I worry that I will answer wrong.”*

Another important factor that causes anxiety in students is that students are afraid and shy of the **reactions of their peers (f=4)**. For this reason, students often experience anxiety while participating in classroom activities and hesitate to express themselves.

**Student 8:** *"I feel anxious when the teacher asks questions during the lesson. I get very worried about any activity done during class. Because I think my friends will make fun of me."*

**Student 7:** *"I am afraid that I will make mistakes when I speak English and I think that my friends will make fun of me as a result of this mistake."*

**Student 4:** *"I don't like talking and being active during class. Because the teacher wants us to speak English in the lesson, and for this reason, I think I will make the wrong pronunciation. I think my friends will make fun of me."*

On the other hand, teacher reactions may be one of the reasons that cause anxiety in students. Students cannot ask questions or answer questions in the classroom due to the teacher's reaction. Because they are afraid of their teacher's reaction. Moreover, students' express anxiety about the teacher potentially becoming angry in the classroom, even in situations where the teacher's behavior is not hostile. Additionally, the students' responses suggest that the teacher's reactions contribute to a feeling of apprehension in the classroom. Some of the answers related to the **teachers' manners(f=4)**:

**Student 1:** *"Whether I know the answer to the question or not, being asked a question suddenly causes me anxiety and stress. The reason for this is that I feel nervous about the teacher's reaction to my answer. Because usually, the teacher gets angry when we give the wrong answer."*

**Student 5:** *"I feel nervous when the teacher asks me questions that I don't know the answers to. As a result, I am afraid of the teacher's reaction to me, and this causes me anxiety."*

**Student 12:** *"I feel anxious about the reaction the teacher will give me while answering the questions. And that's why I forget what I was going to say."*

In addition, **parental expectations(f=2)**, and **fear of receiving low grades in exams (f=2)** are other factors that cause anxiety in students. Some students mentioned feeling anxious due to their parental high expectations in English lessons. This circumstance has led to reluctance and anxiety throughout their English learning experience. Some of the answers related to **parental pressure**:

**Student 7:** *“My father always wants me to be good at English. This request of my father puts pressure on me. Because I think I will never be as good as he wants.”*

**Student 11:** *“My father's good English makes me anxious. Because he speaks very well, he judges me for how I can't speak.”*

Throughout their entire academic journey, students encounter challenging periods, both in language classes and when facing various types of assessments. Tests, in particular, represent one of the most stress-inducing scenarios for the majority of individuals. It's not just the preparation for exams that generates anxiety, but the act of taking the tests itself is a source of stress for students. A few of the students stated that they felt anxious during the lesson because of their English exams. They stated that they could not focus on the lesson because they thought they would get low scores on the exams. The answers given by the students to **the fear of receiving low grades in exams** are as follows:

**Student 5:** *“I believe that if I don't grasp the subject taught by the teacher well during the lesson, I will score poorly on the exam. This thought induces anxiety, making it difficult for me to concentrate on the lesson.”*

**Student 4:** *“I feel anxious and stressed before English exams. Even though I know the exam will be easy, this creates anxiety in me.”*

### **Question 3: How do you cope with the times you feel anxious?**

The purpose of the third question is to analyze the solutions students find for the anxiety they experience in English lessons. Students reported numerous methods to cope with the situation that caused them anxiety. These methods include preparation, doing nothing, teacher collaboration, sleeping in class, peer solidarity, and relaxing exercises.

Table 17

## Coping with Anxiety

| Codes                        | Frequency |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Preparation</b>           | 3         |
| <b>Doing nothing</b>         | 1         |
| <b>Teacher collaboration</b> | 4         |
| <b>Sleeping in class</b>     | 2         |
| <b>Peer solidarity</b>       | 2         |
| <b>Relaxation exercises</b>  | 4         |

When examining Table 17, it is evident that students expressed various methods to cope with anxiety. One of the most preferred methods is teacher collaboration and relaxation exercises, followed by preparation, sleeping in the classroom, and peer solidarity. The least-mentioned method is doing nothing.

Some participants seek help from their friends and teachers, which greatly assists them in alleviating anxiety experienced while learning the language. At the same time, Çermik (2005) emphasized in one of his studies the importance of receiving support from others to overcome foreign language anxiety. When one feels alone while dealing with a situation, coping becomes significantly more difficult. This scenario is also prevalent during the learning process. Therefore, **teacher cooperation(f=4)** and **peer solidarity(f=2)** play crucial roles in addressing anxiety. Most students attempt to resolve this situation by making eye contact with their teachers and friends, consulting them, and asking for help when they experience anxiety. Thus, it can be said that communication between teachers and students, and among students, in the classroom is highly effective and important.

**Student 7:** *“I usually talk to my teacher when I feel anxious and share my feelings with her.”*

**Student 10:** *“I usually talk to my teacher when I don't understand and feel nervous. I want him to explain the subject again. I feel better when I talk to my teacher.”*

**Student 8:** *“My teacher understands when I feel anxious and allows me to talk during classroom activities, such as sitting at my desk without going to the blackboard. Because*

*he knows that I can express myself better this way. I usually make eye contact with my teachers at such moments. I take care to get support from my teacher.”*

**Student 9:** *“I usually try to get help from my friends during class. I ask them about things I don't know or don't understand. The more I ask, the more I understand, and my anxiety slowly decreases.”*

**Student 3:** *“When I feel anxious, I ask my friends or my teacher. I try to solve the situation.”*

Participants try to alleviate the situation by engaging in **relaxation exercises(f=4)** to cope with anxious moments. These exercises can be classified as listening to music, breathing deeply, imagining positive things, or engaging in activities they enjoy.

**Student 1:** *“I usually try to do things in English. I listen to music or try to improve my English by playing English games. Usually, when I feel anxious, my face turns red, or my hands shake. In such cases, I clear my mind of these thoughts during the lesson and take deep breaths. Thus, my anxiety level decreases.”*

**Student 5:** *“Sometimes, when I don't receive satisfactory answers from the teacher, I try to calm myself down by focusing on other things and thinking about different topics.”*

**Student 12:** *“To cope with moments when I feel anxious, I usually try to calm myself down by listening to music at home.”*

**Student 4:** *“Whenever I feel anxious, I ask permission from the teacher and go to the toilet. I take deep breaths and try to cope with this situation.”*

Some participants think that they can reduce anxiety by coming to class prepared, revising, and studying more. They think that they will be successful with more work and that their self-confidence will increase as they become successful. Therefore, **preparation(f=3)** is an important method for them to reduce and resolve anxiety.

**Student 4:** *“To solve the anxiety I experience in English lessons; I usually repeat the topics we will cover in class at home. I read the texts we will read in class at home beforehand and memorize the words I do not know.”*

**Student 5:** *“To reduce the anxiety and stress I experience in class; I study the topic we will cover before entering the class. I go to class prepared.”*

**Student 12:** *“I study more at home to cope with the anxiety I experience.”*

Some of the participants try to reduce the anxiety they experience by walking away from the scene, **doing nothing(f=1), or sleeping in the classroom(f=2).**

**Student 2:** *“When I am anxious, I usually do not like to share this situation with anyone. Instead, I tend to keep it to myself. As a result, I may refrain from participating in the lesson and become silent.”*

**Student 5:** *“If I cannot solve my anxiety in any way, I try to avoid the problem by sleeping during class.”*

**Student 11:** *“When I feel anxious, I try to get away from the environment by sleeping during class.”*

**Question 4: Does anxiety prevent you from learning English? Can you explain how?**

The purpose of the third question is to analyze whether the anxiety experienced by students hampers their ability to learn English and to elucidate the mechanisms through which it impedes learning. Out of 12 students surveyed, 11 answered ‘yes’ to the first question, indicating that anxiety hindered their English learning. Most students reported difficulties in comprehending English lessons and maintaining focus due to anxiety during class. Participants predominantly converged on common responses when describing how anxiety affected their English learning. With the exception of one participant, the others cited negative effects of anxiety during English lessons, resulting in issues such as reluctance the subject, lack of focus, and comprehension challenges.

**Student 10:** *“When I feel anxious in English lessons, I do not understand the subject my teacher is teaching and as a result, I cannot focus on the lesson.”*

**Student 9:** *“For example, I said that I get anxious when the teacher speaks English during the lesson, and when I get anxious, I do not understand the teacher at all. As a result, I do not learn the new things that were taught.”*

**Student 1:** *“For example, when I feel anxious, I cannot hear and often do not understand what the teacher says. Additionally, I cannot answer a question that I know and would like to answer, and I cannot attend the lecture. This situation prevents me from being active in class and learning English.”*

**Student 8:** *“For example, I said that I do not like speaking activities. When the teacher asks a question, I cannot even understand the question due to anxiety. I cannot focus on the rest of the lesson because the anxiety continues throughout the lesson. In this case, it prevents me from learning English.”*

**Student 5:** *“I feel reluctant before taking an English class. During the lesson, as soon as the teacher starts speaking English, my anxiety increases, and I do not understand the subject he is explaining. As a result, I cannot learn the subject taught by the teacher. In this case, it prevents me from learning English.”*

**Question 5: In which situations do you feel happy and relaxed in English lessons?**

The purpose of the fifth question is to analyze the situations in which students feel happy and comfortable during English lessons. Unlike the first four questions, which focused on moments of anxiety, the fifth question aims to identify the specific circumstances in which anxious students feel at ease. By eliciting multiple responses from each student, this question seeks to leverage these moments of comfort to understand their feelings and explore potential solutions.

Table 18

Pleasant Moments English Class

| Codes                       | Frequency |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Group activities            | 3         |
| Playing Games               | 3         |
| Writing activities          | 2         |
| Individual activities       | 1         |
| Speaking in native language | 2         |
| Teacher’s attitude          | 4         |

When Table 18 is examined, it is seen that the students feel happy and comfortable thanks to many different situations in English lessons. One of the situations most mentioned by the participants is group activities and games. This is followed by writing activities, speaking in the native language and teacher's attitude. The least mentioned situation is individual activities. The most important factor that causes students to feel comfortable and happy during the lesson is the **teacher's attitude(f=4)**. Students stated that they were more comfortable thanks to the positive atmosphere created in the classroom as a result of the positive behavior of the teacher.

**Student 5:** *"I feel happy and comfortable in the classroom when the teacher is not nervous."*

**Student 10:** *"I feel more comfortable when my teacher is happy during the lesson."*

**Student 2:** *"I feel happier when I receive approval from my teacher when I complete a task given by the teacher in the classroom. When my teacher appreciates me, my self-confidence increases."*

**Student 1:** *"I feel happier when I answer correctly when the teacher asks a question. I feel more comfortable when my teacher appreciates my answer."*

The reason why participants feel more comfortable and happier in **group activities(f=3)** is that they can communicate with their peers and get help from each other while answering questions. Thanks to group activities, students feel more comfortable expressing themselves and are not afraid of making mistakes. Because they are sure of the correct answer by consulting each other. The fear of making mistakes, which causes them to experience anxiety, disappears.

**Student 2:** *"I generally enjoy group activities in the classroom or doing an activity with a friend I love. I feel more comfortable at those moments."*

**Student 5:** *"I feel comfortable working on the subject in small groups in the classroom."*

**Student 10:** *"I feel more comfortable doing group activities. Because there is no need to express myself alone in group activities. I have no fear of saying the wrong thing."*

Contrary to the views above, one student stated that she felt happier and more comfortable thanks to **individual activities(f=1)** in the classroom.

**Student 12:** *“I enjoy individual activities more. I think that I will not be able to learn during group activities due to the noise in the classroom, and if I cannot learn, I will not be able to do well in exams.”*

Another situation favored by most participants is **playing games(f=3)**. Students expressed that they felt happier during lessons when engaging in games. They reported that they found it easier to express themselves during these moments and learned while having fun.

**Student 9:** *“When we play games related to the subject in class, I feel more active, and I understand the lesson better thanks to games.”*

**Student 4:** *“I am happier when the teacher makes me play a game after explaining the subject. I can reinforce the subject taught by the teacher through games.”*

Students stated that they felt happy during their **writing activities(f=2)**. They reported that they did not have to be active in the classroom during their writing activities and that the classroom environment was quieter.

**Student 1:** *“I am happier with my writing activities. Because I learn a subject better while writing.”*

**Student 8:** *“I feel comfortable and happy in writing activities because I can remain silent in those moments. I do not need to express myself in front of my friends and teacher in the classroom. Additionally, I learn better because there is a quiet environment in the classroom.”*

Participants stated that they felt more comfortable when the teacher spoke in their **native language (f=2)** in the classroom.

**Student 7:** *“I feel comfortable when the teacher speaks Turkish in the classroom.”*

**Student 3:** *“I feel happy and comfortable when the teacher speaks Turkish during the lesson.”*

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

This study aims to elucidate the levels of foreign language anxiety among young adolescents and explore the factors influencing this anxiety, including age, gender, academic success, learning experience, school type, and parental expectations. Furthermore, it endeavors to uncover the underlying reasons for anxiety among students and understand their perspectives. The study employed two distinct instruments to gather data from students in English courses at two different schools in Ankara. Initially, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was administered to 414 participants to assess their anxiety levels and the participants' anxiety levels were analyzed in alignment with the findings of Kovaç's (2007) research. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with 12 students exhibiting high anxiety levels to unveil the reasons behind their anxiety and their individual perspectives. This section delved into a comprehensive discussion of the research questions.

#### **5.1. Discussion of the Research Questions**

The study involved a mixed methods approach to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the anxiety levels of young adolescents?
  - 1.1. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to age?
  - 1.2. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to gender?
  - 1.3. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to learning experiences?
  - 1.4. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to academic achievement?
  - 1.5. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to parental expectations?
  - 1.6. Does students' foreign language anxiety vary according to school type(public-private)?

2. What are the leading causes of young adolescent students' anxiety toward the Foreign Language?

#### **5.2.1. What are the anxiety levels of young adolescents?**

A foreign language anxiety scale was utilized to gauge the anxiety levels of young adolescent students during language learning sessions. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was administered to 414 students. Developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), this scale aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of anxiety levels. In order to ensure accurate data collection and interpretation, the Turkish-translated version of the FLCAS was employed, adapted from Aydın et al. (2016). Delving further into the analysis, each item of the questionnaire was meticulously examined, shedding light on various aspects of anxiety experienced by the students. The FLCAS was structured to explore anxiety across four distinct sections: communication apprehension, general English, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Upon analyzing the data, it became apparent that both male and female students exhibited moderate levels of anxiety, as evidenced by the "Anxiety Score Range" presented in Table 3. There are many studies investigating the level of foreign language anxiety, and some of these studies have obtained data confirming this claim. For instance, research conducted by Wong (2009) and Kovac (2017) indicated that a significant proportion of young adolescents experienced moderate levels of anxiety. In line with this, Özsarı (2014) conducted a study assessing foreign language anxiety levels among 414 secondary school students, revealing a similar trend of moderate anxiety levels among the participants. Çermik (2015) observed that eighth-grade students exhibit an average level of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), aligning with the research by Abu-Rabia (2014), which focused on 7th-grade students. Moreover, the findings from Alshahrani and Alandal's (2015) study, which focused on elementary school students, closely align with the outcomes of the present investigation. Likewise, Helen (2019) found the students' anxiety levels to be moderate in her study with university students. Similar results were obtained in many different studies conducted with university students in Türkiye (Çakar, 2009; Demirdağ and Bozdoğan, 2013; Şakrak, 2009; Çağatay, 2015;). In contrast to the present study, Xiaotong Wen et al. (2022) and Natarajan (2015) found that their study's participants, consisting of young adolescents, exhibited high levels of anxiety. Numerous investigations have sought to ascertain the anxiety levels prevalent among students. However, as previously indicated, research pertaining specifically to young adolescents remains relatively scarce. Thus, upon

examining the aforementioned studies, it becomes evident that the anxiety levels observed among young students exhibit considerable variability.

The research explored various aspects of foreign language anxiety experienced by participants, including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, general English anxiety, and test anxiety. Examination of the data indicated that participants experienced moderate levels of anxiety across these dimensions. Specifically, after examining general English anxiety, it is suggested that the observed anxiety in English classes may stem from participants often underestimating their language competence during communicative exercises, thus fostering a fear of classroom participation. This category pertains to the overarching disposition toward foreign language courses, encompassing a broader spectrum of attitudes rather than being tied to any particular skill or ability. The research conducted by Bailey et al. (1999) and Samimy and Radrin (1994) illuminates that previous adverse encounters encountered by students in foreign language acquisition (FLA) studies can significantly influence their attitudes toward these courses. These studies underscore the enduring impact of negative experiences on students' perceptions and attitudes, thereby shaping their overall outlook toward foreign language education.

In this study, the levels of communication anxiety and fear of negative evaluation anxiety closely align, and the study revealed that students experienced moderate fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension. The research on foreign language learning suggests that learners often grapple with communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation, as posited by Aydın (2008). Moreover, MacIntyre, Clement, and Noels (1997) further delineate foreign language anxiety as stemming from pessimistic expectations, leading to apprehension that hampers performance. This apprehension manifests in both physical and psychological manifestations, as evidenced by studies such as Argaman and Abu-Rabia (2002), particularly in school settings where students may exhibit shyness and indifference during language production and comprehension. Additionally, Gardner and Lambert (1972) conducted research that underscores the significance of motivation in language acquisition, proposing that anxiety may emerge when learners feel their language abilities are insufficient, impacting their inclination to participate in communication. Consequently, students who feel inadequate may fear negative feedback and exhibit low participation levels.

In the realm of anxiety disorders affecting middle school students, test anxiety emerges as one of the least prevalent concerns. This assertion finds support in Aida's (1994) seminal study, which specifically posited that test anxiety does not significantly contribute to foreign language anxiety. Additionally, Aydın's (2013) empirical investigation corroborated this observation, highlighting the relatively subdued levels of test anxiety among young adolescents. These findings underscore the limited impact of test anxiety within the secondary education context, particularly concerning its influence on foreign language anxiety among students.

In summary, the research findings unveiled that participants experienced moderate levels of communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and general English anxiety, while test anxiety was comparatively low. These observations suggest that young learners generally grapple with a moderate level of anxiety when engaging in foreign language learning. Moreover, these insights shed light on the multifaceted nature of anxiety experienced by young learners in language learning contexts, emphasizing the importance of addressing these concerns to facilitate effective language acquisition and participation. Furthermore, understanding and addressing these anxieties can contribute to creating supportive learning environments that nurture confidence and promote active engagement in language learning activities.

#### **5.2.1.1. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to age?**

The investigation sought to ascertain the influence of students' age on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), revealing a significant correlation between age and FLA. Furthermore, a detailed examination of subcategories uncovered notable disparities particularly within the domains of general English proficiency, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Specifically, findings indicated that 11-year-old students exhibited heightened levels of test anxiety, accompanied by increased apprehension toward general English proficiency and fear of negative evaluation. However, no statistically significant disparity was observed in the subcategory of communication apprehension. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the nuanced relationship between age and FLA, shedding light on specific dimensions wherein age exerts discernible impacts on students' anxiety levels in foreign language learning contexts.

Likewise, there are various studies investigating whether age has a significant effect on FLA. For instance, Aydın (2008) observed in his research that older students tend to exhibit lower levels of anxiety compared to their younger counterparts. Similarly, Latif (2013) noted in his study involving adult learners that anxiety levels diminish with age. Furthermore, Aydın and Tiryaki (2017) conducted a comprehensive investigation into the impact of age, gender, and academic classification on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Their findings revealed a consistent pattern wherein FLA declines with increasing age across different demographic and academic cohorts. These scholarly endeavors collectively contribute to our understanding of the inverse relationship between age and FLA, elucidating the potential role of self-efficacy, motivation, and attitude in mediating anxiety levels among language learners of varying age groups. Similarly, in his study, Dewaele (2007) found results parallel to the current study, concluding that younger learners were more anxious during language learning and faced difficulty when encountering new situations.

In contrast, Dewaele (2002) conducted a study that yielded divergent results, revealing that older learners exhibited greater anxiety compared to their younger counterparts. Özşarı (2022) conducted research corroborating this trend, suggesting that older learners experience heightened levels of anxiety relative to younger learners. These contrasting findings underscore the complexity of the relationship between age and anxiety in language learning contexts, warranting further exploration to elucidate the underlying mechanisms and contributing factors influencing anxiety levels across different age groups.

As a result of these studies, it can be inferred that age significantly influences Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). While some studies indicate that younger learners tend to experience higher levels of anxiety compared to older learners, others suggest the opposite. In the current study, age emerged as a significant factor, revealing a notable difference in anxiety levels across age groups. This discrepancy may be attributed to young adolescent learners heightened self-efficacy awareness, leading to increased motivation in English lessons and fostering a positive attitude toward language acquisition with advancing age. Furthermore, a comparison between students aged 11 and 14 reveals that the former group is more prone to anxiety, particularly during teacher corrections and examinations. In summary, it is evident that self-efficacy and motivation play pivotal roles in determining anxiety levels in language learning contexts.

#### **5.2.1.2. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to gender?**

The current study aimed to investigate the potential effect of students' gender on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). A total of 414 students participated, with 202 being male students and 212 female students. The study revealed a significant difference in FLA based on students' gender. As a result of the study, it was revealed that female students' FLA total scores were higher than those of male students. Additionally, upon examining the subcategories, it became evident that gender had a significant effect on communication apprehension, with female students exhibiting higher levels of communication apprehension than male students. In contrast, no significant differences were found between genders regarding general English, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

Numerous studies have investigated the potential impact of gender on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). For instance, Deweale et al. (2008) discovered that female students tended to experience higher levels of anxiety compared to their male counterparts. This aligns with the current study's findings, which indicated that female students exhibit elevated levels of communication apprehension and often avoid public speaking situations. Similarly, research conducted by Balemir (2009) and Tian et al. (2018) on student cohorts reinforced these conclusions by highlighting the heightened FLA levels among female students compared to males. Moreover, Aydin et al. (2017) delved into the nuances of language anxiety and noted that female students frequently reported increased anxiety levels, especially in response to teacher corrections during speaking tasks. Stephenson (2006) explored the impact of age and gender on FLA in his research, leading to the conclusion that female participants exhibited higher levels of anxiety compared to male participants. Collectively, these studies underscore the persistent pattern of elevated FLA among female students, shedding light on the multifaceted aspects of anxiety in language learning contexts.

Contrary to the trends observed in prior studies, Aida (1994) found that male students reported higher levels of anxiety compared to female students in her research. This matches with the findings of Fatimah and Hasan (2018), who also noted a significant disparity between male and female students, specifically highlighting those male students had greater fear of negative evaluation. This pattern was similarly corroborated by Marwan (2016), whose study further emphasized that male participants exhibited heightened anxiety regarding potential failures in English classes when compared to their female participants. These studies collectively highlight the complex and varied nature of gender-related

differences in anxiety levels among students, emphasizing the need for nuanced and context-specific approaches in addressing anxiety in educational settings.

Additionally, some recent research has indicated a lack of significant association between age and Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). For instance, Alshahrani and Alandal (2015) studied the influence of gender on FLA among young adolescents but did not detect any significant difference. Similarly, Kayhan et al. (2022) explored the impact of gender on FLA and arrived at a similar conclusion of no significant difference. Moreover, Özsarı (2022) focused on secondary school students and found that gender did not have a notable effect on FLA levels. Latif (2015) also reached a similar conclusion regarding the lack of a significant gender-based difference in anxiety levels. These findings collectively suggest that while age and gender are important factors to consider in language anxiety research, their direct relationship with FLA may not always be significant across different study contexts.

Based on the extensive exploration of gender effects on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) across various studies, it is evident that these factors play nuanced roles in shaping anxiety levels among language learners. The current study's findings align with previous research indicating a significant gender difference in FLA, with female students consistently exhibiting higher anxiety levels, particularly in communication apprehension domains. Societal expectations and gender roles place greater emphasis on communication and social interaction skills for females, leading to increased pressure to meet these perceived standards in language learning contexts (Tabassum et al., 2021). This societal pressure can contribute to heightened anxiety, especially in situations involving communication and potential evaluation. According to Bahrami and Yausefi (2011), self-perception plays a significant role in increasing anxiety, as females often hold different beliefs about their language abilities and exhibit lower self-confidence in language tasks, thereby amplifying anxiety levels. Moreover, perceived competence and self-imposed standards for language proficiency may also contribute to increased anxiety among female students when they feel they are not meeting these expectations. In addition, cultural influences, and communication apprehension, which are often higher among females across various contexts, also play pivotal roles in shaping FLA levels (Junguara et al., 2023). Understanding these multifaceted factors can guide the development of targeted interventions to alleviate FLA among female language learners and promote more positive language learning experiences. However, it is

crucial to note the variability observed in research, with some studies reporting contrasting findings regarding gender impacts on FLA. These discrepancies underscore the need for comprehensive and context-specific approaches to understanding and addressing FLA in language learning environments. Future research should continue to explore the interplay between gender and FLA, considering diverse learner characteristics and educational contexts to develop targeted interventions that effectively mitigate language anxiety and promote optimal language learning experiences for all students.

#### **5.2.1.3. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to learning experiences?**

The current study encompassed students with varying learning experiences, spanning from 1 to 15 years, with a notable concentration falling within the 4–7-year range. Upon analyzing the research findings, a profound influence of students' learning experience on anxiety levels emerged. Generally, an escalation in learning experience corresponded to heightened anxiety levels. However, intriguingly, this pattern did not persist among students with 12-15 years of learning experience, where anxiety levels showed an unexpected increase rather than the anticipated decrease. Furthermore, upon examining the subcategories, a significant difference was found in fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and general English scores concerning learning experience, except for the 12-15 years of learning experience group. It was observed that as learning experience increases, there is a notable decrease in these subcategories.

Similarly, there are various studies investigating the relationship between learning experience and FLA. For example, Afigah (2015) found in his study that as students' years of learning English increase, their anxiety levels decrease. This finding aligns with the results of the current study. Moreover, according to the research carried out by Zambak (2016), it was determined that students who participated in English classes at school demonstrated elevated anxiety levels in comparison to their non-participating counterparts. This outcome underscores the notable influence of learning English on anxiety levels. As a result of their study, MacIntyre and Dewaele (2014) corroborated the finding that students' anxiety levels decreased due to the experiences they gained through the learning process.

Contrary to the findings of these studies, Kayhan (2022) concluded in her study that as students' learning experience increases, so does the anxiety they experience. This observation is further supported by the findings of Garau and Marco-Llinas (2009), who also

concluded in their study that students in Spanish classes exhibit increased anxiety as they progress through later classes. These studies collectively highlight the significant correlation between advancing learning experiences and heightened levels of anxiety among students in language learning contexts.

In conclusion, the findings of this study shed light on the nuanced relationship between learning experience and Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). According to conventional wisdom, the research reveals a negative correlation, indicating that as students' learning experience in a foreign language increase, their levels of FLA tend to decrease. This insight underscores the importance of progressive and immersive language learning experiences in mitigating anxiety among language learners. By gaining confidence, familiarity with language structures, and improved coping mechanisms, students can navigate language challenges more effectively, leading to reduced anxiety levels. These findings align with existing literature and underscore the need for targeted interventions and pedagogical strategies to support learners in their language acquisition journey. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the study's limitations, such as sample size and specific language contexts, which may impact the generalizability of the results. Future research endeavors should delve deeper into the underlying mechanisms driving FLA reduction and explore additional factors influencing anxiety in diverse language learning settings. Overall, this study contributes valuable insights to the field of language education and underscores the importance of creating supportive and effective language learning environments for students.

#### **5.2.1.4. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to academic achievement?**

The current study concluded that academic success significantly influences Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Students' academic success levels were categorized as 100-85, 84-70, 69-60, 59-50, and 49-0. It was found that students with academic success scores between 100-85 exhibited lower FLA values compared to those with scores of 84-70, 69-60, 59-50, and 49-0. Therefore, as academic success increases, students tend to have lower FLA values. Upon examining subcategories, it was observed that communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation decreased with higher academic success levels. Similarly, general English proficiency scores and test anxiety decreased as academic success improved.

These findings suggest that higher academic success correlates with reduced anxiety levels among students.

There are many similar studies examining the impact of academic achievement on FLA. For example, Liu (2006) investigated the variations in anxiety levels between students with advanced academic success and those with beginner academic success and She concluded that as academic success increases, students' anxiety levels decrease. Similarly, Vitasari et al. (2010) identified a significant relationship between anxiety and academic success in their study and concluded that students with high academic success exhibit low anxiety levels. In another similar study, Halder (2018) examined the relationship between Indian students' anxiety levels and academic success and concluded that students with high anxiety levels had low academic success. In addition, Tugan (2015) investigated the relationship between test anxiety and academic success in her study. He concluded that similar to the findings of the current study, test anxiety decreases as the academic success of young adolescent students increases. As a result of his study, Azher (2010) concluded that as academic success increases, the level of anxiety decreases.

Considering all these studies and the results of the current study, the relationship between academic achievement and Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) reveals a complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, and motivational factors in language learning. As students experience academic success, they often gain a boost in confidence regarding their language abilities, which in turn can lead to reduced anxiety levels when engaging in language tasks such as speaking, writing, or listening (Kurtoglu and Sabuncuoglu, 2021). Moreover, academic achievements reflect students' mastery of language skills, contributing to a sense of comfort and ease in language use. Positive feedback from successful language learning experiences reinforces students' belief in their capabilities and fosters a positive attitude toward language learning (Moluayonge and Bella, 2020). As Aydın (2013) aptly stated, students with high academic success are not only aware of situations that trigger anxiety but also possess strategies to mitigate these feelings. Consequently, their anxiety levels are lower. Additionally, successful students tend to develop effective coping strategies, such as better time management and seeking assistance when needed, which further contributes to anxiety reduction (Omari et al., 2023). Academic success can also alleviate performance pressure, allowing students to approach language tasks with less fear of making mistakes or being negatively evaluated (Han et al., 2022). Overall, as students achieve higher academic

milestones, they not only enhance their language proficiency but also cultivate the skills and mindset necessary to manage anxiety and engage more confidently in language learning endeavors. These findings underscore the importance of considering academic success as a significant factor in addressing Foreign Language Anxiety comprehensively.

#### **5.2.1.5. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to school type?**

A total of two different types of schools participated in the current study: private schools and public schools. The study involved 188 students from public schools and 226 students from private schools. This study examined the effect of school type on anxiety and concluded that school type is an important factor in anxiety levels. It was found that the anxiety level of students in public schools is higher than that of students in private schools. When examining subheadings, a significant difference was found in the fear of negative evaluation, with students in public schools exhibiting a greater fear of negative evaluation. However, no significant differences were found in other subheadings, namely communication apprehension, test anxiety, and general English proficiency.

Various studies have analyzed the difference in anxiety between public and private schools. For example, in their study, Gosh and Sil (2016) wanted to analyze the difference in academic anxiety among young adolescents in public and private schools. As a result, he concluded that students studying in private schools experienced more academic stress. Similarly, Razia (2016) obtained results in her study that supported the previous findings. She concluded that the academic anxiety experienced by young adolescent students in private schools is higher than that experienced by students in public schools. In addition, Thenmozi (2020) conducted a study in which the anxiety levels of students in both types of schools were examined. The study revealed that students in both types of schools experienced high levels of anxiety, but it also showed that the anxiety level of students studying in private schools was slightly higher than that of students studying in public schools. Habib et al.; (2019) conducted a study with 100 high school students, 50 of whom were studying in a private school and 50 in a public school. The study examined the anxiety levels of the students, and the results showed that the anxiety level of students in the private school was higher than that of students in the public school. Contrary to these studies, Özsarı (2022) examined the anxiety levels of secondary school students studying in private and public schools in her study. As a result of the study, it was concluded that students in public schools experienced more anxiety than students in private schools, as found in the current

study. In addition, Brader et al. (2008) concluded in their study that students studying in public high schools experience more anxiety than students studying in private high schools.

The findings from recent studies highlight a concerning trend: students in public schools face higher levels of anxiety compared to their peers in private schools, and several intertwined factors contribute to this phenomenon. Öztürk and Çeçen (2007) pointed out a critical difference in instructional hours between public and private schools, with public school students receiving fewer hours of instruction. This discrepancy places heightened academic demands on public school students within limited time frames, leading to increased pressure and stress. Furthermore, larger class sizes in public schools result in reduced individualized attention from teachers, fostering a competitive environment that amplifies academic stress. Insufficient resources, including limited counseling services and extracurricular opportunities, further contribute to heightened stress levels among public school students. Moreover, classroom dynamics influenced by class size can hinder collaborative activities, such as group and pair work, which are essential for holistic learning experiences (Dörnyei, 2005; Sparks and Ganschow, 1991). These limitations may exacerbate anxiety levels among students, as they miss out on interactive and engaging learning opportunities. Çağatay (2015) also emphasizes the impact of students' background knowledge on anxiety levels, highlighting socioeconomic status, family dynamics, previous educational experiences, exposure to community stressors, and access to support systems as influential factors. Understanding these broader contextual influences, including social, emotional, and environmental factors, is crucial for developing effective strategies to address mental health challenges among public school students. By exploring and addressing these multifaceted issues, educators and policymakers can work toward creating supportive and conducive learning environments that promote students' overall well-being and academic success.

#### **5.2.1.6. Do students' foreign language anxiety levels vary according to parental expectations?**

The current study investigated the effect of parental expectations on anxiety in young adolescents. The results of the study showed a significant difference in FLCAS total scores based on parental expectations. Specifically, as parental expectations increased, students' anxiety levels decreased. Upon examining the subcategories, it became evident that parental expectations significantly influenced various aspects. Specifically, communication

apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and general English scores decreased as parental expectations increased. In this study, students perceived parental expectations not as pressure but as support from their parents. This distinction between expectations and pressure is crucial. Expectations refer to the hopes or standards parents have for their children's achievements, which can motivate and guide students without causing undue stress. On the other hand, pressure is often perceived as a forceful demand or obligation to meet specific standards, which can lead to increased stress and anxiety. The supportive nature of parental expectations in this study likely contributed to lower anxiety levels by providing encouragement and confidence, rather than creating a fear of failure.

Several studies have examined the effect of parental expectations on foreign language anxiety. For example, Butnaru and Gherasim (2012) investigated the effect of parents' behaviors on students' test anxiety in their study and found that high levels of parental pressure caused students to experience high levels of test anxiety. Similarly, in the study conducted by Rani and Rawat (2019), the relationship between parental expectations and academic anxiety was investigated, and a positive relationship emerged. As the expectations of students' families increased, there was an increase in the academic anxiety of the students. In addition, Başıy and Büber (2023) examined the effect of parental expectations on test anxiety in secondary school students in their study and concluded that as parental expectations increase, test anxiety in students also increases. Zhang et al. (2023) obtained similar results from their study and concluded that family expectations cause anxiety in students. In another study, Peleg et al. (2015) examined the effect of parental expectations on test anxiety in female college students and obtained similar results, concluding that parental expectations increased the level of anxiety. The study conducted by Zhang et al. (2022) revealed that parental educational expectations had a positive effect on children's cognition but had negative effects on children's depression. Additionally, when parents' educational expectations exceeded their children's educational expectations, it had a negative effect on children's cognition but a positive effect on children's depression. As a result of this study, it was concluded that increasing parental expectations can help improve academic performance and reduce anxiety and depression in children, potentially due to the enhanced academic outcomes.

Parental expectations play a significant role in shaping students' academic experiences and emotional well-being. Contrary to common assumptions about increased

expectations leading to heightened anxiety, the current study has shown that appropriately managed parental expectations can create a positive environment that reduces student anxiety. Zheng et al. (2020) suggest that when students are aware of their parents' expectations, they can be motivated to improve their self-efficacy and strive for success. This awareness fosters a sense of responsibility and drive, contributing positively to their overall well-being. Similarly, Li (2012) found that higher parental expectations are often accompanied by more positive parental behaviors, which can have a direct impact on students' academic achievements and mental health. The supportive environment created by high expectations provides students with the necessary encouragement and resources to navigate challenges and reduce anxiety levels. Conversely, low levels of parental expectations and engagement may inadvertently signal to students that their academic success and life goals are not significant. This lack of interest can lead to decreased motivation, low self-esteem, and feelings of incompetence, as noted by Ndukwu and Ndukwu (2017). Therefore, finding a balance in parental expectations, where they are realistic, supportive, and encouraging, can create an environment where students feel empowered, capable, and less anxious about their academic performance and future prospects. This underscores the importance of parental involvement and positive reinforcement in promoting students' well-being and academic success.

### **5.2.2. What are the leading causes of young adolescent students' anxiety toward the Foreign Language?**

After conducting interviews with 12 anxious students, several subheadings emerged as sources of their anxiety. These include teacher manners, parents' pressure, speaking activities, peer reactions, and fear of receiving low grades in exams.

As a result of interviews with anxious students, it was revealed that most of the students felt very anxious about the activities carried out in the classroom. The most important of these activities were the speaking activities carried out in the classroom. During the interviews, when the students were asked what causes them to feel anxious, most of them answered, *'I feel inadequate during speaking activities,' or 'I do not like to express myself even when I know the answer to the question'.* According to Worde (2003), one of the most important factors causing anxiety is speaking. Similarly, according to Kim (2009) and Magnan (2005), speaking tasks and oral examinations conducted in class are identified as the primary factors leading to student anxiety. Students often experience discomfort during

speaking activities due to several reasons. Firstly, they may not feel confident in their ability to express themselves accurately, stemming from a perception of being at a lower language proficiency level. This feeling is compounded by a lack of sufficient vocabulary knowledge and a fear of mispronunciation. Additionally, many students express anxiety about making mistakes during speaking tasks, which further contributes to their unease. The combination of limited vocabulary, pronunciation concerns, and fear of errors leads to a heightened fear of negative evaluation among students, impacting their overall speaking confidence. This can be supported by Tanveer's (2007) statement stating that one of the most important factors causing speech anxiety is pronunciation and lack of vocabulary. Shortly, using the target language during communication causes significant discomfort among students, highlighting the presence of communication apprehension. Likewise, Shannan et al., (2013) emphasize that communication anxiety plays a crucial role in shaping students' willingness to engage in communication with others. Moreover, Students resorted to various methods to overcome this anxiety they experienced. Similarly, as a result of the semi-structured interviews with anxious students in the current study, it was revealed that most students resort to relaxation activities to get away from anxiety during speaking activities. These activities serve as essential tools for learners, offering them opportunities to unwind, distress, and cultivate a positive mindset toward language acquisition. As noted by anxious students, whether through mindfulness exercises, deep breathing techniques, or guided relaxation sessions, learners can find solace and relief from the pressures associated with language learning. By incorporating such activities into the curriculum, educators not only address the emotional well-being of their students but also create conducive environments that promote effective learning. Through relaxation, learners can approach language acquisition with renewed vigor, confidence, and a sense of calm, ultimately fostering a more enriching and fulfilling language learning journey.

Additionally, following interviews with 12 anxious students, teacher behavior emerged as another factor contributing to their anxiety. Most of the students stated that their anxiety levels increased when a question was asked by the teacher in the classroom. They mentioned feeling uncomfortable with their teachers' reactions toward them as the reason for this. This shows that teachers' attitudes in the classroom have a negative impact on students' language anxiety. Similarly, Subaşı (2010) concluded in his study that teacher behavior plays a significant role in students' experiences, and negative teacher behavior contributes to students' anxiety levels. Toth (2011) conducted a similar study and, at the end

of his 2-year study, concluded that authoritarian and perfectionist teacher behaviors in the classroom triggered the anxiety level of students. The reason why students feel anxious about their teachers is that they are afraid of the response they will receive from their teachers if the students give a wrong answer. For this reason, students are often very afraid of making mistakes. Teachers bear a great responsibility in addressing this issue. Teachers should help students understand that making mistakes is quite normal and that by making mistakes, they can learn more effectively and reduce their anxiety. In this case, it is closely related to the fear of negative evaluation and the fear of making mistakes. Aydın (2008) supported this situation with his study and showed that correcting students' mistakes or receiving negative reactions in response to the teacher's questions are the main reasons that trigger anxiety in students. However, a supportive, guiding, and instructive teacher in the classroom can reduce students' anxiety levels. As a result of their study, Young and Price (1991) concluded that positive teacher behaviors caused a decrease in students' anxiety levels and as a result, they participated in lessons more willingly. Furthermore, in semi-structured interviews, many anxious students stated that they find it easier to overcome anxiety during lessons by communicating and cooperating with their teachers. They expressed that sharing their concerns with teachers helps them feel calmer, and even simple gestures like maintaining eye contact during lessons contribute to reducing their anxiety levels. Moreover, the strong bond formed between teachers and students enables students to express themselves more easily, thereby minimizing their fear of making mistakes within the positive environment created. Teachers play a significant role in alleviating student anxiety by fostering an engaging and supportive classroom atmosphere while also boosting students' enthusiasm for learning English. Educators must assist students in managing negative attitudes and discomfort associated with English learning, aiming to enhance students' self-assurance through positive reinforcement and increased encouragement.

On the other hand, students stated that their anxiety levels increased significantly as a result of peer reactions. They expressed that they were more reluctant and more anxious due to the feedback they would receive from their classmates while answering questions and participating in activities in the classroom. This situation may occur more frequently when students perceive themselves as inferior to their peers in language activities in the classroom. Likewise, in his study, Bailey (1983) stated that students comparing themselves to others during foreign language learning caused them to lack self-confidence. As a result of his study, the feedback he received from anxious students indicated that most of them did not

want to express themselves because they perceived themselves as inferior to their peers and felt uncomfortable in the competitive classroom environment. Moreover, pronunciation errors and lack of knowledge made by students often lead to increased evaluation by their peers, revealing students' fear of negative evaluation. Students who are affected by peer pressure and negative evaluations from their peers often lack self-confidence, leading to reluctance to participate in classroom activities. Also, this hesitancy stems from the fear of being ridiculed by their classmates. As a result, the academic success of students who choose not to participate in classroom activities is automatically negatively affected. Therefore, it is crucial to create a positive environment among students in the classroom. Similarly, in her study, Young (1990) analyzed the situations that caused students to experience anxiety in the classroom. As a result of her study, she concluded that students were quite anxious when they spoke in front of their peers. Horwitz et al. (1980) endorsed this phenomenon, asserting that conversing in a foreign language within the classroom could be unsettling and elevate anxiety levels, especially when students did so in the presence of their peers. Therefore, according to anxious students interviewed, strengthening their communication with peers, and fostering solidarity in the classroom environment will lead to a decrease in their anxiety levels. Furthermore, it is crucial to turn the competition between peers into solidarity in this process. Peer solidarity, often underestimated, holds immense importance in the realm of anxiety reduction. In environments where individuals share common experiences and struggles, the solidarity among peers creates a sense of belonging and understanding. This camaraderie fosters an atmosphere where individuals feel comfortable expressing their concerns and seeking support from those who can empathize with their challenges. Whether it's through shared encouragement, listening ears, or collaborative problem-solving, peers offer invaluable resources for coping with anxiety. Their collective strength not only provides solace but also serves as a reminder that one is not alone in facing difficulties. By fostering a culture of solidarity, communities can significantly contribute to the well-being and resilience of their members, creating spaces where anxiety is met with empathy and understanding.

According to the feedback from a group of 12 anxious students, parental pressure emerged as a significant source of anxiety. These students expressed feeling pressured to excel academically, fearing they may never match up to their parents' achievements. Kean-Davis et al., (2005) corroborated this observation, highlighting the common occurrence of parental expectations inducing anxiety among students. The influence of parental

expectations on students' success cannot be understated. Parents often desire their children to achieve academic excellence and mirror their skills, leading them to exert pressure on their children. However, this pressure can have detrimental effects, triggering feelings of inadequacy and anxiety in students. The pursuit of perfectionism may also manifest in students who harbor feelings of inadequacy, potentially resulting in self-harm, both physically and emotionally. Research by Becker and Luthar (2002) further emphasizes the negative impact of parental pressure on students' mental well-being, with oppressive parenting styles contributing to extreme anxiety and depression among students, especially young adolescents. While parental involvement in guiding their children is essential, moderation is key, particularly in the context of language learning. Similarly, Trinidad (2009) suggests that heightened parental expectations correlate with increased anxiety levels in students, leading to academic challenges and adverse outcomes. Therefore, parents must play a supportive role rather than enforcing strict academic standards. By prioritizing their children's emotional well-being over academic achievements, parents can foster a positive learning environment and alleviate anxiety. Ultimately, nurturing a strong parent-child relationship is paramount. A supportive and nurturing bond between parents and children fosters greater self-confidence in students, thereby reducing anxiety levels and enhancing academic success.

Finally, anxious students often express concerns about receiving low grades in exams, especially when they struggle to comprehend lessons or feel inadequate. This often leads to test anxiety among students. Generally, students dislike exams or quizzes they are evaluated on. Chen et al., (2013) support this notion, stating that students experience anxiety due to the fear of receiving low grades. Additionally, El-Banna (1989) asserts that test anxiety significantly hampers students' learning process. Consequently, this anxiety adversely affects motivation and success, hindering genuine learning and diminishing students' enthusiasm for language acquisition. Moreover, a primary cause of pre-exam anxiety is the attitude of teachers and negative evaluations. When exams are used punitively rather than as assessment tools, students may experience heightened anxiety. Such negative experiences contribute to pre-exam nervousness. Therefore, positive communication between teachers and students, along with feedback provided before and after exams, can alleviate this anxiety.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to analyze the level of anxiety experienced by young adolescents and the reasons for this anxiety using a mixed methods design. For quantitative data, the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al., (1986) and translated into Turkish by Aydın (2001) was utilized. Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher, drawing insights from previous studies on foreign language learning anxiety (Balemir, 2009; Çermik, 2015; Özkan, 2019; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Worde, 2003).

#### 6.1. The Summary of the Results

The current study aims to determine the level of foreign language anxiety in young adolescents and to reveal the reasons that cause this anxiety. The Foreign Language Anxiety Scale was applied to measure the anxiety level that occurs in young adolescents, and as a result, it was found that young adults have moderate levels of anxiety. After determining the anxiety level of the students, semi-structured interviews were held with 12 anxious students to try to clarify the underlying reasons for their anxiety.

When examining the impact of foreign language anxiety across different subcategories, it is observed that general English anxiety, communication apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation occur at a moderate level. Conversely, test anxiety emerges as one of the least influential subcategories. Furthermore, a significant relationship was found between age and the level of foreign language anxiety. Upon examining the categories, it became evident that 11-year-old students experienced high levels of test anxiety and general fear of English. However, there was no significant change observed in communication anxiety. Moreover, when investigating the connection between gender and foreign language anxiety, it became apparent that gender significantly influences anxiety levels. The research revealed that female students experience higher levels of anxiety compared to male students. Notably, there was a significant disparity in communication anxiety between male and female students, with females experiencing more pronounced anxiety in this area. However, there was no substantial difference observed in general English proficiency, test anxiety, and

fear of negative evaluation among genders. Additionally, it was discovered that the learning experience had a notable effect on FLA. As students' learning experience increased, their levels of foreign language anxiety decreased. However, intriguingly, among students with 12-15 years of experience, anxiety levels increased rather than decreased. In terms of subcategories, there was no significant difference observed except for those with 12-15 years of experience, where a notable disparity in anxiety levels emerged. Similarly, as students' academic success increased, there was a significant decrease in foreign language anxiety scores. Hence, with improved academic performance, students typically exhibit lower levels of FLA. An analysis of subcategories revealed a decline in communication anxiety and fear of negative evaluation with higher academic achievement. Likewise, general English proficiency and test anxiety also diminished as academic success increased. Two different types of schools were included in the study, and the findings revealed that students attending public schools exhibited higher levels of foreign language anxiety compared to students in private schools. In the subcategories, except for fear of negative evaluation, no significant difference emerged in other categories. Finally, the study explored the relationship between parental expectations and foreign language anxiety, revealing a surprising finding: as parental expectations increased, there was a significant decrease in the level of foreign language anxiety. Likewise, when the subheadings are examined, a significant decrease was observed in communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and general English scores.

Subsequently, according to the results of the semi-structured interviews conducted with 12 students, 5 topics were revealed that caused the anxiety level of the students. These are speaking activities, teacher manners, parental pressure, and fear of receiving low grades.

Upon analyzing the results, the semi-structured interviews conducted with anxious students unveiled a multifaceted landscape of language anxiety within the classroom environment. Foremost among the identified factors was the apprehension elicited by speaking activities, which emerged as a pervasive source of unease among students. This anxiety often stemmed from a perceived lack of proficiency, leading students to feel ill-equipped to express themselves effectively and fearing potential mistakes or mispronunciations. Indeed, the fear of negative evaluation loomed large, with students expressing concerns about their performance being scrutinized and judged by peers and teachers alike. To address this, incorporating relaxation activities, such as deep breathing

exercises or mindfulness techniques, can help students manage their anxiety and feel more at ease during speaking tasks.

Furthermore, the demeanor and responses of teachers played a pivotal role in exacerbating student anxiety, particularly when met with perceived criticism or disapproval. This underscores the importance of cultivating supportive and nurturing teacher-student relationships, wherein students feel empowered to express themselves without fear of reproach. Collaboration and preparation among teachers can also contribute to creating a conducive learning environment, where educators are equipped to provide constructive feedback and encouragement to students. In addition to teacher interactions, peer dynamics also significantly influenced students' anxiety levels, with the fear of peer evaluation and comparison exacerbating feelings of inadequacy and reluctance to participate. Indeed, the competitive nature of the classroom environment often fostered a sense of apprehension and self-doubt among students, hindering their willingness to engage actively in language activities. Promoting peer solidarity and collaboration through group activities or peer support systems can help alleviate feelings of isolation and foster a sense of belonging among students.

Moreover, parental pressure emerged as a potent source of anxiety, with students feeling pressured to meet lofty academic standards set by their families. This pressure to excel academically often led to feelings of inadequacy and fear of failure, further exacerbating language anxiety. Educating parents about the importance of supporting their children's emotional well-being and fostering a positive attitude toward language learning can help alleviate undue pressure and create a supportive home environment. Furthermore, the prospect of receiving low grades in exams was found to induce significant anxiety among students, with the fear of academic evaluation casting a shadow over their learning experiences. This test anxiety not only hindered students' performance but also detracted from their intrinsic motivation to learn and engage with the material. To address this, educators can implement strategies such as formative assessments, where students receive feedback aimed at improving their learning rather than solely focusing on grades.

Consequently, fostering positive and supportive learning environments that prioritize emotional well-being and celebrate individual progress is paramount. By promoting a culture of empathy, understanding, and collaboration, educators can help alleviate language anxiety

and empower students to navigate their language learning journey with confidence and resilience.

## **6.2. Pedagogical Implications**

Understanding foreign language anxiety among young adolescent students offers invaluable insights that can profoundly influence the practices and approaches of language educators. By thoroughly exploring various contributing factors such as age, gender, learning experiences, academic achievement, and parental expectations, educators can gain a nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics at play within the language learning process. This comprehensive understanding paves the way for the development of tailored instructional strategies aimed at fostering a supportive and conducive learning environment for students.

One pivotal aspect of pedagogical implications involves the cultivation of positive teacher-student relationships. Building rapport, trust, and empathy within the classroom setting can significantly alleviate language anxiety among students. Educators equipped with the knowledge of individual student backgrounds and learning preferences can adopt personalized approaches that cater to diverse needs, thereby fostering a sense of inclusivity and belonging.

Moreover, the creation of collaborative learning environments emerges as a crucial strategy in mitigating language anxiety. Encouraging peer collaboration, group activities, and cooperative learning initiatives not only facilitates language practice but also provides students with opportunities for social interaction and support. Through shared experiences and mutual encouragement, students can develop a sense of camaraderie and collective resilience, effectively diminishing feelings of isolation and apprehension.

In addition to fostering positive interpersonal relationships, educators must also address the role of parental expectations in shaping students' language anxiety levels. Collaborative efforts between educators and parents are essential in fostering a supportive home-school partnership that prioritizes the holistic development of students. Open communication channels, parental involvement in the learning process, and access to

resources aimed at enhancing parental understanding of language learning dynamics can significantly contribute to creating a nurturing and empowering learning environment. Furthermore, integrating stress-reducing techniques and promoting a growth mindset are indispensable components of effective language instruction. By teaching students coping mechanisms, mindfulness practices, and stress management strategies, educators empower students to navigate language learning challenges with resilience and self-assurance. Emphasizing the value of effort, progress, and perseverance over perfectionism fosters a positive learning ethos where mistakes are embraced as opportunities for growth and learning.

In conclusion, the pedagogical implications derived from the study of foreign language anxiety underscore the importance of adopting a holistic and student-centered approach to language education. By recognizing the multifaceted nature of language anxiety and its underlying determinants, educators can implement targeted strategies that foster emotional well-being, promote linguistic growth, and ultimately empower students to realize their full potential in language acquisition and proficiency.

### **6.3. Suggestions for further studies**

The current study was conducted in 2 different schools in Ankara with 416 students. For this reason, it is not possible to generalize the study to a broader population. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, future research should aim to replicate the study in various regions and with larger sample sizes. Additionally, in addition to the interviews with 12 anxious students, incorporating diaries and classroom observations could provide further insights into the experiences and triggers of anxiety among students. The analysis focused on understanding the underlying reasons for anxiety among the participants. Moreover, involving teachers in the study would allow for a comprehensive exploration of their perspectives and insights into potential solutions to address student anxiety. Finally, extending the duration of student observations would enable researchers to capture more nuanced and comprehensive data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the dynamics of anxiety in educational settings.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire

#### YABANCI DİL KAYGI ÖLÇEĞİ

Değerli öğrenciler, bu anket İngilizce Dil Öğrenimi sürecindeki kaygı seviyeniz hakkında bilgi toplamak amacıyla hazırlanmıştır. Aşağıdaki soruları dürüst ve samimi olarak cevaplamanız çalışmanın güvenilirliği açısından önem taşımaktadır. Bu anketteki maddeler için doğru ya da yanlış cevap yoktur. Her bir ifadeyi okuduktan sonra, lütfen size en çok hitap eden ifadeyi işaretleyiniz. Vereceğiniz cevaplar bilimsel bir araştırmaya ışık tutacağından boş bırakmamanızı önemle rica ederiz. Katkınız için teşekkürler.

**AD-SOYAD:**

YAŞ: .....

CİNSİYET: ☐ Kız ☐ Erkek

SINIF: ☐ 5.sınıf ☐ 6. sınıf ☐ 7.sınıf ☐ 8.sınıf

KAÇ YILDIR İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENIYORSUN: ☐ 1-3 yıl  
☐ 4-7 yıl  
☐ 8-11 yıl  
☐ 12-15 yıl

DERS BAŞARINIZ NEDİR? : ☐ (100-85)  
☐ (84-70)  
☐ (69-60)  
☐ (59-50)  
☐ (49-0)

AİLENİN İNİLİZCE ÖĞRENME BEKLENTİSİ: ☐ Yüksek ☐ Orta ☐ Düşük

|                                                                                                     | Hiçbir zaman | Nadiren | Bazen | Sıklıkla | Her zaman |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------|-------|----------|-----------|
| 1. İngilizce derslerinde konuşurken kendimden emin olamıyorum.                                      |              |         |       |          |           |
| 2. İngilizce derslerinde hata yapmaktan korkuyorum.                                                 |              |         |       |          |           |
| 3. İngilizce derslerinde sıranın bana geldiğini bildiğim zaman heyecandan ölüyorum.                 |              |         |       |          |           |
| 4. İngilizce derslerinde öğretmenin ne söylediğini anlamamak beni korkutuyor.                       |              |         |       |          |           |
| 5. Haftada daha fazla İngilizce ders saatimin olmasını isterdim.                                    |              |         |       |          |           |
| 6. İngilizce dersi sırasında kendimi dersle hiç de ilgisi olmayan başka şeyleri düşünürken bulurum. |              |         |       |          |           |
| 7. Diğer öğrencilerin İngilizce derslerinde benden daha iyi olduklarını düşünüyorum.                |              |         |       |          |           |
| 8. İngilizce derslerinin sınavlarında kendimi endişeli hissediyorum.                                |              |         |       |          |           |
| 9. İngilizce derslerinde hazırlıksız konuşmak zorunda kaldığımda paniğe kapılıyorum.                |              |         |       |          |           |
| 10. İngilizce derslerinde başarısız olmak beni endişelendiriyor.                                    |              |         |       |          |           |
| 11. Yabancı dil dersleri konusunda bazılarının niye endişe duyduklarını anlayabiliyorum.            |              |         |       |          |           |
| 12. İngilizce derslerinde bazen öyle heyecanlanıyorum ki, bildiğim şeyleri bile unutuyorum.         |              |         |       |          |           |
| 13. İngilizce derslerinde sorulan sorulara gönüllü olarak cevap vermekten sıkılıyorum.              |              |         |       |          |           |

|                                                                                              |  |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 14. İngilizceyi, ana dili İngilizce olan insanlarla konuşmak beni heyecanlandırıyor.         |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15. Öğretmenin hangi hataları düzelttiğini anlamamak beni endişelendiriyor.                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 16. İngilizce derslerinde, önceden çok iyi hazırlanmış olsam bile derste heyecanlanıyorum.   |  |  |  |  |  |
| 17. İngilizce derslerine girmek istemiyorum.                                                 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 18. İngilizce derslerinde konuştuğum zaman kendime güvenmiyorum.                             |  |  |  |  |  |
| 19. İngilizce öğretmenim yaptığım her hatayı düzeltmeye çalışıyor.                           |  |  |  |  |  |
| 20. İngilizce dersinde sıra bana geldiği zaman kalbimin hızlı hızlı attığını hissediyorum.   |  |  |  |  |  |
| 21. İngilizce sınavlarına ne kadar çok çalışırsam kafam o kadar çok karışıyor.               |  |  |  |  |  |
| 22. Kendimi İngilizce çok iyi hazırlanıp gitmek zorunda hissediyorum.                        |  |  |  |  |  |
| 23. Her zaman diğer öğrencilerin benden daha iyi İngilizce konuştuğunu düşünüyorum.          |  |  |  |  |  |
| 24. Diğer öğrencilerin önünde İngilizce konuşurken kendimi çok tedirgin hissediyorum.        |  |  |  |  |  |
| 25. İngilizce dersleri o kadar hızlı akıp gidiyor ki, sınıfa ayak uyduramamaktan korkuyorum. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 26. İngilizce derslerinde konuştuğum zaman hem sıkılıyor hem de kafam karışıyor.             |  |  |  |  |  |
| 27. İngilizce dersinde konuştuğum zaman heyecanlanırım ve aklım karışır.                     |  |  |  |  |  |
| 28. İngilizce derslerine girerken kendimi çok rahatsız ve güvensiz hissediyorum.             |  |  |  |  |  |

|                                                                                                                      | Hiçbir zaman | Nadiren | Bazen | Sıklıkla | Her zaman |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------|-------|----------|-----------|
| 29. İngilizce öğretmenimin söylediği her kelimeyi anlayamadığım zaman paniğe kapılıyorum.                            |              |         |       |          |           |
| 30. İngilizce konuşabilmek için öğrenmek zorunda olduğum kuralların sayısının çok fazla olması beni kaygılandırıyor. |              |         |       |          |           |
| 31. İngilizce konuştuğum zaman diğer öğrencilerin bana güleceğinden endişe duyuyorum.                                |              |         |       |          |           |
| 32. İngilizceyi, ana dili İngilizce olan insanların yanında kullanırken rahatsız oluyorum.                           |              |         |       |          |           |
| 33. İngilizce öğretmenimin cevabını önceden hazırlamadığım sorular sorduğunda heyecanlanıyorum.                      |              |         |       |          |           |

## **APPENDIX 2: Semi-Structured Interview Questions in Turkish**

1.İngilizce dersleri hakkında nasıl hissediyorsunuz?

- a. İngilizce derslerinde neleri seversiniz?
- b. İngilizce derslerinde neleri sevmezsiniz?

2.İngilizce derslerinde hiç kaygı hissettiniz mi?

- a. Hangi durumlar sizi kaygılı veya stresli hissettiriyor?

3.Kaygı hissettiğiniz zamanlarla nasıl başa çıkıyorsunuz?

4.Kaygı İngilizce öğrenmenizi engelliyor mu? Açıklayabilir misiniz?

5.İngilizce derslerinde hangi durumlarda mutlu ve rahat hissedersiniz?

### **APPENDIX 3: Semi-structured Interview Questions in English**

1)How do you feel about English lessons?

- a. What things do you like in English lessons?
- b. What things don't you like in English lessons?

2)Do you ever feel anxious during English lessons?

- a. Which situations cause you to feel anxious or stressed?

3)How do you cope with the times you feel anxious?

4)Does anxiety prevent you from learning English? Can you explain how?

5)In which situations do you feel happy and relaxed in English lessons?

## APPENDIX 4: Permission Letters



Dilşat Atan <di...

Alıcı: belgin.aydin ▾

2 Mar 2023 13:51



Belgin Hocam merhabalar,

Başkent Üniversitesi İngiliz Dil öğretimi bölümünde yüksek lisans öğrencisiyim ve kaygı üzerine bir çalışma yürütüyorum. Öğrencinize ulaştım ve ölçeği sizin Türkiye'ye uyarladığınızı öğrendim. Türkiye'ye uyarlamış olduğunuz ölçeği tezimde kullanmak istiyorum. Tezimde kullanırken size atıfta bulunmamda bir sakınca var mı? Bana yardımcı olursanız çok sevinirim. İyi günler dilerim



Belgin Aydın <be...

Alıcı: ben, Belgin ▾

2 Mar 2023 14:44



Tabi ki

referans gösterdiğin sürece kullanabilirsin Dilşat

Kolay gelsin

Belgin

Gönderen: Dilşat Atan <di...

Gönderildi: 1 Mart 2023 Çarşamba 22:51:05

Kime: Belgin Aydın



1993  
**BAŞKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ**  
**Akademik Değerlendirme Koordinatörlüğü**

Sayı :E-62310886-605.99-200142

Konu :Etik Kurul İzni (Dilşat Atan)

24.01.20

EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

İlgi : 29.12.2022 tarih ve 191793 sayılı yazınız.

Enstitünüz İngiliz Dili Öğretimi Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Dilşat Atan'ın, Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Ahmet Remzi Uluşan danışmanlığında yürütmeyi planladığı "Genç, Ergen Öğrencilerin Kaygı Düzeyinin ve Nedenlerinin İncelenmesi" adlı tez önerisi değerlendirilmiş ve bilgilerinize ekte sunulmuştur.

Prof. Dr. M. Abdülkadir VAROĞLU  
Kurul Başkanı Ek: Değerlendirme Formu

Sayı : 17162298.600-15  
Konu : Tez Önerisi

12 OCAK 2023

İlgili Makama

Üniversitemiz Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili Öğretimi Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Dilşat Atan'ın, Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Ahmet Remzi Uluşan danışmanlığında yürütmeyi planladığı "Genç, Ergen Öğrencilerin Kaygı Düzeyinin ve Nedenlerinin İncelenmesi" adlı tez önerisi değerlendirilmiş ve yapılmasında bir sakınca olmadığı tespit edilmiştir.  
Bilgilerinize saygılarımızla sunarız.

Başkent Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler ve Sanat Araştırma Kurulu

| Ad, Soyad                       | Değerlendirme              | İmza |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|------|
| Prof. Dr. M. Abdülkadir Varoğlu | Olumlu/ <del>Olumsuz</del> |      |
| Prof. Dr. Kudret Güven          | Olumlu/Olumsuz             |      |
| Prof. Ali Sevgi                 | Olumlu/Olumsuz             |      |
| Prof. Dr. Işıl Bulut            | Olumlu/Olumsuz             |      |
| Prof. Dr. Sadegül Akbaba Altun  | Olumlu/ <del>Olumsuz</del> |      |
| Prof. Dr. Can Mehmet Hersek     | Olumlu/ <del>Olumsuz</del> |      |
| Prof. Dr. Özcan Yağcı           | Olumlu/ <del>Olumsuz</del> |      |

Prof. Dr. Sadegül Akbaba Altun, Üniversitemiz Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili Öğretimi Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Dilşat Atan'ın, Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Ahmet Remzi Uluşan danışmanlığında yürütmeyi planladığı "Genç Ergen Öğrencilerin Kaygı Düzeyinin ve Nedenlerinin İncelenmesi" adlı tezin yapılabileceği görüşündeler. Araştırmanın içeriğine bakıldığında araştırmanın, "Genç Ergenlerde Yabancı Dil Öğrenme Kaygısı ve Nedenleri" ile ilgili olduğunun görüldüğünü, bu bağlamda başlığın yanıltıcı olabileceğini; ayrıca, araştırmacının kullanılacak ölçek ve çocukların ailelerinden araştırma için izin alması gerektiğini belirtmişlerdir.

Prof. Dr. Özcan Yağcı, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili Öğretimi Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Dilşat Atan'ın, Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Ahmet Remzi Uluşan danışmanlığında yürütmeyi planladığı "Genç, Ergen Öğrencilerin Kaygı Düzeyinin ve Nedenlerinin İncelenmesi" adlı tez önerisinin uygun olduğu düşüncelerini iletmişlerdir.