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**FROM SHYNESS TO FLUENCY: THE CORRELATION
BETWEEN ENGLISH EXPOSURE AND THE FOREIGN
LANGUAGE PRONUNCIATION ANXIETY LEVELS OF TURKISH
STUDENTS**

MASTER'S DEGREE THESIS

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ETHICAL AGREEMENT

I declare that my Master's thesis titled 'From Shyness to Fluency: The Relationship Between Turkish Students' English Exposure and Their Levels of Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety,' prepared under the supervision of Assit.Prof.Dr. Serpil Azap at Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University Graduate Education Institute, is an original work that complies with scientific ethical values and guidelines. I also acknowledge that I will accept any legal consequences if it is found otherwise.

.../.../...

Rabia ALKAN Signature

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mom and my dad for giving me every opportunity they did not have...

To Hayriye and Erol Alkan



ÖZET

UTANGAÇLIKTAN AKICILIĞA: TÜRK ÖĞRENCİLERİN İNGİLİZCEYE MARUZ KALMA SEVİYELERİ İLE YABANCI DİL TELAFFUZ KAYGISI SEVİYELERİ ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ

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Bu tez çalışmasının amacı öğrencilerin İngilizceye maruz kalma seviyeleri ile telaffuz kaygısı arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektir. Aynı zamanda kaygı ve maruz kalma seviyeleri cinsiyet, okul seviyesi, İngilizce dersine başlama yaşı, haftalık ders saati ve özel İngilizce dersi alıp almama durumları arasındaki ilişkilere de bakılmıştır. Çalışmada sınavla öğrenci alan iki farklı devlet okulundan toplam 468 öğrenciden veri toplanmış ve toplanan veriler analiz için SPSS programına işlenmiştir. Bu çalışma ilişkisel tarama modelinde tasarlanmış ve iki farklı ölçek veri toplama aracı olarak kullanılmıştır. Birincisi Gökcan ve Çobanoğlu Aktan'ın (2019) geliştirdiği, 22 maddeden oluşan İngilizceye Maruz Kalma Ölçeği, ikincisi de Baran-Lucarz (2016) tarafından geliştirilen ve Yağız (2018) tarafından Türk diline uyarlanan 25 maddeli Telaffuz Kaygısı Ölçeğidir. Verilerin analizinde araştırma sonuçlarını yanıtlamak için çeşitli istatistiksel analizlerden yararlanılmıştır. Betimleyici istatistikler için minimum, maksimum, ortalama, standart sapma, sıklık ve yüzdelikler SPSS aracılığıyla hesaplanmıştır. Sürekli değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiyi tahmin etmek için Pearson Korelasyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Farklı gruplardan katılımcıların ortalama değerlerini karşılaştırmak için bağımsız grup t testi

kullanılmıştır. Son olarak İngilizceye maruz kalmanın telaffuz kaygısı üzerindeki öngören rolünü belirlemek için yapısal eşitlik modellemesinden yararlanılmıştır.

Yapılan tüm bu analizlerin sonuçlarına göre; İngilizceye maruz kalmanın telaffuz kaygısı üzerinde istatistiksel olarak anlamlı, direkt ve olumsuz bir etkisi vardır. Telaffuz kaygısı kız öğrencilerde erkek öğrencilere oranla ve ortaokul öğrencilerinde lise öğrencilerine oranla istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir oranda daha yüksektir. İngilizce dersi almaya başlama yaşının ve özel İngilizce dersi almanın telaffuz kaygısı üzerinde herhangi bir etkisi yoktur. İngilizce öğrenmeye okul öncesinde başlayan öğrenciler ve özel İngilizce dersi alan öğrenciler daha yüksek maruz kalma seviyelerine sahiptir. Ancak, cinsiyet ve okul kademesinin maruz kalma üzerinde istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir etkisinin bulunmadığı anlaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Telaffuz Kaygısı, Dile Maruz Kalma, Yabancı Dil Kaygısı, İletişim Kurma İsteği, Kaygı ve Performans

ABSTRACT

FROM SHYNESS TO FLUENCY: THE CORRELATION BETWEEN ENGLISH EXPOSURE AND THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE PRONUNCIATION ANXIETY LEVELS OF TURKISH STUDENTS

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The aim of this thesis was to investigate the relationship between students' levels of exposure to English and their pronunciation anxiety. Additionally, it examined the associations between anxiety and exposure levels and variables such as gender, school level, age at which students began learning English, weekly English hours, and whether they received private English lessons. Data were collected from 468 students enrolled in two selective public schools and analysed using the SPSS program. The study was designed within a correlational research model, utilizing two distinct scales as data collection instruments. The first was the English Language Exposure Scale, developed by Gökcan and Çobanoğlu Aktan (2019), comprising 22 items. The second was the Pronunciation Anxiety Scale, developed by Baran-Lucarz (2016) and adapted into Turkish by Yağız (2018), consisting of 25 items. A range of statistical analyses were conducted in order to examine the research questions. Descriptive statistics, which included values such as minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentages, were calculated using SPSS. Pearson correlation analysis was employed to estimate relationships between continuous variables. Independent sample t-tests were used to compare mean values across different groups. Finally, structural equation

modelling (SEM) was utilized to determine the predictive role of English exposure on pronunciation anxiety.

The findings revealed a statistically significant, direct, and negative effect of English exposure on pronunciation anxiety. Pronunciation anxiety was significantly higher among female students compared to males and among middle school students compared to high school students. No significant effect of the age at which students started learning English or receiving private English courses on pronunciation anxiety was found. Students who began learning English during preschool and those who received private English lessons exhibited higher exposure levels. However, gender and school level were not found to have a statistically significant effect on exposure levels.

Key Words: Pronunciation Anxiety, Language Exposure, Foreign Language Anxiety, Willingness to Communicate, Anxiety and Performance

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This section gives information about the research problem, purpose, and significance of the study. Assumptions, definitions, and abbreviations that are used in the study are also included in this section.

Research Problem

Starting from the 2023-2024 academic year, the Ministry of National Education released a directive about how to evaluate and give grades to students in Turkish and Foreign Language classes. According to the new directive, a three-part evaluation system that includes a written exam consisting of reading and writing parts, a listening exam, and a speaking exam was to be used as a measurement tool (MoNE, 2023). This new system was to be implemented starting from the first exam cycle of the term, which was a big surprise for middle school students who had only been completing a written exam and getting their grades since they started middle school. It was especially a big surprise for 5th graders who were just about to start having written exams since they did not have any in primary school.

Immediately after teachers explained the new exam system, there were loud voices coming from the students saying things like “Teacher, what are we going to talk about?”, “Can I not speak, please?”, “Can you give us a speaking text that we can memorize?” “Can I do it later when everyone is out?”. As it can be understood from their sentences, having to perform orally in an official exam environment in the language they are learning was not something they wanted to participate in. There might be many reasons for that including but not limited to being afraid of getting ridiculed by their friends, not feeling ready or prepared enough, and being afraid of making mistakes. As teachers, this is something most have the chance to observe first-hand. And this new exam system brings pronunciation anxiety back to the table, or for some, it brings it forward for the first time.

It is not just students who have a hard time or some negative feelings about speaking in English. It is almost certain that you have heard the sentence “I can

understand you, but I cannot speak” in your circle or on social media. There are multiple applications right now to help people with their speaking skills by providing opportunities for them to communicate with English speakers, such as Cambly and Open English (Cambly, 2024; Open English, 2024) and also applications where you can study on your own, like Duolingo (Duolingo, 2024). Through games, series, social media, music, and more, there are countless opportunities for learners to take part in language consumption and production.

Being able to communicate in English and having an adequate proficiency level is getting more and more important every day as people become not only citizens of certain countries but also citizens of the world with increasing rates of migration and immigration. Several affective factors have been noted as potentially influencing individuals' experiences of learning or acquiring a new language. These include confidence, self-sufficiency, readiness for communication, mental block, anxiety, risk-taking, compassion, motivation, and outspokenness (Brown, 2006). The relationship between students' exposure to English and the level of pronunciation anxiety they have is investigated in the current study.

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the connection between the extent of students' exposure to the English language and their levels of pronunciation anxiety. This research focused on examining how exposure to English, not just in the classroom but also out of it, contributes to students' pronunciation anxiety levels, as it can hinder language learners' progress and self-esteem, potentially affecting their academic prospects.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between students' exposure to English and their pronunciation anxiety levels. To achieve this purpose, the research questions below were addressed:

1. Is there a statistically significant correlation between students' exposure to English scores and their English course scores, age, weekly English course hours, and total years of attending English courses?
2. Is there a statistically significant correlation between students' pronunciation anxiety scores and their English course scores, age, weekly English course hours, and total years of attending English courses?
3. Do students' exposure to English scores significantly differ by their gender, school stage, first English course period, and the status of private English courses?
4. Do students' pronunciation anxiety scores differ by their gender, school stage, first English course period, and the status of private English courses?
5. Do students' exposure to English scores significantly predict their pronunciation anxiety scores?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for the reasons listed below:

- It will be helpful in understanding pronunciation anxiety and its underlying factors, therefore providing insights for language educators and curriculum developers to create more effective language programs.
- The findings may provide educators and learners with some answers on how to develop strategies to eliminate pronunciation anxiety, hence enhancing the language learning experiences of the learners.
- Getting an in-depth comprehension of the role of language exposure in pronunciation anxiety can supply broader implications for language policy and planning in educational institutions.
- This study will offer new insights into the existing literature about language anxiety, giving way for further research in related fields.

The most valuable point in this study is that when the literature is revised, there are several studies about pronunciation anxiety and its effects on language learning just as there are several studies about the impact of exposure on language learning separately,

however there are very limited studies on the relationship between the two especially in the context of Türkiye and with middle school and high school students.

Assumptions

This study operated under several key assumptions essential for accurate interpretation of the findings:

It was assumed that all participants willingly participated in the study and provided genuine, reliable responses to the questionnaires. Learners were informed that participation was voluntary and confidential, encouraging honest disclosure. This assumption was critical because the validity of the study's conclusions depended on the authenticity and accuracy of the data collected.

It was assumed that participants fully comprehended all questionnaire items and instructions. The questionnaires were applied in Turkish to ensure clarity for learners. This assumption ensures that responses accurately reflect participants' perceptions and experiences regarding pronunciation anxiety and exposure.

The study assumed that external factors such as access to English language resources, socio-economic status, and educational environments were relatively consistent across participants. This allowed the research to attribute variations in pronunciation anxiety and exposure primarily to the variables under investigation rather than to uncontrolled external influences.

It was assumed that there was a significant relationship between exposure to English and pronunciation anxiety. Increased exposure was hypothesized to reduce pronunciation anxiety. This assumption was grounded in established theoretical frameworks and was fundamental to the study's research questions.

Definitions

Pronunciation anxiety: As Baran-Lucarz explained below, pronunciation anxiety is a type of worry that foreign language students face in or out of the school setting, stemming

from learners' perceptions of themselves, which are most probably negative. These feelings of worry and uneasiness arise from their beliefs and concerns regarding their pronunciation abilities and their negative or low self-evaluation of their pronunciation skills (Baran-Łucarz, 2014, p38). Foreign language learners may experience pronunciation anxiety, a type of apprehension occurring in the classroom or natural settings. This anxiety arises from negative perceptions of their pronunciation abilities, fear of being judged, and assumptions about the importance, complexity, or auditory aspects of the language's pronunciation. Common symptoms include cognitive, physical, and behavioural indications of stress.

Language Exposure: Language exposure refers to the opportunities individuals have to encounter and engage with a language in their daily lives. Exposure can occur in various contexts, including formal education, informal social interactions, media consumption, and immersive experiences. Exposure can be passive (e.g., listening to native speakers) or active (e.g., engaging in conversations). The quantity and quality of exposure have been found to influence language learning outcomes (Krashen, 1982).

Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

FL: Foreign Language

FLA: Foreign Language Anxiety

FLCAS: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

GPA: Grade Points Average

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

LGS: Liselere Geçiş Sınavı (High School Entrance Exam)

MPA-FLC: Measure of Pronunciation Anxiety in Foreign Language Classroom

PA: Pronunciation Anxiety

PM: Pronunciation Motivation

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

SLR: Systematic Language Review

TL: Target Language

WTC: Willingness to Communicate

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to explore the relationship between language exposure and pronunciation anxiety, examining how these factors affect language learning outcomes. The key concepts of foreign language anxiety (FLA) and pronunciation anxiety (PA) will be defined and discussed in relation to existing research, followed by an examination of the role of exposure to English. The review will be concluded by identifying gaps in the literature and outlining how the current study intends to address them.

Foreign Language Anxiety

“I cannot learn English; I can understand you but I cannot speak. No matter what, I never get good grades in English classes.” Many learners express frustration with their inability to speak English fluently despite understanding it well and participating in language classes. Such experiences highlight the challenges associated with foreign language learning and the individual differences that influence proficiency. They also tend to talk about their learning experiences in the presence of a teacher. The problems they had in their courses or homework or how they had a positive or negative thing happen while they were learning English. The negative experiences tend to be about how they said a word wrong and their friends made fun of them. Then, there is the fact that students with equal opportunities and equal tasks in the same class do not achieve the same level of learning. The reason might be individual differences (e.g., attitudes, motivations). In examining the literature on language learning and acquisition, it becomes evident that a multitude of factors influence the learning process. Influencing factors include cognitive abilities, such as aptitude and learning strategies; affective components, including attitudes, motivation, and anxiety; metacognitive skills, which involve self-regulation and awareness of learning processes; and demographic characteristics.

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis posits that emotional variables such as anxiety can impede language acquisition by raising the "affective filter," which blocks

comprehensible input from being processed effectively (Krashen, 1982). Increased exposure to English is hypothesized to lower pronunciation anxiety by enhancing language proficiency and self-confidence, thereby lowering the affective filter and facilitating better acquisition of pronunciation skills.

Additionally, MacIntyre's Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Model underscores the importance of psychological readiness to engage in communication in a second language (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Pronunciation anxiety negatively affects WTC by diminishing self-confidence and increasing fear of negative evaluation. By increasing exposure to English, learners can improve their pronunciation proficiency and build communicative competence, which enhances self-confidence and reduces anxiety. This, in turn, promotes a greater willingness to communicate. Following the theoretical perspectives of Krashen and MacIntyre, it is evident that exposure helps reduce pronunciation anxiety, which in turn aids language acquisition.

In this study, one of the main factors examined was foreign language anxiety. The construct of foreign language anxiety has been a topic of research since the 1970s. One of the earliest studies was done by Gardner, Clément, Smythe, and Glikman in 1976. It pointed out that French classroom anxiety predicted speaking skills, and it was meaningful that anxiety was negatively related to a measure of oral production. Also, classroom anxiety played a more dominant role as the level of grades increased; therefore, anxiety played a more important role as students began to achieve a better grasp of the language. Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is characterized as a unique and intricate set of self-perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors. This anxiety emerges from the distinctive challenges associated with acquiring a new language in a classroom environment (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986). Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) published a 33-item scale to measure the anxiety levels of learners. On the scale, there are several items related to speaking in a foreign language, such as "Speaking in my language class makes me feel both nervous and confused" and "I worry that my classmates will laugh at me when I speak in the foreign language" which probably led to more in-depth studies about pronunciation anxiety and speaking anxiety.

In the book that employed a comprehensive literature review approach, summarizing research findings on foreign language anxiety (FLA) from the 1970s to 2016, Kráľová examined various factors contributing to FLA, including cognitive, affective, metacognitive, and demographic factors (Kráľová, 2016). The study also explored the subtypes of FLA, such as skills-based and systems-based anxieties, and investigated coping strategies for managing FLA. Kráľová described foreign language anxiety (FLA) as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that arises from various dimensions, including self-perceptions, emotional states, beliefs, and behaviors associated with the process of learning a new language. Key triggers included fear of communication, stress related to examinations, and apprehension about negative evaluations. FLA negatively affects the cognitive processes integral to learning a language, including processing, retaining, and recalling information. It could result in divided attention, memory lapses, and avoidance behaviours. Pronunciation anxiety was identified as a significant subtype of FLA, closely related to learners' willingness to communicate. Pronunciation anxiety was influenced by psychological inhibitions and self-confidence. Effective strategies for reducing FLA included systematic desensitization, cognitive modification, skills training, and creating a supportive classroom environment. Specific techniques such as cooperative learning, role-playing, and the use of virtual environments have been found to alleviate FLA. The book highlighted the importance of understanding the multifactorial nature of FLA and the need for tailored strategies to help learners manage anxiety. It emphasized the role of teachers in creating a supportive learning environment and the potential of positive psychology interventions to enhance language learning experiences. However, the emphasis on teacher-led interventions and classroom-based strategies may not fully address the impact of language exposure outside the classroom. With the increasing availability of authentic language input through media and the internet, learners now engage with languages in more diverse contexts.

A study on foreign language anxiety was conducted at Taif University with 373 English major students by Alsowat (2016). This research incorporated an adapted version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, along with the Inventory of Foreign Language Anxiety Factors, academic records, and semi-structured interviews conducted

with 30 participants who exhibited high levels of anxiety. The study found that Saudi English major students exhibited a moderate level of anxiety. The primary sources of anxiety were identified as concerns regarding the potential consequences of failing, difficulties in recalling previously acquired knowledge, and feelings of unease during language examinations. The study identified three significant sources of classroom anxiety: the teacher's personality and behaviour, teaching style, and pedagogical practices. A strong negative relationship was found between language anxiety and language proficiency across grammar, speaking, writing, reading, and overall GPA. The strong negative correlation between language anxiety and proficiency across all language skills and overall GPA underscored the detrimental effect of FLA on academic performance. The analysis showed that gender and academic level had no impact on anxiety levels, suggesting that students at all academic levels experience similar anxiety. This contrasted with studies suggesting demographic variables impact anxiety levels, indicating a need for further research.

Research consistently shows that FLA negatively affects language learning outcomes, particularly speaking proficiency and willingness to communicate. Key factors contributing to FLA include cognitive and affective components like self-confidence and motivation, metacognitive skills such as self-regulation, and various demographic characteristics. Common triggers are fear of failure, difficulties in recalling previously learned material, and anxiety during examinations. To mitigate FLA, effective strategies involve creating supportive and understanding classroom environments, employing teaching methods that reduce anxiety, and fostering positive attitudes toward language learning. By addressing these factors, educators can help learners overcome anxiety, enhance their communicative competence, and improve overall language proficiency.

Pronunciation Anxiety

Baran-Łucarz (2017) defined pronunciation anxiety as a complex concept that describes the feelings of nervousness and concern non-native speakers experience during oral communication, stemming from their negative self-perception, beliefs, and fears specifically related to their pronunciation abilities. There are four subcomponents of pronunciation anxiety (Baran-Łucarz and Lee, 2021).

(1) Fear of negative judgement from others, such as classmates, teachers, or conversation partners, specifically due to pronunciation issues.

(2) Self-confidence and self-evaluation regarding one's pronunciation abilities, often influenced by comparisons with peers or conversation partners.

(3) Perception of self-image while speaking the target language, including how learners sound and appear and their willingness to embrace this image.

(4) Beliefs about pronunciation, such as how challenging the target language's phonological system is for speakers, the significance of pronunciation in effective communication, and attitudes toward the overall sound of the target language's pronunciation.

In the following section, studies on pronunciation anxiety and its relationship with different learning outcomes and its effects on learners were summarised and discussed in relation to the current study.

Baran-Łucarz (2014) was one of the first researchers to examine pronunciation anxiety (PA) as an independent phenomenon. The study focused on the relationship between PA and willingness to communicate (WTC) in foreign language learning. It involved 151 Polish learners of English at the University of Wrocław, Poland, with proficiency levels ranging from A2 to B2. The participants completed two principal instruments: The Measure of Willingness to Communicate in the Foreign Language Classroom (MWTC-FLC) and the Measure of Pronunciation Anxiety in the Foreign Language Classroom (MPA-FLC). Both were self-report questionnaires written in the participants' first language and completed anonymously during regular English classes. The reliance on self-reported measures can introduce bias, as students may underreport or over-report anxiety; the study still provided valuable insights into the inverse relationship between PA and WTC. The results revealed a moderate inverse relationship between pronunciation anxiety and willingness to communicate, meaning that increased anxiety levels corresponded with reduced willingness to communicate. This relationship was significant in tasks performed with acquaintances and friends but not with unknown

students. This means participants were more anxious about speaking in front of or with their friends, colleagues, and people who knew them than they were communicating with strangers. Therefore, it could be concluded that it can be useful to provide opportunities for language learners to use it with unknown people, e.g., students from a class lower or higher than them. The correlation was stronger in larger groups and specific types of tasks, such as discussions and presentations. The relationship between PA and WTC was significant across all proficiency levels, with the strongest correlation at the intermediate level (B1).

In another study involving willingness to communicate, Baran-Lucarz and Lee (2021) sought to identify the significant determinants of pronunciation anxiety (PA) among EFL learners. The study explored how several external and internal factors might impact PA. These factors included learning from native-speaking teachers, study abroad experiences, enjoyment of the foreign language (FLE), and willingness to communicate (WTC) in it. Participants were selected from two universities in Seoul, South Korea, and grouped based on their field of study and self-perceived English ability into two categories: The English Education (EE) Group and the Tourism English (TE) Group. A questionnaire was administered to measure PA and its potential correlates. The results demonstrated that willingness to communicate in English was the most significant predictor of PA for both groups. The second meaningful correlate was the enjoyment of learning a foreign language, which was observed only in the group with lower self-assessed proficiency (TE Group). Study abroad experience was a significant determinant of PA only for the EE Group in simple regressions. Learning experiences with native-speaking teachers were not found to be significant determinants of PA. The study concluded that L2 WTC is the most significant determinant of PA in the FL classroom, regardless of the learners' self-perceived proficiency level. The findings suggested that creating an enjoyable learning environment and encouraging willingness to communicate can help reduce pronunciation anxiety.

These findings suggested that pronunciation anxiety significantly impacts students' willingness to participate in communicative tasks in foreign language classrooms, particularly in larger groups and with familiar interlocutors. The studies

highlighted the importance of addressing pronunciation anxiety to improve students' communicative competence in a foreign language. Both Baran-Łucarz (2014) and Baran-Łucarz and Lee (2021) highlighted the significant impact of PA on WTC. However, while the former found this effect more pronounced in familiar settings, the latter emphasized the role of enjoyment in learning, suggesting that affective factors play a critical role across different contexts.

As they saw pronunciation anxiety affecting students' performance, researchers also wanted to see whether pronunciation anxiety was correlated with learners' different characteristics, such as gender, age, year of study, and proficiency levels. The following study is an example of that.

In a study, Erdel (2023) tried to find out the answers to two questions; “What are the pronunciation anxiety levels of English major students?” and “Does pronunciation anxiety (PA) of English major students differ across different groups of gender, age, year of study, perceived English proficiency, and prior L2 learning experience?” She employed a descriptive case study design using a questionnaire survey. Undergraduate students majoring in English Language and Literature at a public university in Türkiye during the 2022-2023 academic year participated in the study. The research instrument consisted of the Measure of Pronunciation Anxiety in Foreign Language Classroom (MPA-FLC) and a portion designed to collect demographic and personal information. The data were analysed using statistical tests in SPSS. After the analysis, it was found that the overall PA of the students was mild to moderate. Beliefs about the importance of pronunciation as a key communication skill were identified as the strongest factor influencing PA. The findings showed that gender, perceived English ability, and past language learning experiences significantly affected PA levels. Higher PA was observed in female students, those who rated their English proficiency lower, and individuals who had received intensive English instruction in high school. This might be about the participants thinking they knew more since they had a more intensive education, so they should not make as many mistakes, or they should sound native-like while speaking. It can also be related to strict teacher behaviour about their mistakes while learning. Age and year of study did not significantly affect PA levels. As it can be inferred, exposure

and pronunciation anxiety are related. The finding that female students had higher pronunciation anxiety is consistent with the findings in the current study. Similarly, years of study that did not have any effect on pronunciation anxiety coincide with the results of the current study. On the other hand, while Erdel's study did not show any correlation between age and pronunciation anxiety, the current study found a negative, mediocre, and statistically significant correlation between students' pronunciation anxiety and their age.

After establishing the fact that pronunciation anxiety has an effect on students' performance in tasks and is correlated with different variables, studies tried to find the reasons behind pronunciation anxiety, how learners cope with it, and what strategies they use to limit its effect.

In a study conducted with 147 first-year students from various departments at Mersin University, Özkan (2019) collected data using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and semi-structured interviews. The Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was employed to quantify students' anxiety levels, while semi-structured interviews facilitated the collection of qualitative data pertaining to the main sources of foreign language speaking anxiety. The study also examined midterm exam results to explore the relationship between anxiety levels and academic achievement. It was found that students had high levels of foreign language anxiety, and no significant differences in anxiety were found based on gender or department. A moderate negative correlation was observed between students' anxiety and their academic success, suggesting that greater anxiety is related to lower performance. The primary contributors to foreign language speaking anxiety were fear of errors, vocabulary limitations, and teachers' attitudes. While Özkan did not find a significant difference between gender and pronunciation anxiety, the current study did. Female students had higher levels of PA. The finding about greater anxiety being related to lower performance was consistent with the finding in the current study.

In a similar study aiming to define the factors for students' speaking anxiety in class and how they cope with it, Siagian and Adam (2017) employed a descriptive qualitative research method to understand the factors causing students' speaking anxiety and the strategies they use to overcome it. Data were collected through interviews and

questionnaires from 22 tenth-grade students at SMK Indomalay School Batam during the 2015/2016 academic year. The questionnaire included five indicators with ten items to identify the factors causing anxiety, while the interview had five indicators with ten questions to explore the students' strategies to manage their anxiety. To cope with speaking anxiety, students employed various strategies, which were ranked from most to least effective: seeking support from peers, preparing in advance, using relaxation techniques, thinking positively, and, lastly, resignation. The study concluded that the most significant sources of speaking anxiety were a lack of familiarity with the task at hand and the fear of making mistakes. Peer seeking was identified as the most effective strategy for overcoming speaking anxiety. One thing to overcome the lack of familiarity might be to expose the learners to language and different tasks as much as possible. The findings in the current study showed that greater exposure is correlated with higher language scores.

Similar to previous studies in Widhayanti's study (2018), the object was to find out the factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety and which learning strategies were being used by learners to overcome this anxiety. To accomplish that, the study employed a qualitative method to explore the factors provoking speaking anxiety and the learning strategies used by students to overcome it. The subjects were 16 students from the Academic Speaking Class D in the English Department at UNESA. Data collection methods included observation field notes, questionnaires, and interviews. The researcher conducted an observational study of the classroom environment and teaching methods, distributed questionnaires to students on a range of topics, including their identity, English comprehension abilities, speaking anxiety factors, and learning strategies, and conducted semi-structured interviews with five students. There were several factors identified at the end of the study, including formal speaking tasks, individual presentations, impromptu speeches, concerns about fluency, grammar, accuracy, and pronunciation, teacher's behaviour, causing an uncomfortable atmosphere, fear of being perceived as 'dumb' or getting a bad score, lack of exposure and limited practice opportunities, fear of negative responses, difficulty in understanding the topic and anxiety when speaking to strangers. The study also identified some of the methods participants used to overcome their anxiety. The methods included reviewing notes and outlines,

practicing in front of a mirror and recording rehearsals, selecting familiar topics and using gestures, making outlines, organizing speeches and planning, using relaxation techniques like deep breathing and positive self-talk, and finally rehearsing with friends and seeking peer support. As the study showed, lack of exposure is considered a factor in speaking anxiety, which is why it is one of the variables in the current study.

Research has demonstrated that PA significantly impacts learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) and performance in speaking tasks. For instance, Baran-Łucarz (2014) found a moderate inverse relationship between PA and WTC among Polish learners of English, with higher anxiety correlating with reduced WTC, especially in familiar settings and larger groups. Similarly, Baran-Łucarz and Lee (2021) identified WTC as the most significant predictor of PA among Korean EFL learners, emphasizing the role of enjoyable learning environments in reducing anxiety. Studies have also explored the relationship between PA and learner characteristics. Erdel (2023) reported that gender, perceived proficiency, and prior learning experiences significantly affect PA levels, with higher anxiety observed in female students and those with lower self-assessed proficiency or intensive English backgrounds. Factors contributing to PA include fear of errors, vocabulary limitations, teacher attitudes, and lack of familiarity with tasks (Özkan, 2019; Siagian and Adam, 2017; Widhayanti, 2018). Learners employ various strategies to cope with PA, such as seeking peer support, preparation, relaxation techniques, and positive thinking. These findings underscore the importance of addressing pronunciation anxiety to enhance communicative competence and encourage active participation in language learning.

Exposure to a Foreign Language (English)

In the context of language learning, exposure may be defined as the amount and quality of contact a learner has with the target language. This includes listening to, reading, speaking, and writing in the language, as well as being immersed in environments where the language is used naturally (Brown, 2007). In the case of English language teaching, learners are exposed to the target language in a formal setting in class. Teachers generally use course books that are specifically designed for the purpose of teaching English. There is a debate on whether course books are authentic materials or

not for learners to be exposed to. However, the education system requires these books to be used in formal education. It might be a good idea for teachers to use authentic materials (e.g., magazines, newspapers, short stories, movies, songs) during classes to be able to expose their learners to more natural resources. Outside the classroom, learners are exposed to the target language through songs, movies, games, books, TV series, social media, and technology. The more exposure a learner has, the more opportunities they have to internalize its structures, vocabulary, and usage patterns, facilitating language acquisition. There are multiple studies done on the effects of exposure on language learning and acquisition.

In a study on exposure and its effects on second language learning, Howard (2013) explored the effects of intensive exposure conditions on second language acquisition through a collection of articles. The research included large-scale projects conducted in classroom contexts, study abroad, and naturalistic settings. The focus was on manipulating the time of input exposure and its impact on language learning. The chapters covered various aspects such as proficiency levels, age, learner awareness, and extracurricular factors like L1 and L2 prominence and typological distance. The study results showed that intensive exposure was beneficial for second language learning, leading to better fluency, confidence, and use of communicative strategies. Learners who had a lower proficiency could quickly catch up with those learners who had more advanced proficiency with the help of intense exposure. Intensive exposure did not override the need for careful attention to language input characteristics. Study abroad contexts showed more significant benefits for grammatical and lexical accuracy compared to regular classroom instruction, especially for children. Naturalistic learners, particularly children and adolescents, exhibited enhanced perceptual skills in phonological segmental perception. Howard's (2013) findings on intensive exposure leading to better fluency reinforced the importance of providing learners with ample opportunities to engage with the language, both inside and outside the classroom.

In their study, Küçükler, Sulac, and Küçükler (2021) employed a comparative and quantitative research design to investigate the effect of language exposure on university students' English-speaking levels. The study took place during the 2020 academic year

and included 102 students from Balıkesir University in Türkiye and 108 students from Komrat University in Moldova. Participants were asked to identify how frequently they were exposed to the language outside of their classroom learning environment. Data were analysed using SPSS software. Results showed that increased English exposure was linked to better language proficiency, with 22% of students' total language proficiencies attributed to language exposure. This finding suggests that outside-of-class communication activities significantly impact language learning, enhancing students' vocabulary, speaking skills, and overall language proficiency. Again, this study supported the finding in the current study that showed learners with higher exposure scores had also higher exam scores.

Jahrani and Listia (2023) conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) to explore how exposure affects second language acquisition (SLA). The researchers systematically located, examined, assessed, and interpreted all available research on the topic. They gathered journal articles from 2009 to 2021 using Google Scholar and ScienceDirect, with keywords such as "exposure" and "second language acquisition." A total of 30 articles were selected and analysed, and the findings were classified into three categories: positive impact, negative impact, and not specified. They were searching for answers to the questions of what the impact of exposure was on second language acquisition and how exposure influenced learners' ability to speak and comprehend a second language. The analysis revealed that the majority of the articles (24 out of 30) indicated that exposure had a positive impact on SLA. No articles reported a negative impact, while six articles did not specify the impact due to insufficient evidence. The study concluded that exposure to the target language through various means, such as television, social media, and classroom activities, significantly aided in language learning and mastery.

In a study, 51 parent-child pairs whose first language was Spanish and who recently moved to New York were examined by Lambelet and Valian (2023) for their English acquisition. Data were collected over three sessions within a year. The study began with assessments of foreign language aptitude, working memory, and three language proficiency tests (i.e., tense comprehension, oral narrative, and verbal fluency).

Participants also completed a questionnaire addressing their demographic data, exposure, and anxiety levels. The goal was to examine how age, cognitive factors (i.e., working memory and aptitude), and contextual-affective factors (i.e., exposure, motivation, anxiety) influenced lexical diversity and verbal fluency. Moreover, the research aimed to assess the impact of these factors on tense comprehension and production across both children and adults. The results showed that children outperformed their parents in both tense comprehension and production, showing significant improvement over the year. The analysis revealed that exposure to English was the most significant predictor of both comprehension and production, while age was not a significant predictor. With regard to tense production, it was found that lower anxiety in speaking English was related to better performance. Adults had less exposure to English compared to children, primarily due to their segregated work environments and social circles. While in this study, children, the younger group in the study, had higher exposure to the language, age was not found to be related to exposure in the current study. Similar to this research, the current study found that lower anxiety was related to better performance. Learners with lower anxiety levels had higher exam scores.

The study by Kuppens (2010) involved 374 Flemish Dutch-speaking pupils in their final year of primary education who had not yet received formal English instruction. Participants completed a survey on their use of English-language media, including subtitled and non-subtitled television programs and movies, music, computer games, and so forth, as well as their attitudes toward English. They then took two oral translation tests: one from Dutch to English and one from English to Dutch. The study excluded pupils with substantial English exposure outside of media to ensure the influence measured was from media use. The findings indicated that engaging with subtitled English television programs and films was associated with notable enhancements in both Dutch-to-English and English-to-Dutch translation abilities. The impact of watching subtitled television and films was more pronounced in female participants than in males. Additionally, the data suggested that engaging with English computer games was linked to favourable outcomes in English-to-Dutch translation abilities. This study implied the potential of media exposure in incidental language acquisition without a formal education, particularly through subtitled television and movies. Similar to the current

study, his study also showed the positive effect of exposure on performance. Children who were exposed to English media and games had better translation skills.

In a very similar study to the previous one, De Wilde and Eyckmans (2017) investigated the incidental acquisition of English among 11-year-old Flemish children who had not received formal English instruction. The study involved 30 children and assessed their English proficiency using a receptive vocabulary test and a proficiency test covering listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Additionally, learner characteristics were gathered through questionnaires for children and parents. The study found that a significant proportion of the children could perform tasks at the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) without formal instruction. Children's English proficiency was significantly influenced by media exposure, particularly gaming and computer use. Listening comprehension and receptive vocabulary were better developed than productive skills (speaking, reading, and writing). Children displayed a positive attitude towards English, with many preferring to use English over their first language in certain contexts. The study highlighted the impact of media exposure on language acquisition.

In another study about the role of exposure to English media on language acquisition, Ina (2014) investigated whether incidental foreign language acquisition occurs in children aged 9-12 years through watching subtitled television programs. The research involved Greek elementary school students who watched a 15-minute Italian children's program under three conditions: with Greek subtitles, without subtitles, and in Greek (control). The study aimed to determine if subtitles aided in learning Italian vocabulary and if older children benefited more than younger ones. The results of the study revealed that children who watched the subtitled program acquired more Italian vocabulary than those who watched the non-subtitled version or the control. Subtitles did not distract children but rather provided a richer context for learning. Older children (fifth and sixth graders) learned more Italian words than younger children (fourth graders). The study concluded that subtitled television programs could effectively facilitate incidental language acquisition in children, with older children benefiting more. This supports the

use of subtitled media as a valuable tool for language learning outside formal educational settings.

Similarly, Jensen (2017) investigated the role of extramural English (EE) activities, particularly gaming, in the English language learning of young children in Denmark. The study involved 107 Danish children aged 8 and 10 who had received minimal formal English instruction. Data on their EE habits were collected through a one-week language diary, and their vocabulary proficiency was measured using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT™-4). The study showed that most of the time was spent on gaming, listening to music, and watching television. Boys gamed significantly more than girls. Boys engaged more in gaming activities, while girls preferred listening to music and watching television. Gaming with both oral and written English input was significantly related to higher vocabulary scores, especially for boys. Early starters scored lower on the PPVT compared to later starters, indicating the importance of EE exposure over time. The finding that children with more exposure had higher vocabulary scores was also present in the current study. Learners with higher exposure scores had higher exam scores, too. The study highlighted the potential of gaming as a valuable tool for vocabulary acquisition in young learners, emphasizing the importance of incidental learning through engaging and motivating activities outside the formal classroom setting. The findings suggested that boys benefit more from gaming in terms of vocabulary learning, possibly due to their higher engagement in such activities.

In a study on language exposure, Muñoz (2012) collaborated with 142 undergraduate students attending an English Studies program at a Spanish University. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews in English, with each interview lasting between 15 and 30 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed to identify turning points in the learners' language learning histories. The responses were categorised according to whether they identified a turning point and whether this involved an intensive language learning experience. The study found that the majority of participants (85.7%) mentioned a critical event that occurred in an input-intensive context. Of these, almost half mentioned an experience abroad in an English-speaking country. The thematic analysis revealed four salient themes: agency, practice,

language improvement, and linguistic assimilation. Agency and practice were the most frequent themes, with participants expressing awareness of their learning process, engagement, and the creation of learning opportunities. Language improvement was often noted in terms of fluency and comprehension, while linguistic assimilation was mentioned in the context of immersion experiences. This study shows the importance of intensive exposure in language learning, particularly in improving fluency and reducing pronunciation anxiety. Intensive exposure environments, such as study abroad or immersion programs, provide learners with ample opportunities for practice and interaction, which are crucial for language development and overcoming pronunciation anxiety. The findings of Muñoz (2012) align with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, as increased exposure through immersion experiences reduced anxiety and facilitated language acquisition.

In summary, extensive research underscored the pivotal role of exposure in language learning, highlighting that increased and varied contact with the target language, in other terms, exposure, significantly enhanced acquisition and proficiency. Both formal instruction and informal engagement through authentic materials, such as media, games, and social interactions, contributed to better fluency, confidence, and communicative abilities (Howard, 2013; Kuppens, 2010; De Wilde and Eyckmans, 2017). Studies consistently demonstrated that exposure aided in internalizing language structures and vocabulary, with intensive exposure environments like study abroad or immersion programs showing marked benefits in language improvement and reduction of pronunciation anxiety (Lambelet and Valian, 2023; Muñoz, 2012). Furthermore, engaging with subtitled media and interactive activities like gaming facilitated incidental learning, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension, even without formal instruction (Ina, 2014; Jensen, 2017). These findings emphasized that providing learners with ample opportunities to interact with the language in naturalistic and engaging contexts is crucial for enhancing language skills and overcoming learning barriers, thereby supporting overall language development.

Studies on the Relationship Between Pronunciation Anxiety and Exposure

Language exposure and pronunciation anxiety are critical factors influencing language learning outcomes, particularly in speaking proficiency and learners' willingness to communicate. Recent studies have highlighted that increased exposure to a target language, both within educational settings and through extracurricular activities, significantly enhanced language acquisition and overall proficiency among students. Simultaneously, interventions aimed at reducing pronunciation anxiety have been shown to improve pronunciation quality and encourage more active participation in language use. These findings underscored the importance of integrating strategies that increase language exposure and address affective factors like anxiety and motivation in language education to facilitate more effective learning experiences. Some of the studies on the relationship between exposure and pronunciation anxiety are presented below.

Kralova, Skorvagova, Tirpakova, and Markechova (2017) conducted a study to see if intervention can be used to reduce pronunciation anxiety. A total of 68 non-native English language student teachers from Slovakia participated in the study, which consisted of an experimental group of 22 students and a control group of 46 students. Both groups received 12 weeks of intensive English pronunciation training. The difference for the experimental group is that they participated in psycho-social training, which aimed to reduce foreign language anxiety (FLA) through active social learning. The training sessions were led by a psychologist and included various activities to enhance self-confidence and social abilities. At the end of the study, the experimental group showed a significant reduction in pronunciation anxiety after the training, while the control group showed only a moderate decrease. Similarly, pronunciation quality significantly improved in both groups, but the experimental group showed a more substantial improvement. The strong negative correlation found between pronunciation anxiety and pronunciation quality in the experimental group post-test indicates that lower anxiety levels are associated with better pronunciation. Similar to the current study, this study showed that learners with lower anxiety levels performed better in their tasks.

The objective of a similar study was to determine which variable, pronunciation anxiety (PA) or pronunciation motivation (PM), more accurately predicts Iranian EFL

learners' willingness to communicate (L2 WTC) in English classes. Alimorad and Adib (2022) carried out their research with 134 upper-intermediate EFL learners from two private language institutes located in a large city in Iran. The participants were selected using a convenience sampling procedure, and their proficiency levels were determined using written and oral placement tests. Three questionnaires were used. The questionnaires were administered separately to avoid fatigue and ensure accurate responses. The results were as follows: Both PA and PM had significant correlations with L2 WTC. PA showed a moderate negative correlation with L2 WTC, indicating that higher anxiety levels led to lower willingness to communicate, while PM showed a moderate positive correlation with L2 WTC, indicating that higher motivation levels led to higher willingness to communicate. Multiple regression analysis revealed that PA was a stronger predictor of L2 WTC compared to PM. The study suggested that addressing pronunciation anxiety in EFL learners could significantly enhance their willingness to communicate in English. It also highlighted the importance of focusing on intelligibility rather than near-perfect pronunciation in language teaching.

Küçükler and Sulac (2021) conducted a study using a comparative and quantitative design to explore the influence of language exposure on university students' English learning, specifically targeting speaking levels. They collected data with the "Exposure Scale to English," a tool created by Gökcan and Çobanoğlu Aktan (2017), which includes 23 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The study took place during the 2020 academic year and included 102 participants from Balıkesir University in Turkey and 108 participants from Comrat State University in Moldova. The participants were randomly selected and volunteered to take part in the study. The study also included open-ended questions to assess out-of-class language exposure and a questionnaire to determine preferred language skills. The analysis revealed that students at Balıkesir University had greater exposure to the English language than those at Comrat University, both within and beyond the educational setting. Over 51.43% of Balıkesir students reported exposure to the English language in multiple contexts, including at school, at home, with friends, and through media. Female students showed higher motivation and better performance in English language learning compared to male students. Interaction with English-speaking friends and family was limited, with most students not frequently

using English in social settings. The study concluded that increased exposure to English significantly enhances language acquisition and proficiency.

In their study, authors Orena, Theodore, and Polka (2015) worked with two groups of English-monolingual adults from Montréal, Québec where participants were exposed to French regularly, and Storrs, Connecticut, where participants had very little exposure to French if they ever did. The intervention was auditory stimuli, which included sentences spoken by four female native Canadian English speakers and four female native Canadian French speakers. Visual stimuli were cartoon avatars associated with each voice. Participants underwent a training phase where they learned to identify voices associated with avatars, followed by a test phase to assess retention and generalization. The training phase comprised a series of trials, with participants required to meet a learning criterion before moving on to the test phase. This phase included both trained and novel sentences without feedback. The results demonstrated that, on average, residents of Montréal required fewer training blocks to reach the learning criterion for French voices than residents of Storrs. This indicated a faster learning rate. Again, Montréal residents showed higher accuracy in identifying French voices during the test phase than Storrs residents despite receiving less exposure to French stimuli during training. The study showed that consistent exposure to a non-native language can enhance the learning capabilities of a speaker, even if they do not yet have a fully functional understanding or speaking proficiency in that language. The findings indicated that systematic exposure to a foreign language could enhance talker-learning abilities, thereby supporting the notion that language exposure, in the absence of phonological competence, can facilitate talker identification. This finding is relevant for understanding how language exposure impacts pronunciation anxiety and language learning.

In summary, the studies reviewed highlighted the critical role of language exposure and pronunciation anxiety in language learning. Increased exposure to the target language, both inside and outside the classroom, significantly enhanced language proficiency, particularly in speaking skills (Küçükler, Sulac, and Küçükler, 2021; Orena, Theodore, and Polka, 2015). Interventions aimed at reducing pronunciation anxiety, such as psycho-social training and focusing on intelligibility over native-like pronunciation,

have been shown to improve pronunciation quality and increase learners' willingness to communicate (Král'ová et al., 2017; Alimorad and Adib, 2022). These findings underscored the importance of integrating strategies that boost language exposure and address affective factors like anxiety and motivation in language education. By doing so, educators can facilitate more effective learning experiences, ultimately enhancing students' communicative competence and overall language proficiency.

In conclusion, the literature underscored the significant impact of foreign language anxiety (FLA) and its specific subset, pronunciation anxiety (PA), on language learning outcomes. FLA and PA have been shown to negatively affect learners' willingness to communicate (WTC), speaking proficiency, and overall language performance. Factors contributing to PA include fear of negative evaluation, self-confidence issues, perceptions of self-image, and beliefs about pronunciation's importance (Baran-Łucarz, 2017; Baran-Łucarz and Lee, 2021). Gender differences, prior language learning experiences, and perceived English proficiency have also been identified as influencing PA levels (Erdel, 2023), though findings on age and years of study remain inconclusive.

Simultaneously, extensive research highlighted the pivotal role of exposure in language acquisition. Increased contact with the target language, both within formal educational settings and through informal means such as media, gaming, and social interactions, enhanced language proficiency, fluency, and confidence (Howard, 2013; Kuppens, 2010; De Wilde and Eyckmans, 2017). Intensive exposure environments, like study abroad programs, not only improve linguistic skills but also contribute to reducing anxiety levels (Muñoz, 2012). However, the type and quality of exposure appeared crucial, as mere quantity did not guarantee reduced anxiety or improved performance (Erdel, 2023; Lambelet and Valian, 2023).

Despite substantial research on FLA, PA, and exposure separately, there remained a notable gap in understanding the specific relationship between pronunciation anxiety and language exposure. Few studies have directly examined how different types of exposure influence PA and, by extension, learners' willingness to communicate and overall language achievement. Additionally, existing research often focused on specific

contexts or populations, limiting the generalizability of findings across diverse cultural and educational settings.

This literature review highlighted the need for further investigation into how varying degrees and types of language exposure affect pronunciation anxiety among learners of English as a foreign language. Addressing this gap, the current study aimed to explore the relationship between exposure to English and pronunciation anxiety, considering factors such as age, gender, school stage, and the status of private English lessons. By deepening the understanding of this relationship, the study sought to inform educators and curriculum designers on effective strategies to enhance language exposure while mitigating anxiety, ultimately fostering better communicative competence and language proficiency among learners.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This part includes information about the research design, the participants, data collection tools, the data collection process, and the data analysis.

Research Design

In this study, a correlational quantitative design was applied. Correlational research is a method of collecting data to identify if and how strongly two or more measurable variables are connected. The strength of the relationship is represented by a correlation coefficient (Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2012, p.203). In this study, data were collected from the participants cross-sectionally, and the relationship between English exposure and pronunciation anxiety was investigated. The process or the variables were not manipulated; instead, data were collected to examine and analyse the existing conditions.

Participants

The participants for the study were selected using the convenience sampling method. A convenience sample can be defined as a sample in which research participants are chosen on the basis of their accessibility (Given, 2008). The researcher was working as a teacher at the all-boys school while the data collection process was ongoing, therefore it was easy to reach the participants. The all-girls school was also easily accessible to the researcher and it was necessary to include female students in the study since gender was one of the variables. The participants were students from two different state schools in Tokat city centre. The schools they attended accept students with an entrance exam for middle school, and according to the LGS (Liselere Giriş Sınavı, High School Entrance Exam) exam results for high school. One of the schools is only for girls, and the other one is only for boys. Both of them have students from 5th grade to 12th grade, but because the 8th and 12th graders were preparing for the official exams during the data collection process, not many participants from those grades participated in the study.

A total of 468 students took part in the current study. The majority of participants were males ($f=286$, 61.1%). The largest group was 10th graders ($f=95$, 20.3%), while only 15 students (3.2%) were 8th graders. The number of middle school students ($f=214$, 45.7%) was slightly lower than the number of high school students ($f=254$, 54.3). The age of participants ranged from 10 to 19, with a mean age of 14.03 ($SD=2.06$). The demographics of participants have been presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' Demographics

Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	286	61.1
Female	182	38.9
School Stage		
Middle School	214	45.7
High School	254	54.3
Grade Level		
5th Grade	72	15.4
6th Grade	68	14.5
7th Grade	59	12.6
8th Grade	15	3.2
9th Grade	91	19.4
10th Grade	95	20.3
11th Grade	68	14.5

Note: *f*=frequency, %=Percentage

Data Collection Tools

A structured survey was utilized to collect data in this study. The survey was composed of three sections. The first section involved 11 questions related to participants' demographics (e.g. gender, age, grade level). The following sections included existing instruments to capture students' exposure to English and pronunciation anxiety. Both of the instruments used in this study were conducted in Turkish since participants of the study are not highly proficient in English.

Exposure to English Scale

The Exposure to English Scale was used to capture students' exposure to English. The instrument was developed by Gökcan and Çobanoğlu Aktan (2019). The instrument

was composed of 22 items. The instrument was based on different sources of exposure, which resulted in six factors. The factors are Friends and Family (four items), Foreigners (two items), School (four items), Media (three items), Text (six items), and Computer (three items). Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale from one (never) to five (always), with higher scores indicating greater exposure from the respective source. The instrument was developed using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The results demonstrated that the data fit well with the model ($\chi^2/df=1.84$, CFI=0.92, RMSEA=0.060, SRMR=0.069). Cronbach alpha coefficients of the factors ranged from .70 to .92, indicating adequate reliability (Gökcan and Çobanoğlu Aktan, 2019). In the current study, confirmatory factor analysis was also conducted to provide evidence for construct validity in the study sample. The results showed that the six-factor construct fit well with the data ($\chi^2/df=2.64$, CFI=0.92, RMSEA=0.059, SRMR=0.056). The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the instrument was .87, indicating good reliability.

The Measure of Pronunciation Anxiety

The Measure of Pronunciation Anxiety was used to evaluate students' pronunciation anxiety. The instrument was developed by Baran-Lucarz (2016) and adapted to Turkish by Yağız (2018). It involves 25 items under five factors: Classroom Anxiety and FL Oral Performance Apprehension (seven items), Fear of Negative Evaluation Related to Pronunciation (eight items), Pronunciation Self-Efficacy and Self-Assessment (three items), Pronunciation Self-Image (four items), and Beliefs (three items). Items are rated on a six-point Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to six (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater anxiety. The adaptation study showed that the five-factor construct of the instrument fit well with the data ($\chi^2/df=2.23$, CFI=0.97, RMSEA=0.060). Cronbach alpha coefficient was .94 (Yağız, 2018). In the current study, confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the same construct fit well with the data of this study ($\chi^2/df=2.69$, CFI=0.92, RMSEA=0.060, SRMR=0.050). Cronbach alpha coefficient was .93, indicating good reliability.

Data Collection Process

Prior to the data collection process, ethical approval and institutional permission were granted. Data collection took place in two schools. The researcher distributed surveys during course hours and collected them when students completed them. The data collection process took approximately three weeks.

Data Analysis

A variety of statistical analyses were conducted to respond to research questions. Prior to these analyses, the normality assumption of the data was examined to decide between parametric or nonparametric analyses. The Shapiro–Wilk test was conducted first. The results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Normality Tests

Variables	Shapiro-Wilk	Skewness	Kurtosis
Exposure to English	.00	.50	-.06
Pronunciation Anxiety	.00	.29	-.51

Examination of the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated the violation of the normality assumption since the findings were significant. However, since the Shapiro-Wilk test tends to yield significant results even in the case of a small deviation from normality, although this deviation does not affect the parametric test results (Field, 2009; Öztuna, Elhan, and Tüccar, 2006), other methods were addressed as recommended by various researchers (Ghasemi, and Zahediasl, 2012; Mishra et al., 2019). Thus, skewness and kurtosis values were examined. The skewness values were within ± 2 , while the kurtosis values were within ± 3 . Thus, skewness and kurtosis values indicated normal distribution (Kline, 2011). Additionally, z-scores of variables were examined. All the z-scores for both exposure and anxiety were within ± 3.29 , which also indicated the normal distribution of the data (Kim, 2013). In addition to these statistics, a visual examination was conducted. First, the histograms of the distributions were examined. The results showed the normal distribution of the data despite the slight deviations since the histograms were approximately bell-shaped and symmetric about the mean (Mishra et al., 2019). Histograms have been presented in Figure 1.

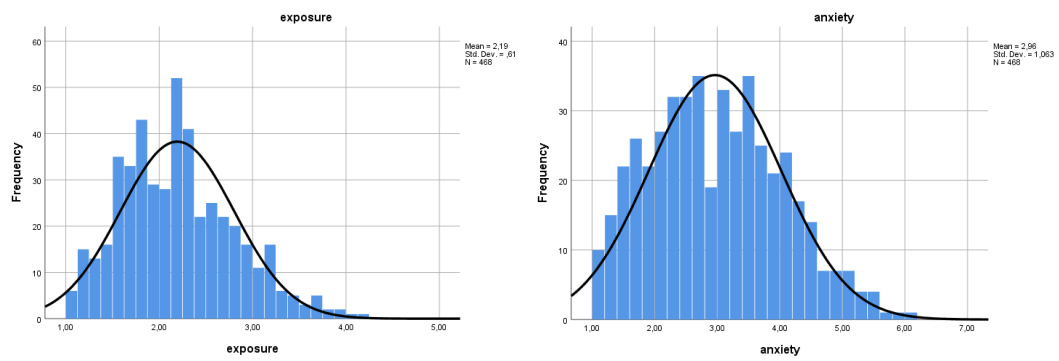


Figure 1. Histograms

Another method was the examination of Q-Q and P-P plots. An approximate straight line in these plots indicates that data are normally distributed (Mishra et al., 2019). The lines in all plots were approximately straight, indicating normal distribution. The plots can be seen in Figure 2.

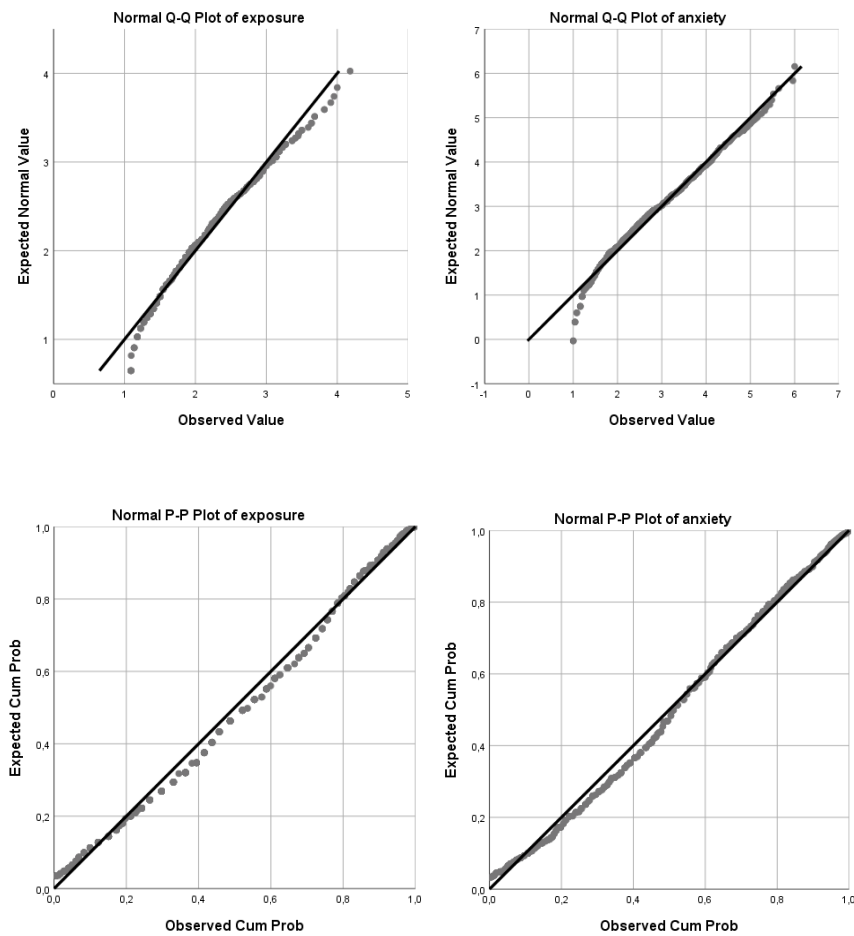


Figure 2. Q-Q and P-P Plots

To sum up, although the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the data were not normally distributed, other methods revealed that the data were normally distributed. Thus, the deviation from normality was not severe. Overall, the data analyses were conducted using parametric tests for two reasons. First, it is known that the Shapiro-Wilk test is over-sensitive to large sample sizes (Mishra et al., 2019). It means that the Shapiro-Wilk test tends to yield significant results even if the data are normally distributed. Second, when the sample size has 100 or more observations, violation of normality does not cause major issues in parametric analyses, which implies that parametric tests can be used even when the data are not normally distributed (Altman and Bland, 1995). Since the sample size in the current study was 468, which is large, parametric tests were used.

To provide descriptive statistics, minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were calculated using SPSS software. The associations between continuous variables were estimated using Pearson correlation analysis. The independent-sample t-test was used to compare the mean scores of different groups of participants. Finally, structural equation modelling was conducted to reveal the predictive role of English exposure on pronunciation anxiety using IBM AMOS software. Normed chi-square (χ^2/df), comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) were used to evaluate the models. The following criteria were considered during this evaluation: χ^2/df close to five or below = adequate (Bollen, 1989); CFI around .90 = adequate (Bentler and Bonett, 1980), around .95 = good (Hu and Bentler, 1999); SRMR close to .08 or below = adequate (Hu and Bentler, 1999), and RMSEA less than .10 = mediocre (Browne and Cudeck, 1993), less than .06 = good (Hu and Bentler, 1999). The alpha value was set as $p \leq .05$ in the study. The interpretation of relationships was based on the following criteria: values around .10 = weak, around .30 = Mediocre, and around .50 = strong (Cohen, 1988).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Demographics

The participants were asked some questions related to their experience with English learning. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' Statistics of English Grades, Weekly Course Hours, and Years of Attending English Courses

Variables	<i>n</i>	min	max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
English Course Grade	445	8	100	92.63	12.09
Weekly English Course Hours	459	2	14	3.54	1.77
Years of Attending English Courses	455	2	14	7.19	2.11

Note: *n*=sample size, min=minimum score, max=maximum score, *M*=mean score, *SD*=standard deviation

When students' responses were examined, it was observed that their latest English scores ranged from 8 to 100, with a mean score of 92.63 (*SD*=12.09). The mean score of 92.63 for the English Course Grade showed that the students had relatively high exam scores. The average weekly English course hours students attended was 3.54 (*SD*=1.77). The minimum of 2 English course hours was for students who attended the special program in the schools for Hafiz students. The minimum of 14 English course hours was for the foreign language class students. Moreover, students have been taking English courses for an average of 7.19 years (*SD*=2.11). Further demographics about students' experience with English learning have been presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Students' Statistics of Starting Period of Learning English and Status of Private English Courses

Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Starting Period of Learning English		
Preschool	70	15
Primary School	390	83.3
Middle School	8	1.7

Status of Private English Course		
No	397	84.8
Yes	64	13.7

Note: f =frequency, %=Percentage

Table 4 shows that most of the students ($f=308$, 65.8%) started learning English in their second year at primary school. Seven students (1.5%) had no experience with English learning before starting middle school. Moreover, a small number of students ($f=64$, 13.7%) took private English courses, while the majority ($f=397$, 84.8%) did not.

Descriptive Statistics Related to English Language Exposure and Pronunciation Anxiety

Students' responses to the Exposure to English Scale and the Measure of Pronunciation Anxiety were examined. Mean scores, standard deviations, and the correlation between the two variables have been presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Students' English Exposure and Pronunciation Scores

Variables	n	min	max	M	SD	r
Exposure to English	468	1.09	4.18	2.19	.61	-.14*
Pronunciation Anxiety	468	1.0	6.0	2.96	1.06	-

Note: n = sample size, min=minimum score, max=maximum score, M =mean score, SD =standard deviation, r =correlation coefficient, * $p \leq .05$

Table 5 shows that students' exposure to English scores ranged from 1.09 to 4.18, with a mean score of 2.19 ($SD=.61$). Their pronunciation anxiety scores varied between one and six, with a mean score of 2.96 ($SD=1.06$). Moreover, it was observed that the Pearson correlation between exposure to English and pronunciation anxiety was negative, weak, and significant ($r=-.14$, $p \leq .05$). This finding showed that students with more exposure to English tended to feel slightly less anxious about pronunciation, but the relationship was weak. This could imply that exposure plays a minor role in reducing pronunciation anxiety, but other factors might also contribute significantly.

Findings Related to the First Research Question

The first research question in the study was "Is there a statistically significant correlation between students' exposure to English scores and their English course scores,

age, weekly English course hours, and total years of attending English courses?”. To respond to the first research question, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The findings have been summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlation Coefficients between English Exposure and Demographic Variables

	English Score	Age	Weekly English Hour	Years of English Courses
Exposure	.22*	.06	.13*	.09

Note: * $p \leq .05$

Pearson correlation analysis revealed that students' exposure to English was positively, mediocrely, and significantly correlated with their latest English exam scores ($r=.22$, $p \leq .05$). Similarly, their exposure to English was positively, weakly, and significantly correlated with their weekly English course hours ($r=.13$, $p \leq .05$) suggesting exposure to English is moderately associated with better exam performance and weakly associated with the amount of weekly class hours. On the other hand, students' exposure to English was not significantly associated with their age ($r=.06$, $p \geq .05$) and years of attending English courses ($r=.09$, $p \geq .05$). These findings suggested that exposure to English impacted students' performance and class engagement more than their age or duration of learning English.

Findings Related to the Second Research Question

The second question in the study was “Is there a statistically significant correlation between students' pronunciation anxiety scores and their English course scores, age, weekly English course hours, and total years of attending English courses?”. Similar to the first research question, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between students' pronunciation anxiety and demographics. The findings have been presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Correlation Coefficients between Pronunciation Anxiety and Demographic Variables

	English Score	Age	Weekly English Hour	Years of English Courses
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Pronunciation Anxiety	-.26*	-.24*	-.03	-.22*
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Note: * $p \leq .05$

The results of Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated that pronunciation anxiety was negatively associated with the majority of demographics. Accordingly, students' pronunciation anxiety was negatively, mediocrely, and significantly correlated with their latest English exam scores ($r = -.26, p \leq .05$), age ($r = -.24, p \leq .05$), and years of attending English courses ($r = -.22, p \leq .05$) suggesting higher Pronunciation Anxiety was associated with lower exam scores, younger age, and fewer years of English learning. However, their pronunciation anxiety was not associated with their weekly English course hours ($r = -.03, p \geq .05$). These findings suggested that longer exposure to English and maturity (students' age) might help reduce pronunciation anxiety, while weekly course hours alone may not have much impact.

Findings Related to the Third Research Question

The third question in the study was "Do students' exposure to English scores significantly differ by their gender, school stage, first English course period, and the status of private English courses?". Four independent-sample t-tests were conducted to respond to the third research question. The findings are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Differences in English Exposure Scores

Groups	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender						
Female	182	2.17	.59	466	.75	.45
Male	286	2.21	.62			
School Stage						
Middle School	214	2.15	.56	466	1.31	.19
High School	254	2.23	.65			
First English Course						
Preschool	70	2.44	.65	458	3.74	.00*
Primary School	390	2.15	.59			
Private English Course						
Yes	64	2.37	.66	459	2.58	.01*
No	397	2.16	.60			

Note: *n* = sample size, *M* = mean score, *SD* = standard deviation, *df* = degree of freedom, *t* = t score, *p* = probability, * $p \leq .05$

First, independent-sample t-test analysis was conducted to compare English exposure scores between females ($M=2.17$, $SD=.59$) and males ($M=2.21$, $SD=.62$), which revealed that there was no significant difference by gender ($t(466)=-.75$, $p>.05$). Second, differences in exposure scores between middle school ($M=2.15$, $SD=.56$) and high school students ($M=2.23$, $SD=.65$) were examined. Similarly, there was no significant difference in students' exposure scores by their school stages ($t(466)=1.31$, $p>.05$). On the other hand, a comparison of students' exposure scores between those who started learning English during preschool education ($M=2.44$, $SD=.65$) and those who started it during primary school ($M=2.15$, $SD=.59$) showed that the former group of students had significantly higher exposure scores ($t(458)=3.74$, $p\leq.05$). Likewise, compared with the students who did not take private English courses ($M=2.16$, $SD=.60$), students who took private English courses ($M=2.37$, $SD=.66$) had significantly higher exposure scores ($t(459)=2.58$, $p\leq.05$). These results highlighted the importance of early exposure and additional resources (e.g., private courses) for improving English exposure.

Findings Related to the Fourth Research Question

The fourth question in the study was “Do students' pronunciation anxiety scores differ by their gender, school stage, first English course period, and the status of private English courses?”. Similar to the third research question, four independent-sample t-tests were conducted to compare pronunciation anxiety scores of different groups of students. The findings have been provided in Table 9.

Table 9. Differences in Pronunciation Anxiety Scores

Groups	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender						
Female	182	3.23	.94	466	4.35	.00*
Male	286	2.80	1.11			
School Stage						
Middle School	214	3.27	1.06	466	5.92	.00*
High School	254	2.71	1.00			
First English Course						
Preschool	70	2.92	.98	458	.45	.65
Primary School	390	2.98	1.08			
Private English Course						
Yes	64	3.00	1.05	459	.34	.73

No	397	2.95	1.07
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Note: n = sample size, M =mean score, SD =standard deviation, df =degree of freedom, t =t score, p =probability, * $p \leq .05$

An independent-sample t-test analysis was conducted to compare pronunciation anxiety scores between females ($M=3.23$, $SD=.94$) and males ($M=2.80$, $SD=1.11$). The analysis demonstrated that the difference between the groups was statistically significant ($t(466)=4.35$, $p \leq .05$). Similarly, the comparison of pronunciation anxiety scores between middle school ($M=3.27$, $SD=1.06$) and high school students ($M=2.71$, $SD=1.0$) showed that the difference between the groups was significant by their school stage ($t(466)=5.92$, $p \leq .05$). However, the comparison of students' pronunciation anxiety scores between those who started learning English during preschool education ($M=2.92$, $SD=.98$) and those who started it during primary school ($M=2.98$, $SD=1.08$) revealed no significant difference ($t(458)=.45$, $p > .05$). Likewise, comparison of pronunciation anxiety scores between students who did not take private English courses ($M=3.00$, $SD=1.05$) and students who took private English courses ($M=2.95$, $SD=1.07$) showed that there was no significant difference ($t(459)=.34$, $p > .05$). These results suggested that age, stage of education, and gender are important factors influencing pronunciation anxiety, whereas early English exposure and private courses did not appear to play a significant role.

Findings Related to the Fifth Research Question

The fifth question in the study was "Do students' exposure to English scores significantly predict their pronunciation anxiety scores?". Structural equation modelling was conducted to examine the predictor role of English exposure on students' pronunciation anxiety. Before evaluating the relationship between the two variables, model fit was examined. The model included two latent variables and 11 observed variables. Examination of fit indices revealed that the model fits well with the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.82$, $CFI = 0.95$, $RMSEA = 0.062$ (90% CI = 0.050–0.076), $SRMR = 0.055$). The standardized factor loadings in the model ranged from .25 to .84, all of which were statistically significant. The analysis revealed that students' exposure to English had a statistically significant direct, negative, and mediocre effect on their pronunciation anxiety ($\gamma = -.24$, $p \leq .05$) meaning increased English exposure significantly reduced pronunciation anxiety. The effect was moderate which showed that exposure played a

meaningful role in decreasing anxiety but was not the sole determinant. The model has been illustrated in Figure 3.

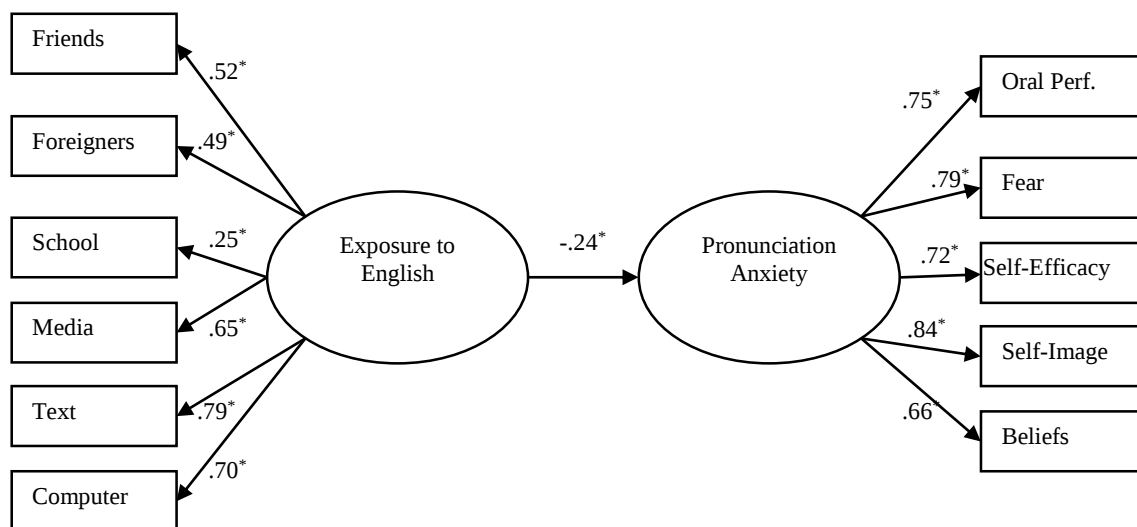


Figure 3. Standardized Parameter Estimates

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of the Study

This study examined the relationship between students' exposure to English and their pronunciation anxiety, along with the role of demographic and contextual factors such as gender, school stage, starting age of English courses, and taking private English courses. The findings could be summarized as:

Students' exposure to English had a statistically significant, direct, and negative effect on their pronunciation anxiety. This indicates that greater exposure to English moderately reduces anxiety related to pronunciation. In other words, greater interaction with the language, whether through listening, speaking, reading, or writing, helps students feel more comfortable and confident in their pronunciation abilities.

Pronunciation anxiety was significantly higher among female students and middle school learners, suggesting that these groups may be more vulnerable to anxiety in oral communication. Neither the age at which students began learning English nor attendance at private English courses significantly impacted pronunciation anxiety. These results challenge traditional assumptions, such as the Critical Period Hypothesis, and highlight that factors other than starting age may play a more critical role in shaping pronunciation anxiety.

Students who began learning English during preschool and those attending private courses exhibited higher levels of exposure to English. However, no significant differences were found in exposure based on gender or school stage, suggesting that opportunities for English exposure in formal education may be uniform across these demographics.

Discussion of the Findings

Discussion of the First Research Question

The objective of this study was to examine the correlation between students' exposure to the English language and their levels of pronunciation anxiety. The first question in the study was “Is there a statistically significant correlation between students' exposure to English scores and their English course scores, age, weekly English course hours, and total years of attending English courses?”. The analyses of the data collected from 468 students and their results showed that there was a positive correlation between students' exposure to English scores and their English course scores. In other words, students with more exposure to English generally scored higher on English exams. This supports earlier research and highlights the importance of language exposure in improving language skills and academic success (Krashen, 1985; Ellis, 1994; Anastasi, 2003). Not all studies support this finding. In a study conducted by Bacus and Alda (2023), there was no significant correlation between language exposure and TOEFL exam scores. The quality of comprehensible input was found to be more important for effective learning than the amount of exposure. Even though the correlation between the two is moderate, it is statistically significant enough for it to be coincidental. The way exposure contributes to better exam performance might be related to the fact that exposure leads to reinforcements in terms of vocabulary, grammar, listening, and speaking skills (Küçükler and Sulac, 2021; Tran and Miralpeix, 2024). Other factors that might be determinants of academic success may include quality of teaching, study habits, and intrinsic motivation, which may also significantly impact exam performance (Gardner, 1985).

Another finding of the study was the lack of a significant relationship between exposure to English and age. It means that within the scope of the current study, there was no evidence of a reliable association between age and exposure (Erdel, 2023; Tekten, 2020). What this finding suggests is that regardless of age, students have similar English exposure levels. It might be because of the consistent access they have to English at school, or because they come from similar social lives, so they have similar habits of exposure. Contrary to this study, in their study conducted with 100 in-service EFL

teachers, Kralova and Mala (2018) found a positive correlation between age and pronunciation anxiety, especially within older groups.

The relationship between exposure to English and weekly English course hours was found to be positive and weak. This means that students who had more hours of English courses weekly tended to have slightly higher exposure to English outside the classroom. This relationship was statistically significant, meaning it is not random. Students having more weekly hours of English courses may encourage them to engage with English beyond their formal classrooms. The weak correlation means it is not a strong indicator of overall exposure. There might be some other external factors, such as personal interest or access to English media and other sources. For example, in a study conducted with Chinese learners, teachers assigned English activities outside of the classroom via technology improved learners' English exposure and learning outcomes (Lai, Zhu, and Gong, 2015). In another study carried out with Czech lower secondary school students, it was found that students who had different subject classes taught in English were more likely to also engage in free time activities in English. Consequently, not only in language classes but also in non-language classes, exposure to English affects students' language skills positively (Moore, Vonkova, and Altinkalp, 2022)

The relationship between exposure to English and total years of attending English courses was another positive but negligible relationship. This means that the number of years students have attended English courses did not have a significant effect on their exposure to English. This relationship is statistically not significant either, meaning the number of years a student has attended English courses has little to no effect on his/her overall exposure. This finding may imply that formal instruction alone does not guarantee students' exposure outside the classroom. Their motivation, access to English media, or extracurricular opportunities may be more influential on exposure levels (Küçükler, Sulac, and Küçükler, 2021; Solmaz, 2021)

Discussion of the Second Research Question

The second question in the study was “Is there a statistically significant correlation between students' pronunciation anxiety scores and their English course scores, age,

weekly English course hours, and total years of attending English courses”. It was found that there was a negative and moderate correlation between pronunciation anxiety and English course scores. Students who had lower pronunciation anxiety tended to perform better in their exams. This finding is in line with previous research showing that anxiety, especially related to speaking and pronunciation, impacts language performance negatively (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986). The relationship was also statistically significant for it to be a coincidence. Students with lower pronunciation anxiety might be able to focus better on exams and show their knowledge more effectively, as having high pronunciation anxiety likely hinders their fluency, accuracy, and comprehension (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994). Implementing strategies such as systematic pronunciation practice and creating a low-stress learning environment may be beneficial for reducing pronunciation anxiety, which in turn would increase the exam results (Lee, 2016).

Again, the relationship between pronunciation anxiety and age was a negative and moderate one. This means that older students were likely to have lower levels of pronunciation anxiety. This relationship was statistically significant, too. The reason might be students getting older and becoming more confident in their pronunciation skills or becoming less self-conscious about speaking English. Even though in this study, exposure was not that related to age, in others’ context, increased exposure over time or maturity may also be a factor in helping reduce anxiety levels (Dewaele, 2017).

There was a negative, moderate, and statistically significant relationship between pronunciation anxiety and the number of years of students attended an English courses. It means that as the number of years of attending English courses increased, the level of pronunciation anxiety tended to decrease. This might be an indication of prolonged formal instruction in English, helping students feel more confident in their abilities and reducing anxiety (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). However, the moderate strength of the relationship suggests that other factors, such as quality of instruction and personal growth, may also play a significant role.

Similar to the previous findings, there was a negative relationship between pronunciation anxiety and weekly English course hours, however, this relationship was

negligible and statistically not significant, suggesting that there was no meaningful or reliable relationship between the two. The type and focus of the instruction might have a more critical role in addressing instruction rather than just the number of hours spent on it. This finding aligns with research suggesting quality over quantity (Nation and Newton, 2009). In many classroom settings, especially larger classes, opportunities for all students to practice speaking and receive individualized feedback might be limited. Students might be passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants, reducing the effectiveness of exposure in reducing pronunciation anxiety. Simply increasing weekly course hours does not guarantee that students are receiving the type of exposure that effectively reduces pronunciation anxiety. The exposure may not be sufficiently engaging or personalized to impact anxiety levels significantly. Pronunciation may receive minimal attention in class, with limited time allocated for speaking activities. Feedback provided by teachers may not be constructive or may inadvertently increase anxiety.

In short, pronunciation anxiety decreases as English exam scores get higher, students get older, or they attend English courses for more years, highlighting the potential of practice, maturity, and experience in reducing anxiety over time. However, the absence of a significant relationship suggests that course design, content, or teaching methods may not adequately address or target the reduction of pronunciation anxiety.

Discussion of the Third Research Question

The third research question in this study was “Do students’ exposure to English scores significantly differ by their gender, school stage, first English course period, and the status of private English courses?” the findings suggested that there was no significant difference between females and males. This indicated that gender did not have a significant role in determining exposure. In this study’s context, both female and male learners had similar interaction levels with the language. This finding is consistent with some research suggesting that gender differences in language learning are diminishing thanks to increasing equality in educational access (Ellis, 1994). Contrary to that, other studies highlighted subtle differences between genders in their attitudes toward language learning, where females often demonstrate higher motivation or anxiety levels (Dewaele, 2017)

Just as it is with gender there was no significant difference in exposure scores between middle school students and high school students. Students' exposure to English did not appear to change significantly as they progressed through their education from middle school to high school. One reason for this might be the opportunities students had for exposure remained relatively unchanged across school stages, probably because of standardized curriculums implemented at schools or the availability of English-related activities and resources. This may also reflect the limited role formal education had in increasing language exposure. Research supports that classroom-based language learning often provides limited opportunities for authentic exposure (Krashen, 1985)

In contrast, in terms of the starting age for learning English, students who first encountered English at preschool and started learning it had significantly higher exposure scores than those who started at primary school. We can interpret this result as follows: When students start English education earlier, they get a significant advantage from exposure to the language. It might also be because pre-schoolers have benefited from young learner activities that might have fostered a more positive attitude toward English, resulting in more engagement with the language over time. This finding is also supported by research that indicates younger learners acquire languages more effectively because of their heightened neural plasticity (Lenneberg, 1967; Muñoz, 2006). Learners who start early are also more likely to develop a natural accent and positive language learning habits, which in turn contribute to greater exposure.

Similar to the starting age of learning English, taking private English courses also had a significant relationship with higher exposure to English. This might be related to private courses providing more focused and intensive practice, using authentic materials, or encouraging learners for extracurricular engagement with the language. It might also suggest that students who take private courses may have more opportunities or motivation to interact with English outside the formal school settings. The higher exposure scores of students taking private English courses align with research showing additional instruction often provides richer and more varied input compared to public education alone (Lightbown and Spada, 2013).

To sum up the third question's findings, the findings suggest that gender and school stage did not impact students' exposure to English, implying there were other factors or variables in play, such as student motivation, access to resources, or educational quality. Starting English education earlier and investing in private English courses lead to significantly higher levels of exposure, highlighting the possible benefits of early intervention and supplementary education in improving students' English engagement.

Discussion of the Fourth Research Question

The fourth research question in this study was "Do students' pronunciation anxiety scores differ by their gender, school stage, first English course period, and the status of private English courses?". The findings suggested female students reported significantly higher pronunciation anxiety than male students. This might stem from greater sensitivity to social judgement since studies showed that females exhibited higher levels of anxiety in language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986). The reason might also be that females have higher self-expectations or are more critical of their own performance. This finding was consistent with previous research highlighting gender differences in language learning. Dewaele (2017) and Horwitz et al. (1986) argue that female learners often state greater anxiety because of their heightened self-consciousness and fear of negative evaluation. Effiong (2016) also notes that these feelings may be exacerbated by social expectations and fear of judgement, particularly in contexts with traditional norms like Türkiye. In a more recent study, Li, Zhang, and Sun (2020) highlighted the impact of gender-specific emotional needs in shaping language learners' anxiety levels in oral tasks. Some other reasons for females reporting higher anxiety levels might be that females may be more sensitive to how others perceive them, increasing anxiety related to making mistakes, particularly in pronunciation, which is immediately noticeable in spoken communication. Psychological research also has indicated that females often report higher levels of general anxiety than males (McLean & Anderson, 2009). This predisposition can extend to language learning contexts. Women may be more attuned to their emotional states and more likely to report feelings of anxiety, including in academic settings. Pronunciation is closely tied to personal identity. Female students may feel that mispronunciation misrepresents them, leading to increased anxiety. Females may be more

open to reporting feelings of anxiety in research studies, leading to higher recorded levels compared to males who might underreport due to social desirability biases.

The findings on the relationship between school stage and pronunciation anxiety showed that middle school students had significantly higher pronunciation anxiety than high school students, which indicates that pronunciation anxiety decreases as students move up in their education. High schoolers probably gain more confidence and familiarity with English through practice over time. It might also be affected by older students developing better coping mechanisms for anxiety or feeling less intimidated by speaking activities due to their experience and maturity. This finding aligns with MacIntyre and Gardner's (1994) findings that young learners are more vulnerable to communication apprehension. At their age, they are not equipped with the experience and the coping mechanisms they need to manage stress during oral tasks. In contrast, high schoolers exhibit greater confidence that can mitigate their anxiety thanks to their increased exposure and maturity (Krashen, 1985; Peng and Woodrow, 2010). It might be a good idea to intervene early to address pronunciation anxiety in middle schoolers, which might include low-stress speaking activities like pair and group work, role-playing, and game-based activities.

The findings found no significant difference in pronunciation anxiety between students who started learning English in preschool and students who started in primary school. This suggests that factors such as the quality of instruction, frequency of use, or individual personality traits may have a stronger influence on pronunciation anxiety than the age at which students begin learning a language. It is true that early exposure provides advantages in language learning. However, psychological and instructional factors may have greater importance in shaping learners' confidence and their anxiety (Muñoz, 2006; Dörnyei, 2020; DeKeyser, 2020)

Similarly, no significant difference was observed in pronunciation anxiety between students who took private English courses and those who did not. While private English courses might be potentially helpful for improving skills, they may not necessarily address the emotional aspects of learning a language, such as fear of judgement or self-perception. Supporting this, Botes, Dewaele, and Greiff (2021)

emphasize that the nature and quality of language input, especially if they reduce stress and promote interaction, are more influential than the quantity of instruction. Additionally, there might also be external reasons; for instance, parents of students who take private English courses having greater expectations from them, which in turn increases the students' anxiety levels.

Discussion of the Fifth Research Question

The final question in this study was, “Do students’ exposure to English scores predict their pronunciation anxiety scores?”. To answer this question Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used. The purpose of SEM was to examine whether English Exposure could predict pronunciation anxiety or not. SEM is a statistical technique that allows researchers to test the relationships between variables. The results of the structural equation modelling analysis revealed that there was a significant relationship between students’ exposure to English and their pronunciation anxiety. The model's good fit indices indicate that the data adequately support the hypothesized relationship.

The analysis showed that exposure to English had a statistically significant, direct, negative effect on students’ pronunciation anxiety. This finding is supported by previous studies highlighting the role of language exposure in reducing anxiety during communication and oral tasks (Horwitz et al., 1986; Krashen, 1985). Increased exposure is likely to help students develop confidence and familiarity with the target language and its phonological system, which reduces students’ negative feelings and worries about pronunciation accuracy (Dewaele, 2017; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991).

The relatively modest effect size implies that while exposure has an important role, it may not be the only determinant of pronunciation anxiety. Other factors, such as perfectionism, fear of negative evaluation, or classroom dynamics, could also significantly influence anxiety levels (Gregersen and Horwitz, 2002; Tanveer, 2007). The findings in this study also align with research emphasizing the importance of creating opportunities for meaningful, communicative exposure rather than students being passive learners since active engagement with a language may yield stronger confidence (Ellis, 1994; Lightbown and Spada, 2013). These results highlight the need for instructional

strategies that integrate authentic, low-stress speaking opportunities, especially for learners in high-anxiety contexts (Young, 1991).

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the study suggested some pedagogical implications for teachers and schools. To maximize students' exposure to English teachers should encourage the use of technology through engaging, authentic tasks and platforms. Examples include assigning activities that utilize real-world materials or interactive tools. Schools could also consider providing non-language courses in English, such as art or science, to integrate language learning into diverse educational contexts.

To reduce students' anxiety, strategies like pair work, role-plays, and gamified speaking activities can be employed in supportive, low-stress settings. Explicit pronunciation training can help build students' confidence and reduce anxiety. Since intrinsic motivation and access to English media impact exposure, teachers should leverage these factors by incorporating personalized and interest-based materials to foster engagement.

Schools should also offer workshops and counselling sessions for students who struggle with pronunciation anxiety or, better yet, language anxiety in general and focus on emotional management and confidence-building techniques. Teachers should try to foster a low-stress learning environment by normalizing mistakes as part of the learning process and providing consistent positive reinforcement.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

Since participation in this work was voluntary, the number of participants was limited to those who chose to participate. This may have resulted in a self-selection bias, where individuals with particular characteristics (e.g., higher motivation or interest in English) were more likely to participate, potentially affecting the generalizability of the results. Future studies could aim for a random sampling method to enhance representativeness. As the study focused on Turkish students, the findings of the study can only be applicable to this exact group. The data collection tools may not capture

students' emotional states and experiences completely. Since the data collections tools used in this study were Likert-type questionnaires, they may not give students enough opportunities to express themselves openly.

Due to the cross-sectional design of this study and the specific timeframe in which data were collected, potential changes in pronunciation anxiety and exposure over time were not able to be observed. A longitudinal approach would provide insights into how these variables evolve. The literature review was limited by access to certain databases and publications, potentially excluding some relevant studies that could have provided additional insights. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights that inform several recommendations for educators, policymakers, and researchers.

Suggestions for educators include:

- Incorporating confidence-building activities into the classroom, such as supportive peer feedback, role-playing, and drama-based exercises, to help students, especially females and middle school learners, overcome their fear of pronunciation errors.
- Introducing speaking clubs or informal conversation groups where middle school students can practice speaking without fear of judgment.
- Expanding preschool English programs with play-based and interactive methods to maximize exposure during the early years, as these are shown to enhance long-term engagement with the language.

Suggestions for policymakers include:

- Designing curricula that include authentic and immersive language experiences, such as interaction with speakers who use the target language as their first or second language through virtual exchanges or projects.
- Policymakers should prioritize curricular changes that enhance meaningful and engaging language use, rather than simply increasing instruction time, to effectively increase exposure and reduce pronunciation anxiety. Private English courses and early language instruction can have a

significant impact on language exposure. Policymakers could provide subsidies or incentives for students to access additional resources, particularly in rural areas.

- Developing programs specifically aimed at female students and middle school learners to address their higher levels of pronunciation anxiety. For instance, gender-sensitive pedagogy could be adopted to build confidence among female learners.
- Professional development programs should equip educators with strategies to lower students' language anxiety and integrate exposure-enhancing methods into their teaching.

Suggestions for further research:

- Investigating the qualitative dimensions of exposure, such as its nature (e.g., interactive vs. passive) and quality, to better understand its role in reducing anxiety.
- Exploring other potential factors influencing pronunciation anxiety, such as teaching methods, teacher feedback, classroom dynamics, and individual learner traits, to gain a holistic understanding of the issue.
- Designing a longitudinal study to get insight into how exposure and anxiety evolve over time and their long-term effects on language proficiency.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Exposure to English Scale

İngilizce 'ye Maruz Kalma Ölçeği					
Aşağıda verilen durumların ne sıklıkla olduğunu, size en uygun olan ifadeyi gösteren rakamı yuvarlak içine alarak belirtiniz.	Hiçbir Zaman	Nadiren	Bazen	Genellikle	Her Zaman
1. Arkadaşlarım sınıf dışında İngilizce konuşur.	1	2	3	4	5
2. İngilizcenin konuşulduğu ortamlarda bulunurum.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Evimizde İngilizce konuşulur.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sınıf arkadaşlarım İngilizce konuşur.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Yabancı turistlerle İngilizce konuşurum.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Yurt dışına seyahat ederim.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Öğretmenlerim İngilizce konuşur.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Okulumda İngilizce aktiviteler yapılır.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Okulum İngilizce konuşmamızı teşvik eder.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Okulda dersler İngilizce işlenir.	1	2	3	4	5
11. İngilizce şarkı dinlerim.	1	2	3	4	5
12. İngilizce dizi izlerim.	1	2	3	4	5
13. İngilizce film izlerim.	1	2	3	4	5
14. İnternette İngilizce web sayfalarını okurum.	1	2	3	4	5
15. İnternette İngilizce blogları takip ederim.	1	2	3	4	5
16. İngilizce dergi okurum.	1	2	3	4	5
17. İngilizce gazete okurum.	1	2	3	4	5
18. İngilizce kitap okurum.	1	2	3	4	5
19. İngilizce karikatür okurum.	1	2	3	4	5
20. İnternet ortamında İngilizce sohbet ederim.	1	2	3	4	5
21. İngilizce bilgisayar oyunu oynarım.	1	2	3	4	5
22. İngilizce bilgisayar programı kullanırım.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 2. Pronunciation Anxiety Scale

Yabancı Dil Sınıfında Telaffuz Kaygısı Ölçeği						
Önermeler	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kısmen katılmıyorum	Kısmen katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
1. İngilizce derslerinde genellikle kendimi rahat hissedirim. *	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Sınıf ortamında İngilizce konuşmam istendiğinde kalp atışlarımın hızlandığını(ya da başka endişe belirtilerini) hissedebiliyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. İngilizce bir metni yüksek sesle okumam istendiğinde utanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Konuşmanın az, yazmanın ise daha fazla olduğu derslerde (ör. Gramer veya kelime dersi) kendimi daha rahat hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Derste öğretmenden sonra söyleneni tekrar etmem istendiğinde genellikle utanırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Öğretmenin sorularına İngilizce cevap verirken öğretmenle göz temasından kaçınırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Telaffuzumu geliştirmeyi dilbilgisi ve kelime bilgimi geliştirmekten daha zor buluyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Telaffuzum sınıf arkadaşlarıma oranla daha düşük seviyededir.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. 'th' ve 'w' seslerini telaffuz ederken tuhaf/komik görünüyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Öğretmenin telaffuza özel önem vermediği İngilizce derslerinde kendime daha çok güveniyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. İngilizce sesleri/kelimeleri Türk aksanıyla telaffuz ederken kendimi rahatsız hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Yüksek sesle İngilizce bir metni okurken kendi sesimi duymaktan hoşlanmıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. İngilizce konuşurken doğal değilmişim gibi geliyor.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Sınıf arkadaşlarımdan beni telaffuz hatası yaparken duymasını istemem.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Bazı İngilizce kelimeler ağızdan tuhaf çıkıyor.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Sınıf arkadaşlarımdan İngilizce telaffuzumu tuhaf ya da komik bulmalarından korkuyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Öğretmen derste telaffuz hatalarımı düzelttiğinde geriliyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Bazı İngilizce sesler bana tuhaf geliyor.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. İngilizcenin telaffuzu Türkler için zordur.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Başkalarının İngilizce telaffuzumu duyduklarında hakkımda ne düşünecekleri beni kaygılandırıyor.	1	2	3	4	5	6

21. İngilizce telaffuzum kabul edilebilir düzeyde değildir.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Ders esnasında, İngilizce bir kelimeyi yanlış telaffuz etmem genellikle beni rahatsız eder.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. Bir telaffuz hatası yaptığımda geriliyor ve öğretmenden utanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. Sınıfta diğer öğrencilerin beni dinlediğini bilmek beni geriyor.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. Dilbilgisi veya kelime hatasından ziyade telaffuz hatası yaptığımda daha çok utanırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6



Appendix 3. Research Ethics Committee Approval

REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
TOKAT GAZİOSMANPAŞA UNIVERSITY
THE DECISIONS OF THE ETHICS COUNCIL FOR THE RESEARCH
IN SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

THE DATE OF THE DECISION	SESSION NO	THE NUMBER OF THE DECISION
05.12.2023	19	01-40

DECISION 19.34- The act dated 03.11.2023 and numbered 358862 by The Directorate of Graduate School of Education was discussed.

It was unanimously decided that the applications to be performed and the data collection tools to be used by the researchers whose details are given below conform to ethical principles.

THE TYPE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY	Master's Thesis
THE TITLE	From Shyness to Fluency: The Correlation between English Exposure and the Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety Levels of Turkish Students
THE THESIS ADVISOR/ AUTHOR	Assistant Prof. Dr. Serpil UÇAR Rabia ALKAN (Department of Foreign Languages Education)
THE OPINION OF THE REPORTER	ADEQUATE

Prof. Dr. Nail YILDIRIM
The Chairman of the Ethics Council
(Signature)

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Serkan UMUZDAŞ
Vice Chairman
(Signature)

Prof. Dr. Emine ÖĞÜK
Member
(Signature)

Associate Prof. Dr. Muhittin DEMİRAY
Member
(Signature)

Prof. Dr. Mehmet KARGÜN
Member
(Signature)

Associate Prof. Dr. Tuğba KILIÇER
Member
(Signature)

Associate Prof. Dr. Hüseyin Baha ÖZTUNÇ
Member
(Signature)

Appendix 4. Application Approval for Exposure to English Scale

Re: Exposure to English Scale Kullanma İzni

Kimden Mustafa Gökcan
Tarih 26.10.2023 Per 13:32
Kime rabia alkan

3 ek (2 MB)

Maruz Kalmadocx; MARUZ.pdf; UATE.pdf;

Merhaba Rabia Hocam,

Ölçeği ekte gönderiyorum. Aynı ölçeği bir de üniversite öğrencileri için geliştirmişbk. ekte onun makalesini de ekledim. İstedığınızı kullanabilirsiniz.
İyi günler, iyi çalışmalar..

Mustafa Gökcan

On Mon, Oct 23, 2023 at 12:04 PM rabia alkan

wrote:

Sevgili Mustafa GÖKCAN Hocam,

İsmim Rabia ALKAN. 2013 yılından beri İngilizce Öğretmeni olarak çalışıyorum. Geçtiğimiz yıl Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalında yüksek lisans eğitimime başladım. Yüksek lisans tez çalışmamda size ve Derya Çobanoğlu Aktan hocamıza ait olan Exposure to English Scale anketini kullanmak istiyorum. Bu konuda izninizi istemekteyim. Saygılarımla.

Rabia ALKAN

Arş. Gör. Mustafa GÖKCAN
Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü
Eğitimde Ölçme ve Değerlendirme ABD

Appendix 5. Application Approval for Pronunciation Anxiety Scale

Re: Yabancı Dil Sınıfında Telaffuz Kaygısı Ölçeği

Kimden Oktay Yağız

Tarih 23.10.2023 Pzt 18:55

Kime rabia alkan

Rabia Hocam Merhaba,

Nazik e-postanız için teşekkür ederim, izne elbette gerek yok alıntı yapmanız yeterli. Aşağıdaki önemli bilgileri de paylaşayım.hangi maddeler hangi temaları ölçüyor ona da bakmanız gerek. Baran-Lucarz ın "Conceptualizing and Measuring the Construct of Pronunciation Anxiety: Results of a Pilot Study" isimli makalesi **Classroom-Oriented Research Reconciling Theory and Practice** adlı kitabın 39. uncu sayfasında bulunuyor.(kitap internetten de indiriliyormuş pdf halinde, okumanızı tavsiye ederim bir şekilde. Eğer türkçe versiyonunu kullanacaksanız asıl yazardan izne gerek yok sadece citation yapın Yağız (hangı yıldı benim makale, unuttum şimdi onu ekleyin) adapted Baran-Lucarz's the construct of Pronunciation Anxiety (bunun a yılına bakın ekleyin) referans listesinde her ikisini de verin.

Kolaylıklar dilerim.

Oktay Yağız