

## TEST ANXIETY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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### ABSTRACT

Learners' experiences, teachers' observations and the related literature indicate that test anxiety affect foreign language learning process negatively. This study aims to find the test anxiety level of Turkish students as EFL learners and to investigate its reasons, effects and results on foreign language learning. A test anxiety scale and survey questions were given to the sample group and the data gathered were analyzed statistically and descriptively. Three results were found: First, the learners usually have test anxiety. Second, test anxiety provoking factors are low level proficiency of the learners, negative attitudes of teachers towards test applications, students' attitudes towards language learning, test invalidity, fear of negative evaluation, bad experiences on tests, time limitation and pressure, the difficulty of course contents and parental expectations. Third, test anxiety causes physical and psychological problems, affects motivation, concentration and achievement negatively, increases errors in learning process, prevents to transfer their real performance to test results and studying efficiently and decreases the interest towards language learning. It was recommended that foreign language teachers should be aware of the test anxiety level, its causes and results.

**Key Words:** Learning, Test anxiety, English as Foreign Language

## İKİNCİ DİL ÖĞRENİMİNDE SINAV KAYGISI

### ÖZET

Öğrencilerin deneyimleri, öğretmenlerin gözlemleri ve ilgili literatür, sınav kaygısının yabancı dil öğrenim sürecini olumsuz etkilediğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin sınav kaygı düzeyini bulmayı ve bu kaygının sebepleri, etkileri ve sonuçlarını araştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Örneklem grubuna sınav kaygı ölçeği uygulanmış, toplanan veri, istatistik ve deskriptif olarak analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmada üç sonuç bulunmuştur: İlk olarak; öğrenciler, genellikle sınav kaygısı taşımaktadır. İkinci olarak; sınav kaygısı üreten faktörlerin, öğrencilerin düşük düzeydeki yeterlilikleri, öğretmenlerin sınav

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uygulamalarına karşı olumsuz tutumları, test geçersizliği, olumsuz değerlendirilme korkusu, sınavlarla ilgili kötü deneyimler, süre sınırlaması ve baskısı, ders içeriğinin zorluğu ve ailelerin beklentileri olduğu görülmüştür. Üçüncü olarak, sınav kaygısının fiziksel ve ruhsal sorunlara yol açtığı, isteklendirme, yoğunlaşma ve başarıyı olumsuz etkilediği, öğrenme sürecindeki hataları artırdığı, etkin bir biçimde çalışmayı ve gerçek performansı sınav sonuçlarına yansıtmayı engellediği ve dil öğrenimine olan ilgiyi azalttığı bulunmuştur. Sonuç olarak, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin sınav kaygısının düzeyi, sebepleri, etkileri ve sonuçları konusunda farklı düzeylerdeki düzeylerini artırmaları önerilmektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Öğrenme, Sınav Kaygısı, Yabancı Dil olarak İngilizce

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is described as an uncomfortable emotional state in which one perceives danger, feels powerless and experiences tension in preparation for an expected danger. It is generally classified into three types: *Trait*, *state* and *situation-specific* anxiety. Trait anxiety, a more permanent disposition to be anxious, is viewed as an aspect of personality. State anxiety is an apprehension that is experienced at a particular moment in time as a response to definite situation. Lastly, situation-specific anxiety is related to apprehension aroused at specific situations and events (Ellis, 1994)<sup>1</sup>. Language anxiety, as an effective factor that affects achievement in L2 (Gardner, 1985)<sup>2</sup>, is a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process (Horwitz et al., 1986)<sup>3</sup>. Depending on

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<sup>1</sup> Ellis, R..(1994). **The Study of Second Language Acquisition**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Gardner, R. C. (1985). **Social Psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation**. London: Edward Arnold.

<sup>3</sup> Horwitz, E.K., Horwitz, M. B. and Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. **Modern Language Journal**, 70/2, 125-132.

the synthesis of research context on L2 anxiety, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993)<sup>4</sup> describes it as the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of second language with which the individual is not fully proficient. Thus, L2 anxiety is described as a situation-specific anxiety. L2 anxiety has three varieties: *Communicative apprehension* occurs when learners have immature communication skills although they have mature ideas and thoughts. It is a fear about real communication with other people. *Fear of negative evaluation* occurs when L2 learners feel that they are not able to make the proper social impression. It is an apprehension about others' evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation. Conclusively, *test anxiety* is an apprehension over academic evaluation. It is a fear of failing in test situations and an unpleasant experience held consciously or unconsciously by learners in many situations. It is a type of anxiety concerning apprehension over academic evaluation which comes from a fear of failure (Horwitz and Young, 1991)<sup>5</sup>.

The related literature on test anxiety in EFL learning point out that the factors that influence students' reactions to language tests are perceptions of test validity, time limit, test techniques, test format, length, testing environment and clarity of test instructions (Young, 1999)<sup>6</sup>. The researches show that test validity is one of significant factors that produce test anxiety. For instance, Young (1991)<sup>7</sup> found that students experience anxiety if the test involves content that was not taught in class. Similarly, Horwitz and Young (1991)<sup>8</sup> noted that tests in the lack of

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<sup>4</sup> Gardner, R.C. & MacIntyre, P.D. (1993). On the measurement of affective variables in second language learning. *Language Learning*, 43, 157-194.

<sup>5</sup> Horwitz, E.K. and Young, D.J. (Eds.). (1991). **Language Anxiety: From Theory and Research to Classroom Implications**. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

<sup>6</sup> Young, D. J. (1999). **Affect in foreign language and second language learning**. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

<sup>7</sup> Young, D.J. (1991). Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: what does the language anxiety research suggest? *Modern Language Journal*, 75/4, 426-437.

<sup>8</sup> Horwitz, E.K. and Young, D.J. (Eds.). (1991). **Language Anxiety: From Theory and Research to Classroom Implications**. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

face validity led to higher anxiety and a negative attitude toward instruction. In the same way, Madsen (in Young, 1999)<sup>9</sup> investigated the effects of anxiety on ESL tests and found that high anxiety producing tests were also perceived by students as less valid. Another factor that increases test anxiety and decreases performance is time limit. For instance, in a study conducted by Ohata (2005)<sup>10</sup>, learners sometimes felt pressured to think that they had to organize their ideas in a short period of time. Inappropriate test technique is also one of the factors that provoke test anxiety as Young (1991)<sup>11</sup> reported that students felt anxious when they had studied hours for a test and then they found that question types with which they had no experience. For him, they experienced anxiety with a particular test format. In addition to the anxiety producing ones mentioned above, learners' capacity, task difficulty, the fear of getting bad grades and lack of preparation for a test are the other factors that make learners worried. Similarly, learners with high levels of anxiety have less control of attention (Sarason, 1980, 1986)<sup>12, 13</sup>. According to Chastain (1975)<sup>14</sup>, there was a negative correlation indicating that low test anxiety was related to greater success. Last of all, in Ohata's study (2005)<sup>15</sup>, most of the participants said that they feared taking tests, because test-taking situations would make them fearful about the negative consequences of getting a bad grade.

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<sup>9</sup> Young, D. J. (1999). **Affect in foreign language and second language learning**. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

<sup>10</sup> Ohata, K. (2005). Potential Sources of Anxiety for Japanese Learners of English: Preliminary Case Interviews with Five Japanese College Students in the U.S., **TESL-EJ**, Volume 9, Number 3, 1 – 21.

<sup>11</sup> Young, D.J. (1991). Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: what does the language anxiety research suggest? **Modern Language Journal**, 75/4, 426-437.

<sup>12</sup> Sarason, I. G. (1980). **Test anxiety: Theory, research, and applications**. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

<sup>13</sup> Sarason, I. G. (1986). **Test anxiety, worry, and cognitive interference**. In R. Schwarzer (Ed.), *Self-related cognition in anxiety and motivation* (pp. 193-213). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

<sup>14</sup> Chastain, K. (1975). "Affective and ability factors in second language learning." **Language Learning** 25: 153-161.

<sup>15</sup> Ohata, K. (2005). Potential Sources of Anxiety for Japanese Learners of English: Preliminary Case Interviews with Five Japanese College Students in the U.S., **TESL-EJ**, Volume 9, Number 3, 1 – 21.

The research on the issue in Turkey seems too limited: One study associated with anxiety level of Turkish EFL learners conducted by Dalkilic (2001)<sup>16</sup> focused on the relationship between anxiety and achievement. In the study, test anxiety was not the focus but a factor that has an effect on language anxiety. In another study (Koralp, 2005)<sup>17</sup>, it was found that EFL learners experienced some English language learning anxiety on two anxiety level measures, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety, which were also positively correlated. In sum, it is impossible to draw conclusions from these studies on the level of test anxiety of EFL learners in Turkey, its sources, reasons and effects. This is the main reason why it is necessary to conduct a research on test anxiety of Turkish students as EFL learners. On the other hand, English as a foreign language is taught widely at primary, secondary, higher education and private institutions in Turkey. Depending on the fact that foreign language learning process is a complex and problematic area, it is a necessity to determine the problems, and present recommendations on L2 learning process of Turkish learners. Additionally, test anxiety as a factor that affects L2 learning is a barrier that stops learners from performing well on tests (Jackson, 2001)<sup>18</sup>. Considering this is a problem for Turkish students who learn English as a foreign language, it seems necessary to lead a research on the subject. As a result, these reasons guided this study: First, the studies carried out in Turkey are too limited to reach an end point on the test anxiety of EFL learners. Second, teachers' observations, students' experiences and the research in the fields of education and psychology show that test anxiety in L2 learning process is a significant factor that affects learners' performance and achievement.

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<sup>16</sup> Dalkilic, N. (2001). **An investigation into the role of anxiety in second language learning**. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Turkey.

<sup>17</sup> Koralp, S. (2005). **A Retrospective Analysis of the English Language Learning Anxiety Experienced by Prospective Teachers of English**. Unpublished MA Thesis. Turkey.

<sup>18</sup> Jackson, P. (2001). Test taking doesn't have to lead to test anxiety, **Florida Times Union**. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=61&did>

Depending on the reasons why this research will be administered, the study has four research questions:

1. What is the level of test anxiety of Turkish students as English as foreign language learners?
2. What are the reasons that provoke test anxiety?
3. What are the effects of test anxiety on foreign language learners?
4. What can be done to allay test anxiety?

In conclusion, this study focuses on the level of test anxiety, its reasons, effects and implications on test anxiety of Turkish students as EFL learners.

## **2. METHOD**

The participants in the study consisted of 114 students in English Language Department of Necatibey Education Faculty of Balikesir University, Turkey. Of the participants, 20 (17.5%) were male and 94 (82.5%) were female students. The mean of their ages in the range between 18 and 23 was 20.46. The group consisted of 24 first (21.1%), 30 (26.3%) second, 28 (24.6%) third and 32 (28.1%) fourth year students.

The instrument used to gather descriptive data consisted of three parts: A background questionnaire, a test anxiety scale adapted from Sarason's (1984)<sup>19</sup> Test Anxiety Scale and a survey. The background questionnaire asked for the students' age, gender, and year in college. The test anxiety scale in Likert type (*always=5, usually=4, sometimes=3, rarely=2, never=1*) contained 22 multiple-choice items that aimed to measure the degree of test anxiety (Alpha=0.85). Lastly, the survey

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<sup>19</sup> Sarason, I. G. (1984), Stress, anxiety, and cognitive interference: Reactions to Tests. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46, 929-938.

contained four questions: if they felt test anxiety or not, what the reasons for test anxiety are, what the effects of tests anxiety are and how it can be allayed.

The author visited all the classrooms at the third week of the semester and administered the background questionnaire and test anxiety scale (TAS). Then, the data were analyzed statistically with the aid of the computer software SPSS for the variables of age, gender, formal achievement scores and grade of the subjects. After finding the test anxiety level, the survey was given to the participants two weeks later, taken back in one week and finally the results were analyzed descriptively.

The data analysis process consisted of two steps: Firstly, the reliability coefficient of TAS was found in Alpha (Cronbach) model. The mean scores, standard deviations and standard error of means were found to see the test anxiety level and the homogeneity of the sample group. The data were analyzed to find the relationship between the dependent variable, TAS results and the subject variables, age, gender, grade and overall achievement scores. The correlation coefficients and significance levels between the dependent and subject variables were also presented. After that, the data collected from the survey questions were analyzed descriptively.

### **3. DATA ANALYSIS**

The findings indicate that the participants usually have test anxiety. The EFL learners worry during test taking and sometimes think that other students are better. The students feel anxious when they study for a test. In addition, before and after tests, they feel not confident and relaxed and assume that they would do better after tests. According to the students, tests affect their performance negatively and cause to forget what they know. Test also bothers them and they cannot be sure if they will succeed or not. During the test, they sometimes believe they will fail,

confuse the course content they study and usually feel pressured by time limits. They feel troubled when they prepared well or not and feel crammed before a test. Fortunately, good grades make them confident and they study more even if they have bad grades. As a final point, the following table shows the test anxiety level of the students.

**Table 1.** Test Anxiety Level of EFL Learners

N=114	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I worry while I am taking a test.	3.47	.86	.08
While taking a test, I am thinking that other students are better than I am.	2.75	.88	.08
When I know that I will take a test, I do not feel confident and relaxed.	3.25	.90	.08
During the test, I am thinking unrelated things about the class.	2.28	.87	.08
I feel worried when I learned that I would take a test.	3.30	.91	.09
During the test, I think I will fail.	2.61	.78	.07
After the test, I feel worried.	3.04	.84	.08
I cannot feel confident even if I have good grades.	2.07	1.05	.10
After the test, I feel I would do better.	3.37	.86	.08
During the test, my emotions affect my performance negatively.	3.30	1.03	.10
During the test, I forget what I know.	2.93	.75	.07
I feel worried when I study for a test.	3.04	.84	.08
The more I work, the more confused I get.	2.66	1.05	.10
During the test, I cannot be sure if I will succeed.	2.98	.92	.09
Tests bother me much.	3.26	1.01	.10
I feel pressured by time limits during test.	3.64	1.06	.10
When I have bad grades, I study less.	1.96	1.14	.11
I would learn more if I should not have tests.	2.75	1.18	.11
Tests affect my performance negatively.	2.67	1.06	.10
I worry even when I am prepared well.	2.93	1.23	.16
I worry when I am not prepared well.	4.11	1.07	.10
I feel crammed before an exam.	3.36	.99	.09

Of the 22 items presented in TAS, six are correlated with the age of the participants. The findings show that younger students are more worried while taking

a test ( $p=.04$ ) and affected more negatively than older ones ( $p=.04$ ). Additionally, during test taking, the older the learners are, the more confident and relaxed they are ( $p=.006$ ). Older ones are more confident even when they have bad grades ( $p=.01$ ) and not prepared well ( $p=0.01$ ). Conclusively, during the tests, the younger ones assume more they will fail ( $p=.01$ ).

Three items in the scale are associated significantly with the gender of the subjects. First, female students feel less confident and relaxed than the males when they know they will take a test ( $p=.02$ ). Second, female students are more worried than the males even they are prepared well. ( $p=.02$ ). Third and last, the females study more than the males when they have bad grades ( $p=.00$ ).

It was found that there is a significant relationship between the grade of the subjects and eight of the items in the scale. The findings point out that the level of test anxiety decreases when the level of grade increases. The first years students are the most worried while taking a test ( $p=.01$ ) and when that are prepared well ( $p=.03$ ) among the participants in second, third and fourth grades. First grade subjects are also the least confident and relaxed when they know that they will take a test ( $p=0.002$ ) and their performance is affected the most negatively by tests ( $p=.003$ ). During the tests, only first year students think unrelated things about the class ( $p=.002$ ), don't feel confident even if they have good grades ( $p=.03$ ), cannot be sure if they will success ( $p=.002$ ) and think they will fail ( $p=.00$ ).

Lastly, six of the items are correlated significantly with the overall achievement scores of the learners. According to the findings, the higher the scores are, the less the level of test anxiety is. In other words, the students who have high scores feel more confident and relaxed than the ones who have lower scores ( $p=.05$ ). The participants with lower marks often think unrelated things during the exam ( $p=.008$ ), will fail ( $p=.01$ ) and cannot be sure if they will succeed ( $p=.04$ ). When

they have bad grades, the subjects with lower points study less ( $p=.00$ ) and their performance is affected more negatively than the ones with higher scores ( $p=.01$ ).

According to the answers compiled from the survey questions, test anxiety is closely related to teachers' and students' attitudes and proficiency, test applications, course contents and parental expectations. Students often complain about scoring subjectivity, the lack of inter-rater and intra-rater reliability, using tests for authority and punishment, the lack of information before and after the administration, negative comments before, after and during tests. In addition, the first test application of a new teacher is another reason that provokes test anxiety. When the reasons based on the students' attitudes and proficiency are considered, it seems that low level at proficiency and achievement is the main reason for test anxiety. The lack of preparation for the tests and inefficient or inappropriate test preparation are other reasons that make the learners anxious. The fear of negative evaluation and previous test experiences concluded with failure are other reasons that make the students feel anxious. Beside these, some participants state that they do not like learning language and being compared to other ones by test scores. For them, one of the main reasons that provoke test anxiety is the lack of content validity. Time limitation and pressure during test administration and exams early in the mornings also cause anxiety. They make complaints about inappropriate test techniques and numbers of items, designing the questions from difficult to easy and negative atmosphere in testing environment, too. Ultimately, parental expectations and the difficult course content are other anxiety producing sources.

For the subjects, test anxiety mostly brings negative effects. One of the negative affects of test anxiety is physical problems. The participants who have high level of test anxiety tell that they suffer from headache, stomach, increasing heart pulse and acnes before, after and during test administration. They also say that test anxiety and bad grades causes some psychological problems. These psychological

problems distort self-confidence and the relations between the learners and their parent and friends. For the participants, test anxiety decreases the concentration during the test and motivation towards language learning. They also make more errors during the tests because of low concentration. In the sense, test anxiety prevents to transfer their real performance to test results. In other words, it is a barrier to study efficiently, achieve the courses and use the knowledge effectively. Test anxiety also makes the students interested in tests and their results but not the contents of the courses and learning the target language. The participants are worried about their educational and professional lives in future when test anxiety is considered. Fortunately, test anxiety has a positive effect on the learners: For them, test anxiety is not a factor that causes to study less.

Students' answers to the question "what can be done to allay test anxiety?" indicate that key role belongs to the language teachers. The subjects state that the teachers should be objective in scoring process and use the most appropriate test technique. For them, a test is not a means of punishment or authority. The participants point out that the teachers should inform the students on the aims of the tests, content, test techniques, number of the questions before the administration. For example, a trial version of a test can be administered or given to the learners before it is applied. They also suggest that the teachers should avoid negative and unrelated comments during tests, give valid tests and enough time to answer. In addition, they want the teachers to give clear explanations and sample answers for the test items designed in different test techniques. For them, the "cold" atmosphere in testing environment can be changed by teachers' "warm" behaviors and words, as one of the students states "I don't want fear, but I need courage". The learners also wonder if the only way to measure their skills and knowledge is a test and if the test results are the only criterion to have decisions about their proficiency and achievement. In this viewpoint, they suggest that the teachers can give assignments or projects to evaluate their proficiency and achievement. All in all, according to the learners, the

teachers should be aware of students' anxiety and know how to allay test anxiety. Another aspect in order to allay test anxiety is related to the learners. The students are aware of the fact that high level proficiency is the most important factor to allay test anxiety. Few of them think that test anxiety helps them to learn more. Last of all, the students admit that they have to know to live with anxiety.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

In the study, the following results were found: First, Turkish students as EFL learners usually have a high level of test anxiety. The findings indicate the subject variables such as age, gender, grade and formal achievement scores are correlated with some aspects of test anxiety: Younger learners are more anxious and do not feel more confident and relaxed than older ones. Female learners feel more worried although they prepare well more than males. The level of test anxiety decreases at higher grades and the students who have higher scores are less anxious than the ones who have lower marks. Second, test anxiety producing factors are low level proficiency of the learners, negative attitudes of teachers towards test applications, students' attitudes towards language learning, test invalidity, fear of negative evaluation, bad experiences on tests, time limitation and pressure, the difficulty of course contents and parental expectations. Third, test anxiety causes physical and psychological problems, affects motivation, concentration and achievement negatively, increases errors in learning process, prevents to transfer their real performance to test results and studying efficiently and decreases the interest towards language learning. Fourth, according to the learners, teachers' behaviors and attitudes and learners' proficiency are the key factors to decrease and prevent test anxiety: Inter- and intra-rater reliability, validity of tests, test techniques, clarification of test items, information on the on the aims, content and number of

questions, time limitation and pressure are some significant issues about which teachers should think again to decrease and prevent test anxiety of learners.

According to the related literature, as mentioned before, test validity, time limit, test techniques, test format and length, testing environment and clarity of test instructions are important factors that cause test anxiety of language learners (Young, 1999)<sup>20</sup>. However, depending on the findings in the study, it is also possible to add some other factors: One of them is scoring subjectivity that makes learners anxious while another is closely related to negative aims of using tests such as a means of authority and punishment. Negative comments of teachers on test applications, the fear of negative evaluation and students' bad experiences on prior tests are other reasons that provoke anxiety. To finish, low level proficiency and achievement of the students and their parents' expectations are last two reasons.

Depending on the results of the study, some recommendations can be presented: First, as Young (1991)<sup>21</sup> states that it is vital to "test what is taught", teachers should be aware of test validity and reflect course content to tests. The second significant point is the use of objective scoring methods or objective testing to prevent test anxiety. Alternatively, Alcalá (2002)<sup>22</sup> advises that the use of two or three examiners as one is too subjective and more than three can inhibit the students' performance. It can be said that this kind of application is helpful for both inter-rater reliability of test scores and prevention of test anxiety of learners as Spielberger (in Horwitz and Young, 1991)<sup>23</sup> notes that an individual's objectively measured ability

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<sup>20</sup> Young, D. J. (1999). **Affect in foreign language and second language learning**. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

<sup>21</sup> Young, D.J. (1991). Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: what does the language anxiety research suggest? **Modern Language Journal**, 75/4, 426-437.

<sup>22</sup> Alcalá, F. R. (2002). Making oral tests more human and less anxiety generating. **Humanising Language Teaching**, 4 (4): 1 – 3.

<sup>23</sup> Horwitz, E.K. and Young, D.J. (Eds.). (1991). **Language Anxiety: From Theory and Research to Classroom Implications**. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

to perform the task can determine the effect of anxiety on performance in a test. Third, teachers should inform the students on the aims of the tests, content, test techniques, number of the questions before the administration as Alcalá (2002)<sup>24</sup> states teachers should familiarize students with the exam format, the type of rating system. Fourth, good communication and feedback before and after tests is also beneficial to decrease test anxiety of learners. On the other hand, they should be aware of that tests are not the means of punishment or ways to authority. Thus, they should avoid comments that affect learners' motivation and concentration negatively. Fifth, students need clear explanations and sample answers for the test items designed in different test techniques. Sixth, creating a low-stress language environment is believed to facilitate acquisition of second language by allowing students to concentrate on communication rather than being distracted by test anxiety. In other words, language teachers should acknowledge students' fears and find ways to evaluate students without inducing high levels of anxiety and while still maintaining a positive, effective climate as Huelsman (in Phillips, 1991)<sup>25</sup> recommends that “*something as simple as an encouraging smile before the test begins might diminish the ominous atmosphere.*” Another way to decrease test anxiety in testing environment is to allow learners to express their feelings and comments. For instance, Calvin (in Young, 1999)<sup>26</sup> notes that giving students the opportunity to express how they felt about tests may have an effect on anxiety levels. Lastly, as Alcalá (2002)<sup>27</sup> states that the anxious students “*frequently fail to reach their potential. ... their marks do not fully reflect their knowledge of second language*”, teachers have to find ways such as assignments, group works, projects to

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<sup>24</sup> Alcalá, F. R. (2002). Making oral tests more human and less anxiety generating. **Humanising Language Teaching**, 4 (4): 1 – 3.

<sup>25</sup> Phillips, J. K. (1991). Upgrading the target language proficiency levels of foreign language teachers. **ERIC Digest**. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics.

<sup>26</sup> Young, D. J. (1999). **Affect in foreign language and second language learning**. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

<sup>27</sup> Alcalá, F. R. (2002). Making oral tests more human and less anxiety generating. **Humanising Language Teaching**, 4 (4): 1 – 3.

confirm and compare their students' performance, knowledge and skills. Consequently, when the results are taken into account, it is clear that foreign language teachers have a place in the center of test anxiety provoking issues. Thus, EFL teachers have a key role to decrease the level of test anxiety of L2 learners.

Some limitations of the research can be noted: First of all, the study is limited to the EFL learners at ELT Department of Education Faculty of Balikesir University, Turkey. Second, the study focuses on the learners' experiences and observations on test anxiety they face. Third, the study is limited to the subject variables, age, gender, grade and formal achievement scores of the learners. Background education is not a variable since all the students graduated from EFL classes of high schools. To conclude, considering the study is limited to test anxiety of Turkish students as EFL learners, further research should focus on more analytic concerns such as teacher attitudes as a factor on test anxiety of learners and the effects of validity and reliability on test anxiety.

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