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Elif Merve Turan

August 2012

LANGUAGE ANXIETY AMONG TURKISH GRADUATE STUDENTS IN SOCIAL  
SCIENCES IN THE UNITED STATES

A Thesis Presented to the  
Faculty of the College of Education  
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Education

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### Abstract

*"Language anxiety"* is a condition that has been studied by researchers for decades, yet the existing research on this topic has examined language anxiety in foreign/second language classroom settings. This research study was designed to contribute to the current body of knowledge by investigating language anxiety among 127 Turkish graduate students in the social sciences in the United States. The study utilized a modified version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale and seven in-depth interviews; results indicated that the relation between language anxiety and the following variables: self-perceived English proficiency, year in the program, age, and medium of instruction in college was statistically significant. The relation between language anxiety and gender did not indicate a statistically significant relation. The experiences of the participants with language anxiety were explained under three main categories: instructor and pedagogical, language skills, and classroom environment, and several coping strategies were identified for dealing with the issues of language anxiety.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

The United States has had the largest percentage of the international student population since the 1940's (The Institute for International Education, 2011; NAFSA). Based on the Open Doors data (2011), the number of international students in the United States increased by 5 percent to 723,277 during the 2010-2011 academic year, and the highest percentage of international enrollments is at the graduate level with 296,574 students. The popularity and attractiveness of the higher education institutions in the U.S. among international students from all over the world is related to their powerful education reputation, advanced technology, and many diverse opportunities to study and research. According to Allan Goodman, President and CEO of the Institute of International Education (Open Doors, 2011), the high increase of the international student enrollment for the higher educational institutions from all over the world creates a global learning environment for students and provides benefits in both directions between the United States and other countries by strengthening cultural ties, developing cooperation and enhancing business.

There are also several other positive contributions of international students to American higher education with their unique strengths, including bilingualism and biculturalism, as international students generally represent the best educated of their home countries (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004). According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the economic contributions of the international students to the U.S., through their living expenses and the cost of tuition, are nearly \$21 billion and make higher education in the United States one of the largest service sector exports. In addition, they

add to the “-intellectual capital-” of the United States (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 381) and enrich the learning environment and experiences of American students (Rai, 2002).

Turkey has consistently ranked among the top ten countries in terms of the number of students sent to study in U.S. higher education institutions. Presently, Turkey is the tenth leading place of origin for students in the United States with a total number of 12,184 in the 2010-2011 academic years. Furthermore, more than half of these Turkish students are at the graduate level (Institute for International Education, 2011). Many Turkish students in the U.S. live on their own means or are financed by their families. There is also a high number of Turkish students who are sponsored by the Turkish government or American higher education institutions.

As a developing country, Turkey provides scholarships for students to study abroad on the condition of returning to their homeland upon completion of their studies. Therefore, many Turkish students, especially at the graduate level, are sent overseas by the Turkish government in order to be trained for positions in public institutions and state universities and provided high-qualified human capacity on the condition of returning and contributing to the development of Turkey after completing their studies (MEB, 2011). A need analysis of these students revealed that these students were reporting concerns about academic issues and meeting language requirements for U.S. graduate programs (Seferöglü, 2001). Further results showed that the top reasons for incomplete degrees is related to language based problems.

Although a consistently high number of Turkish students are choosing to study in the U.S., limited research has been conducted among this student population. Considering the fact that language related problems are a big challenge to the international student

population, the purpose of the present study was to examine language anxiety among Turkish graduate students majoring in social sciences.

### **The Significance of this Study**

*“Language anxiety”* is a condition that has been studied by researchers for decades, but most of the existing research studies have examined language anxiety in foreign/second language classroom settings. Although the amount of work at the graduate level is considerably high and has the prerequisite of competency in English in the U.S., there are only a few studies that have examined language anxiety of students at the graduate level, and these studies were conducted among a particular group of international students. Moreover, there are a high number of Turkish international students in the U.S., and most of these students at the graduate level. However, there is not any existing knowledge regarding the language anxiety of these students. Therefore, this study was designed to contribute to the current body of knowledge by increasing the understanding of language anxiety faced by Turkish graduate students in the social sciences in the United States. The reason for examining the language anxiety of students particularly in social sciences is that social sciences prove to be a challenging academic task for non-native English speakers; furthermore, social sciences require students to be more competent in English than do other fields of study such as science and engineering. According to Wan et al. (1992), students majoring in engineering, mathematics, and computer science tended to rate the same situations as less stressful than students in other fields.

In addition, there are few studies that have investigated whether the following variables may affect language anxiety: (a) self-perceived English proficiency, (b) year in

the specific graduate program, (c) age, (d) medium of instruction in college, and (e) gender. Therefore, this study was designed to explore these characteristics related to student language anxiety and to broaden our understanding of its nature. Moreover, coping with anxiety is one of the study areas of health professionals and counselors. However, investigators of language anxiety have offered implications and coping strategies of language anxiety mostly for educators and language instructors because they associated language anxiety with problems in language learning. This study could further inform counselor practice by adding to the knowledge of implications for counselors to help students alleviate their language anxiety and handle the pressures of language anxiety (Wan, Chapman & Biggs, 1992).

### **The Purpose of the Study and the Research Questions**

This study was designed to contribute to the current body of knowledge by increasing the understanding of language anxiety faced by Turkish graduate students in social sciences in the United States.

In this study the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the level of the language anxiety among Turkish graduate students in social sciences in the U.S.?
2. Are there any significant relation between the level of language anxiety and the following variables: (a) self-perceived English proficiency, (b) year in the specific program, (c) age, (d) medium of instruction in college and (e) gender?
3. What kind of experiences do Turkish graduate students in social sciences have that might be examined in relation to language anxiety?

4. What coping strategies are Turkish graduate students in social sciences using to handle their language anxiety?

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of the Related Literature**

International students and their experiences have been the focus of many research studies for decades. Most of this research has focused on the unique experiences of international students in their new environment, and the findings of these studies clearly showed that the experiences of international students are highly challenging and stressful (Dao et al., 2007; Fletcher & Stern, 1989; Yeh & Inose, 2003). A close examination of the literature reveals that many challenging problems of international students in their new environment are related to the language of the host country (Dao et al., 2007; Yeh & Inose, 2003;). Research on international students have reported that language appears to override all other concerns of the international students and is one of the main resources of international students' academic as well as acculturative problems (Mori, 2000; Tatar, 2005; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Wan et al., 1992). Because the language of the host country is often cited in the literature as a major factor of the international student's problem, language is of particular interest to researchers.

Anxiety is defined as "an abnormal or overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physiological signs (such as sweating, tension, and increased pulse)" by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with it (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). There are many types of anxiety, and language anxiety is associated with many types of anxieties such as; state anxiety, facilitating anxiety, debilitating anxiety, social anxiety, and communication anxiety. (Huang, 2009). The relation between language anxiety and other types of anxieties has been determined by researchers in previous studies. According to MacIntyre (1995),

language anxiety is associated with both facilitative and debilitating anxieties. He stated that when language anxiety stimulates learning and increases students' performance, it works as facilitative anxiety. On the other side, when it impedes learning and performing in the target language, it works as debilitating anxiety. Researchers also related language anxiety to social anxiety (MacIntyre, 1995; Pappamihel, 2002; Young, 1990). These researchers claimed that language anxiety might increase in social situations while interacting with others due to the social aspects of language learning. MacIntyre (1995) connected language anxiety to state anxiety, an immediate emotional experience of anxiety, and offered a model to describe how language anxiety could be developed. MacIntyre (1999) stated that, language anxiety develops after experiencing state anxiety over time due to experiences of learning the target language, negative thoughts, and worry over language performance. Ellis (1994) viewed language anxiety as a situation specific anxiety that can be considered as a state anxiety of limited situations. The relation between language anxiety and the other types of anxiety help us to understand the nature of language anxiety.

The literature on language anxiety has offered several definitions of foreign language anxiety. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) are the researchers who coined this term and defined it as a phenomenon of "self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al, 1986, p.128). Pappamihel (2002) defined language anxiety as a social anxiety which is related to interactions in social situations. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) described this term as "the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully

proficient. It is, therefore, seen as a stable personality trait referring to the propensity for an individual to react in a nervous manner when speaking, listening, reading, or writing in the second language” (p. 5). MacIntyre (1999) offered the following definition for language anxiety “the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language” (p. 27).

According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), this specific anxiety is a threat to an individual’s self-concept and results from an individual’s communication of his or her mature thoughts through his or her immature second language communicative abilities:

Adults typically perceive themselves as reasonably intelligent, socially-adept individuals, sensitive to different socio-cultural mores. These assumptions are rarely challenged when communicating in a native language as it is not usually difficult to understand others or to make oneself understood. However, the situation when learning a foreign language stands in marked contrast. As an individual’s communication attempts will be evaluated according to uncertain or even unknown linguistic and socio-cultural standards, second language communication entails risk-taking and is necessarily problematic. Because complex and nonspontaneous mental operations are required in order to communicate at all, any performance in the L2 is likely to challenge an individual’s self-concept as a competent communicator and lead to reticence, self-consciousness, fear, or even panic (Horwitz et al, 1986, p. 128).

Horwitz et al. (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to examine the language anxiety of a learner in a foreign language learning

setting. The FLCAS is a widely used instrument in the domain of language anxiety and includes a total of 33 questions, which assess the three interrelated components of language anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. The first component of language anxiety is communication apprehension, which is a fear or anxiety associated with interaction and communication with people. Language learners might be frustrated when they cannot express themselves or understand others well. Therefore, learners might be frustrated when they communicate in the target language (Aida, 1996; Cheng & Erben, 2011; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). The second element of language anxiety is the fear of negative evaluation, which is related to the worry or concern of making favorable social impression while performing in the foreign language. Learners who have a fear of making mistakes, drawing negative evaluations from others, and leaving a negative impression tend to avoid social situations and interactions. The third component of language anxiety is test anxiety which is triggered from the fear of failure in evaluative situations. Learners might suffer anxiety when they worry about failing to perform well in the target language. These three components are considered to be the vital part of language anxiety and have a negative effect on performing the target language (Aida, 1994; Horwitz et al. 1986).

Numerous studies in the literature have examined the language anxiety level of participants by administering FLCAS. Most of these previous studies on language anxiety have drawn from quantitative research methods and examined the language anxiety in foreign or second language classroom settings (e.g., Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre, 1999; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999; Young, 1990). There is also

some research that has employed both quantitative and qualitative methods (e.g., Chao, 2003; Cheng & Erben 2011; Huang, 2009).

Aida (1994) used a quantitative methodology with 96 English speaking college students enrolled in a Japanese class at the University of Texas at Austin to examine how anxiety is related to Japanese learning and to test the constructs of the Foreign Language Anxiety Classroom Scale. The reliability, standard deviation, and range of this study were similar to Horwitz's study with English speaking students enrolled in Spanish class, which meant that FLCAS is a highly reliable instrument for measuring the anxiety level of the students across gender and among students studying in Western and non-Western languages.

Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley (1999) used the FLCAS to examine what factors predicted foreign language anxiety in 210 university students. The results of this study revealed that the language anxiety level of freshmen and sophomores was low and that students' anxiety level increase with the year of study. Also, they found that there were significant relations between the following seven variables: age, academic achievement, prior history of visiting foreign countries, prior high school experience with foreign languages, expected overall average for current language course, perceived scholastic competence, perceived self-worth and foreign language anxiety.

In another study, which was conducted by Chao (2003), the link between language anxiety and emotional intelligence skills among 306 private college students who learned English as a foreign language in Taiwan was investigated. This study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. The results of this study indicated that the level of anxiety of Taiwanese students was moderately high. Also, the findings

indicated that there was a significant relation between foreign language anxiety and total emotional intelligence skills (e.g., stress management, time management, empathy, decision making, etc.). Students with high language anxiety were found to have less control over their emotional intelligence skills and experienced more problems with their emotional intelligence skills.

A recent study on language anxiety was conducted by Huang (2009). In this study, he aimed to understand Taiwanese graduate students' personal experiences not only with language anxiety but also with cultural adjustment in the U.S. This study included problems Taiwanese graduate students experienced not only in their classes, but also in their daily lives. Unlike most of the previous research on language anxiety, Huang employed a qualitative research method. In this study, the modified version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, one focus group interview, and three personal in-depth interviews were administered to the participants. The findings of this study revealed that listening comprehension, participation in group discussion, and grammatical errors in writing were the three primary factors associated with the participants' language anxiety, as well as adjustment in classroom situations. The three primary factors associated with their language anxiety and adjustments outside of the classroom were the perceived attitudes of Americans, listening-and-speaking related skills, and loneliness/isolation.

Cheng and Erben (2011) conducted another study with 156 Chinese graduate students in a public university in the U.S. This research focused on how several factors (e.g., the length of stay in U.S. higher institutions, various programs, gender, and acculturation process) predicted the language anxiety level of Chinese graduate students.

The findings showed that students, who stayed longer, were female, were in art-related majors, and had the lowest anxiety. Also, the qualitative part of this study revealed that acculturation did play a role in students' language anxiety levels.

As international students come from diverse backgrounds, it might not always be possible to generalize and ascribe the problems of one ethnic or cultural group to all others. Different groups of students experience different types of problems at different levels. The first step to helping a new and unique group of international students should be to try to understand their problems. Therefore, this study was designed to contribute to the current body of knowledge by increasing the understanding of language anxiety faced by Turkish graduate students in social sciences in the United States. An additional goal of this study was provide useful information to helping professionals in order to provide services for international students to alleviate language anxiety.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Methodology**

##### **Participants**

Based on the Open Doors Data (2011), the number of Turkish students in the U.S. is 12,184, and the majority of these Turkish students are studying at the graduate level. Participants for the quantitative part of this study were recruited through the online groups or associations of the Turkish students by using an online questionnaire along with a demographic information sheet. The participants of this study were 127 Turkish graduate students particularly majoring in social sciences. A sample of 7 students among these 127 participants was also contacted for the qualitative part of this study. These 7 Turkish graduate students were social science students at the University of Houston (UH). To recruit these Turkish graduate students at UH for an in-depth interview, the Turkish American Students Association at UH was contacted. Interviews were conducted through the snowball technique to avoid a sampling bias and a total of 7 voluntary Turkish graduate students participated for the second part of this study. Four of the participants were females and three of them were males. Two of the participants were majoring in sociology, two of them in political science, two of them in education, and one participant was majoring in economics.

##### **Instruments**

This study included both quantitative and qualitative instruments. The first instrument of this study was a demographic information sheet that requested the participant's gender, age, level of the study, medium of instruction in college, year in the particular program, and participant's self-perceived English language proficiency (See Appendix A). The

second instrument was the modified version of the foreign language classroom anxiety scale which was developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) as an instrument to measure foreign language anxiety (See Appendix B). The FLCAS is a “self-report measure which assesses the degree of anxiety, as evidence by negative performance expectancies and social comparisons, psycho-physiological symptoms, and avoidance behaviors” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 556). FLCAS is widely used instrument in the field of language anxiety and contains 33 items. Participants were asked to identify their level of agreement or disagreement with each item. Each of the items is answered on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagrees to strongly agree. The original version of this questionnaire was developed to measure participants’ level of language anxiety in foreign language classroom settings. Therefore, some phrases of the original instrument were modified. For instance, the phrase of *language class* in the second item was modified to *classes in the U.S.* the second item “*I do not worry about making mistakes in my language class*” became “*I do not worry about making mistakes in my classes in the U.S.*” after the modification. This instrument has been shown to have a relatively high reliability in terms of its high alpha coefficient (0.943) which supports previous research that FLCAS is a reliable instrument. The last instrument of this study was the semi structured interview questions. (See Appendix C) The questions for the interview were formulated by the researcher based on findings mostly from the relevant literature about language anxiety, and her personal experiences with language anxiety.

### **Procedure**

This research study relied on both quantitative and qualitative procedures. In the first part of this study, quantitative procedures were applied. For this study, the demographic

information sheet and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale were set up together as an online survey. The online groups or associations of Turkish students in social media were searched through facebook groups of Turkish American Students Associations at several universities, google groups, and yahoo groups of Turkish graduate students. Then, the administrators of these websites were contacted and informed of the aim of the study in order to obtain their permission to contact their members. After getting permission from the administrators, the modified version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) along with the demographic information sheet was sent to the online groups and associations of Turkish student. Graduate students in social sciences were requested to participate in this study by filling out the online survey. In the recruitment e-mails (Appendix D and E), the benefits of participation in this research project were also stated to motivate students to be part of this study. The length of this online survey along with the demographic sheet was approximately 10 minutes in length. After a given period of time, the online survey was closed and the questionnaires were sorted to figure out the total number of completed entries. A number of 127 totally completed survey responses were identified for data analyses.

In the second part of the study, a qualitative approach was applied to answer the third and fourth research questions of this study. As a qualitative procedure, one-to-one in-depth interviews with seven Turkish graduate students in social sciences at UH were conducted. The students were reached through the use of the “snowball technique”, which is a sampling method in which existing study subjects recruit the future subjects from among their acquaintances. The snowball technique helped the researcher approach more sample subject through the friends or colleagues of her interviewees. To motivate

students to participate in an interview, the benefits of taking part of this study were explained to them. Examples of benefits include determining the language anxiety among Turkish graduate students and providing assistance for helping professionals and instructors help students handle their language anxiety. The time and the location of the interviews were scheduled by considering the most convenient time and location for each student.

Before conducting the interview, interviewees were asked to participate in the first part of the study by completing the online survey. At the beginning of each interview, the aim of the study and its confidentiality were explained to all of the participants and a consent form was requested to be signed. During the interview phase, the intent was to retrieve students' perceptions of their experiences with language anxiety. Open-ended semi-structured interview questions were asked to each of the interviewees. Semi-structured interview questions provide an opportunity to gain more insight into the interviewees' experiences with language anxiety due to its nature to allow both the interviewer and interviewee flexibility and more freedom to probe for details or to discuss issues. In addition, being unable to speak in their native language might have limited the communication with participants and the data that the participants provided. Therefore, the language of the interviews was in Turkish.

With permission of the participants, the interviews were also tape-recorded. Each tape was kept in a locked and secure file and was available only to the investigator. In addition, a code number was assigned to each student's interview. This code number or general descriptor appeared on all written materials. Each of the interviews was approximately 45 minutes in length. The interviews were conducted by the researcher,

and after each interview the contents from the tape were transcribed. To check the accuracy of the transcripts in print, a Turkish colleague who is familiar with qualitative data analysis was invited to listen to the tapes and read the transcripts before analyzing the data. To analyze the qualitative data, the content analysis method was used. The data were analyzed by developing main codes and themes from the transcripts. Two Turkish researchers were also asked to read through the data and code transcripts into themes. After comparing themes, the thematic patterns were identified and explained in light of previous research.

Many research studies have revealed that the English language is one of the dominant factors in the academic adjustment process of international students in the U.S. higher education. Especially at the graduate level, students are expected to comprehend written English accurately, to understand rapidly spoken English clearly in classroom lectures, to write with proper grammar, and to be able to respond quickly in English with appropriate vocabulary. Although all of the graduate programs require high English proficiency from international students, it is a known fact that international students in social sciences are expected to perform at a high standard of English proficiency in comparison to students in natural sciences. As an international graduate student in social sciences, I have experienced language anxiety due to having language barriers as a second language user. Therefore, my personal experiences with language anxiety served as the main background to conduct research about this phenomenon. My hope is to provide useful information for helping professionals and instructors to assist students deal with their language anxiety and present knowledge for international students to alleviate their language anxiety by learning from others' experiences.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

The results of this study will be explained under two main categories: questionnaire results and interview findings.

#### **Questionnaire Results**

The modified version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) along with the demographic information sheet was sent to the online groups/associations of Turkish student organizations on facebook and gmail. Graduate students in social sciences were requested to participate in this study by filling out the online survey along with the demographic information sheet. After a given period of time, which was a week, the online survey was closed and the questionnaires were sorted to figure out the total number of effective entries. A number of 127 totally completed survey responses were identified for data analyses. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS on a PC. Below the data analyzes methods and results were explained for each question.

#### **Research Question 1**

*What is the level of language anxiety among Turkish graduate student in social sciences in the U.S.?*

To determine the language anxiety level of Turkish graduate students in social sciences, the recommended instructions from a previous study (Huang, 2009) were followed. According to Horwitz (2008), the developer of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, a student's anxiety level can be determined by adding up his or her responses to all the questions after reversing the scores of the negatively coded items and dividing the score by 33 (the total number of questions). A student's indication of

response (a) "strongly disagree" was equated with a numerical value of one; (b) "disagree" with two; (c) "neither agree nor disagree," with three; (d) "agree" with four; and, (e) "strongly agree" with five. Students with averages around three can be considered slightly anxious. Students whose score is below three can be described as probably not very anxious while students whose score is around 3.5 are described as anxious. Students whose score are near and above four are probably fairly anxious. Based on this instruction, Table 1 shows the scores of the participants.

Table 1

*Scores of the Modified Version of FLCAS*

FLCAS Level	Number of People	Scores
Near 4 and above likely to be fairly anxious (3.75-4.76)	14	3.76, 3.79, 3.82, 3.88, 3.94, 3.97, 4.09, 4.39, 4.48, 4.52, 4.76
Around 3.5 anxious (3.25-3.75)	31	3.27, 3.30, 3.36, 3.39, 3.42, 3.45, 3.48, 3.52, 3.55, 3.58, 3.61, 3.67, 3.73
Around 3 slightly anxious (2.75 – 3.25)	42	2.76, 2.79, 2.82, 2.85, 2.91, 2.97, 3.00, 3.03, 3.06, 3.09, 3.15, 3.18, 3.21, 3.24
Below 3 likely to not be very anxious (1.39-2.75)	40	1.39, 1.45, 1.58, 1.67, 1.76, 1.82, 1.91, 1.94, 2.06, 2.09, 2.12, 2.15, 2.21, 2.24, 2.27, 2.30, 2.36, 2.39, 2.42, 2.45, 2.48, 2.52, 2.55, 2.58, 2.61, 2.70, 2.73

Based on the instructions above the number of the participants who are considered low anxious are 40 around a percentage of 31% of the sample. The highest number of 42 the slightly anxious participants represent approximately 33% of the sample. The number of participants who can be described as anxious is 31 with 24% representation, and the

fairly anxious students represent nearly 11% of the sample with a total of 14 participants. In this study, the mean score of Turkish graduate students is 98.58. Table 2 below shows the mean score and standard deviation of the modified version of FLCAS.

Table 2

*Scale Statistics of Modified FLCAS*

Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation	Number of Items
98.58	482.34	21.962	33

To compare the language anxiety scores of Turkish graduate students with a previous study that was conducted among eighteen Taiwanese graduate students, the results indicate that the percentage of Turkish graduate students who fall within the anxious (24%) and fairly anxious (11%) category is less than the percentage of Taiwanese graduate students who fall within the anxious (33%) and fairly anxious (17%) level. However, the sample of the Taiwanese graduate students was not restricted to students majoring in social sciences. Moreover, the number of participants was respectively less compared with the sample of the present study. To determine the significance of the percentage differences between the language anxiety scores of Turkish and Taiwanese graduate students, a chi square test was used. The results indicated that the language anxiety scores of Turkish and Taiwanese students were significantly different,  $X^2(3) = 38.47, p < 0.05$ .

Based on the results on the adapted version of FLCAS, most of the participants feel more anxious in their classes in the U.S. compared to in Turkey, worry about consequences of failing in class, feel more nervous when they forget things they know,

and think that they are not as good as the other students. Appendix F shows all responses for each item, and Appendix G presents the levels of language anxiety for the 127 questionnaire participants, ranging from low level anxiety to high level anxiety.

### **Research Question 2**

*Are there any significant relationships between the level of language anxiety and the following variables: (a) self-perceived English proficiency, (b) year in the specific program, (c) age, (d) medium of instruction in college and (e) gender?*

To determine the relation between language anxiety and the other variables, the data from the modified version of FLCAS and the background information sheet were extracted. Fifty-seven of the participants (44.9%) were female and 70 of the participants (55.1%) were male. Most of the participants were at the master's level with 93 students (73.2%) and the number of participants at the doctoral level was 34 students (26.8%). Most of the participants attended an undergraduate college where the medium of instruction was Turkish (75.6%) and the majority of the participants (58.3%) were at ages between 25 and 27. Table 3 below presents the demographic information of the subject population.

Table 3

*Distribution of the Participants by Background Information*

	Number	Percentage
<i>Age</i>		
22-24	22	17.3%
25-27	74	58.3%
28-30	27	21.3%
31 and older	4	3.1%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	57	44.9%
Male	70	55.1%
<i>Level of the Graduate Program</i>		
Master's	93	73.2%
Ph.D.	34	26.8%
<i>Medium of Instruction in College</i>		
Turkish	96	75.6%
English	31	24.4%
<i>Length of Time in the Program</i>		
Less than 1 year	20	15.7%
1 to 2 years	57	44.9%
2 to 3 years	21	16.5%
3 to 4 years	17	13.4%
More than 4 years	12	9.4%
<i>Self-Perceived English Proficiency</i>		
Poor	1	0.8%
Fair	9	7.1%
Satisfactory	45	35.4%
Good	63	49.6%
Excellent	9	7.1%

The relations between language anxiety scores and the following variables (a) self-perceived English proficiency, (b) year in the specific program, (c) age, (d) medium of instruction in college and (e) gender were determined by applying correlation procedures. The correlation analysis results are presented in the cross correlations table (Table 4) below.

Table 4

*Cross Correlations of the Variables*

		Language Anxiety Scores	Gender	Time in the Degree Program	Age	Self-Perceived English Language Proficiency	Medium of Instruction in College?
Language Anxiety Scores	Pearson Correlation	1	-.134	-.250**	-.222*	-.579**	-.249**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.132	.005	.012	.000	.005
	N	127	127	127	127	127	127
What is your gender?	Pearson Correlation	-.134	1	-.055	.108	-.095	-.040
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.132		.536	.226	.286	.655
	N	127	127	127	127	127	127
What is your length of time in your degree program?	Pearson Correlation	-.250**	-.055	1	.402**	.200*	.228*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.536		.000	.024	.010
	N	127	127	127	127	127	127
How old are you?	Pearson Correlation	-.222*	.108	.402**	1	.085	.073
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.226	.000		.340	.414
	N	127	127	127	127	127	127
How do you consider your English language proficiency in this rating scale?	Pearson Correlation	-.579**	-.095	.200*	.085	1	.311**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.286	.024	.340		.000
	N	127	127	127	127	127	127
What was your medium of instruction in college?	Pearson Correlation	-.249**	-.040	.228*	.073	.311**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.655	.010	.414	.000	
	N	127	127	127	127	127	127

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: Significant correlations are indicated with asterisk (\*or\*\*).

As can be seen from Table 4, there are significant correlations between language anxiety and the following variables: age, medium of instruction, self-perceived English language proficiency, level in the graduate program and length of time in the program. Self-perceived English proficiency had the largest negative correlation with language

anxiety ( $r = -.579$ ). This was followed by the length of time in the degree program ( $r = -.250$ ). The third largest correlate of foreign language anxiety was the medium of instruction in college ( $r = -.249$ ).

The correlation between language anxiety score and self-perceived English language proficiency was statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level. This statistically significant difference between language anxiety score and self-perceived English language proficiency is negative which can be interpreted as students who perceive their English language proficiency as good or excellent have lower language anxiety score compared with students who indicated their language proficiency as poor, fair or satisfactory. The relation between language anxiety and length of time in the particular graduate program found to be statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level. Students' length of time in their graduate program was negatively correlated ( $r = -.250$ ) with their language anxiety score, which suggests that there is more anxiety among students who are in the early years of their program compared with those who are in their later years.

It can be seen that language anxiety correlated significantly at the  $p < .01$  level with age. The significant negative correlation ( $r = -.222$ ) between language anxiety and age means that language anxiety scores decrease with the increase in age. In other word, older students reported less anxiety than did their younger counterparts. In this study, 96 students' medium of instruction was Turkish and 31 students' medium of instruction was English. In the data set, Turkish medium of instruction was coded as 0, and English medium of instruction was coded as 1. The data analysis shows that there is a negative relation ( $r = -.249$ ) between language anxiety and medium of instruction in college. The two-tailed  $p$  value equals 0.05, therefore, this difference is considered to be statistically

significant, which indicated that students whose medium of instruction was Turkish in college had higher language anxiety than students whose medium of instruction was English.

Lastly, the relation between language anxiety score and the gender of the student was not statistically significant ( $r = -.134$ ). Given the results of the quantitative part of this study, the relation between language anxiety and the following variables: (a) self-perceived English proficiency, (b) year in the specific program, (c) age, and (d) medium of instruction in college were found to be statistically significant. The relation between language anxiety and gender did not indicate a statistically significant relation.

### **Interview Findings**

The purpose of the qualitative part of this study was to identify and describe the experiences of Turkish graduate students in social sciences that might be examined in relation to language anxiety and the coping strategies which were used by Turkish graduate students to overcome language anxiety. As a qualitative method, one-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted. Seven Turkish graduate students studying in social sciences at the University of Houston were interviewed by using semi structured interview questions which were developed to elicit answers to the research questions. With the permission of the participants, the interviews were tape-recorded and the taped interviews were then transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The accuracy of the transcripts in print was checked before analyzing the data.

The qualitative analysis process was carried out by reading through the interviews several times in order to make sense out of the data and by identifying the units of the data which were comprised of either a word, a portion of words or a sentence from the

participant's responses to the research questions. Two Turkish researchers who are familiar with analyzing qualitative data were also requested to read through the data and code transcripts into certain units. Then, these coded units were identified and grouped according to main categories by the researchers after coming to a common decision together about which codes should be placed under the same category. Having these two researchers was extremely helpful in gaining alternative perspectives to view the material and not missing any essential detail. Table 4 below presents information about the interviewees.

Table 5

*Demographic Data of the Interviewees*

Participant	Gender	Degree	Length of Time	Major
A	Female	Master's	1.5 years	Sociology
B	Female	Master's	1.5 years	Economics
C	Female	Master's	6 months	Education
D	Male	Doctoral	3 years	Political Science
E	Male	Doctoral	3 years	Political Science
F	Female	Master's	1.5years	Education

**Research Question 3**

*What kind of experiences do Turkish graduate students in social sciences have that might be examined in relation to language anxiety?*

During the analysis, it was realized that some terms such as: "nervous," "frustration," "overwhelmed," "hesitant," "anxious," "fear," "ashamed" and "stressed"

were commonly used by the interviewees. The frequency of these terms in the transcripts served also as an indicator of students' anxiety level. With regard to interview transcripts, it can be stated that all of the interviewees reported experiencing more or less anxiety while performing in English. However, while three of the interviewees seemed to successfully handle anxiety arising from performing in the second language over the course of time, four of the interviewees considered themselves unable to handle language anxiety.

The main difference between those who experience more or less anxiety among interviewees seemed to relate to the individual's background in English and their personality. For instance, interviewees who have self confidence in their language ability due to English as the medium of instruction in their undergraduate level of education, those satisfied with their performance in English, and those who have more relaxed and calm personality traits expressed less experiences and problems in relation to language anxiety. Participants experiences that relate to language anxiety were grouped under three main categories: instructor- and pedagogy-related experiences, experiences related to participant's language skills, and experiences related to classroom environment.

### ***Instructional and Pedagogical Practices***

In regard to experiences related to instructional and pedagogical practices, all of the participants revealed that they experienced language anxiety in various degrees due to the instructional and pedagogical practices of their instructors as well as the instructors' individual idiosyncrasies.

As social science students, 6 out of the 7 interviewees indicated that almost all classes require classroom participation in many ways, such as presentations, large group

discussions, voicing opinions in discussions, and small group activities. They indicated that most instructors value student participation even in the form of spontaneous statements in class, and expect all students to be prepared for class in advance in order to contribute. The transcript appeared to indicate that the requirement of participation in class provoked language anxiety among interviewees due to fear of communicating orally as a result of their immature and limited language skills, difficulty in following discussions, and the anxiety over public speaking.

Like most of the participants, Ms. C stated that she is more relaxed in lecture-based classes than those based on discussion and that she experiences anxiety in her discussion-based class:

My most anxiety-provoking class is the smallest, where there are only 8 people.

The number of students is very few and the instructor considers discussions highly important. I know that I have to talk when I am going to this class, and this makes me feel very tense . . . I push myself to be prepared for this class but I still feel inadequate.

Almost all of the interviewees stated that the classroom format that requires giving a presentation in their second language is one of the most challenging tasks of an international student. As an example, Ms. C mentioned:

I am very worried during my presentations. I begin to prepare several days before the actual day, repeating my speech many times by myself and trying to overcome accent barriers, but all of my effort still does not help . . . After the presentation, answering questions is also a difficult process because I need to understand the questions, then I have to create an answer in my mind, and afterwards I translate

from Turkish to English, and lastly explain my answer while worrying about making grammar mistakes

While enrolled in seminar classes based on discussions and very active participation, Ms. A stated she sometimes felt overwhelmed in seminar classes and mentioned her concern about following the classes due to difficulty in understanding the accent of some classmates and keeping up with conversation:

Because all of the students are native except me, during discussions the conversations flow very quickly and everyone speaks very fast. While I am trying to understand the first person and opine about his comment, the topic is already changed. These situations make me feel anxious.

Three of the interviewees mentioned that they expect professors to show tolerance to international students and not to compare participation with native students. Three of the interviewees commented that some of their instructors did not show any tolerance to international students and expected from them the same performance as native students in writing and speaking. They suggested that professors should be sensitive to individual differences and that they should not evaluate non-native students' work in the same way as those of native students. For instance, Ms. A stated that even if she deserved an "A" as her final grade in one of her classes, she got a "B" because her class participation grade was a "C."

Five interviewees mentioned that instructors' interruptions for clarification and correction of speaking mistakes are anxiety-provoking. Ms. F cited that formulating a response or comment might take a long time and could be grammatically incorrect. She

added that she was frustrated by the corrections and interruptions of her speech. She reported that:

Instructor's corrections of my words bother me and make me feel uncomfortable in class. I am supposed to participate and participation affects my grades.

However, the instructor's paraphrasing my words in order that they be understood by every student and going over my statements to clarify them annoyed me.

Perhaps I am saying something too complex? I believe that they can understand me if they really want to . . . Why do they insist on clarifying my words instead of comprehending?

A teacher's attitude and personality also appeared to play an essential role in the development of language anxiety. Most of the interviewees reported that they are relaxed and less worried about language performance in classes whose professors are supportive, empathic, and tolerant of them. Mr. G mentioned how one of his instructors made him feel relaxed in class:

I am relaxed in his class due to his positive attitude towards me. When I talk to him, I do not worry about whether or not I am going to make mistakes . . . Also, even though his assignments are difficult and take considerable time to complete, I am not concerned about the time I spend on them, as I try to do my best while working on them, and I feel relaxed . . .

Similarly, Ms. C explained how the positive attitude of her professor helps her to reduce anxiety:

He listens to what I am talking about and makes extra comments about my word usage. When I am stuck, he asks me questions to show me a direction and help me

explain from a different perspective. I was comfortable in his class and talking in English did not seem as difficult or challenging a process for me . . .

Mr. D noted that most of the professors in his department are very supportive and empathetic, but one of them, also a non-native speaker, showed more tolerance to international students in the department. Ms. F indicated that due to the nature of her major, the number of professors whose native language is not English is few. She believes that if she had had more non-native professors, she would be understood more.

Three of the interviewees stated that professors who show tolerance and understanding to international students, do not cut off points for grammar mistakes, and grade assignments based primarily on the content, lead them to worry less about writing activities. Two of the interviewees mentioned how happy they were when they received a detailed feedback from their professors for their writing assignments. Both Ms. C and Mr. E stated they felt that the care of a professor and assistance in correcting mistakes helped them to improve their writing skills. Inversely, almost all of the interviewees stated that teachers who do not provide a warm environment and are not sensitive to individual differences lead to language anxiety.

Criticism of a student's language skills and discouragement were other negative actions of teachers that were indicated as anxiety-provoking by two of the interviewees. Mr. G stated that he lost his confidence to write in English due to the reception of negative comments from a professor on an assignment and mentioned how one of his professors discouraged him openly. He said:

When I went to my professor's office to decide on a master's thesis topic, she asked me if I would be able to write a thesis myself. I said yes I would, and also

that I went to a doctoral program. She said, “You cannot get a Ph.D. Forget that.”

I was shocked and said that I am studying and doing my best, to which she replied that studying would not help me. That was my worst experience. . .

### ***Classroom Environment***

The interview transcripts indicated that another source of language anxiety is associated with the environment of the class. The attitude of the classmates, the number of students in class, classroom activities, and the number of international students were named as factors that can induce or reduce language anxiety. For instance, the positive attitude of the classmates was said to be an essential source of relief for language anxiety and creation of a safe and relaxed classroom environment. Classmates who are friendly towards international students, open-minded about people from different cultural backgrounds, supportive, empathic, collaborative in group work, patient listeners, and generous were declared an essential source for handling language problems and experiencing less or no anxiety in class. Ms. A mentioned the cooperative support of one of her native classmates and stated that she was very thankful for her help in correcting her grammar mistakes and checking the cohesiveness of her writing assignments. Ms. B made comments about the support of her classmates and explained how her classmates' positive attitudes and support helped her to relax:

Both my Indian and native classmates know me well. They know my situation, and they know that I am an international student. As a result, they are very nice to me and try to understand me . . . I try to talk with them to get used to speaking fluently in English. They are always very supportive. They told me to come and

practice with them every day and not to hesitate to ask questions to clarify the course materials. I always have their support . . .

A larger class size was considered a factor that reduced language anxiety.

According to Ms. C, when there are fewer people in a class, she experiences more anxiety because she cannot pass unnoticed in class and is expected to contribute more than she would in a larger class. Inversely, she stated that she was less concerned in crowded classrooms in which she was noticed less by teachers and did not have to contribute as much. Mr. E made similar comments and added that besides class size, he was concerned about his relationship with classmates. He said, “I am more comfortable among classmates whom I know well even if the class is not? crowded.”

The number of international students in a class was also indicated to be an important factor in the comfort and collaborative assistance of students. Mr. D stated that:

When I have international students in my class who are on the same level as I in terms of language, I feel more relaxed . . .

Collaboration with classmates was also noted to be anxiety-reducing by five of the interviewees. Transcripts indicated interviewees tended to collaborate mostly with the other international students in class and that their collaboration is very beneficial for overcoming problems related to language. Mr. D and Mr. E provided the same example of how the collaboration with their international classmates helped them to be more prepared and less anxious in class. Mr. D said:

In my earlier semesters in this major, my international classmates and I shared the assigned readings of the course and came together before class to explain them to one another. By explaining the articles and discussing the content, we practiced

speaking and rehearsed the course subject. By sharing them, we saved time and also got some ideas and were able answer basic questions about every article, a task which would have been almost impossible for us to do in the assigned time we were given. During the class, the person to whom an article was assigned spoke when his article was brought up. Through this collaboration of international students, we did not seem weak in front of teachers.

Factors that are associated with negative classroom environments and that increase anxiety include native classmates, certain speaking activities, unfamiliarity with the class subject, the nature of some classes, and the negative attitudes of classmates. Sources of anxiety connected to native people by all of the interviewees were accent and speech rate. Interviewees reported concern about missing words and not understanding some of their classmates and mentioned the difficulties of doing group work with them due to their accents. Mr. D cited that he was sometimes off-topic during conversations when he did not understand what was said by a friend with an accent. The speech rate of classmates was also indicated to be anxiety-provoking due to the experience of stress from attempting to follow a class lecture. As an example of this situation, Ms. B explained:

I do not feel comfortable talking to some of my friends because they are talking so quickly. I am concerned about the possibility of misunderstanding and of saying something wrong . . .

Six interviewees indicated that the attitudes of classmates were generally nice and respectful towards them. However, one interviewee cited the negative impact of a friend's behavior on developing language anxiety and the main source of his hesitancy in

class. Ms. C mentioned a situation and explained how the attitudes of her classmates toward another international classmate became her reason to keep from speaking in class.

She stated:

On the first day of my second class in the U.S., I experienced something bad.

There was an international student from Nigeria in class who had a heavy accent that made him unintelligible. Even with his accent, he was willing to talk.

However, while he was talking, our classmates looked at him very strangely and with condescension, and scorned. From that day on, I thought that they would look at me in the same way. Therefore, I do not talk unless it is required, and sometimes weeks pass by in which I don't say anything at all in class . . .

She also mentioned that she feels as if she is a stranger in one of her classes because of the treatment she receives from her classmates, and said:

In one of my classes, the people around the table where I sit are all native. When we do group work in this class, I feel that they do not want to listen to me. Yes, they allow me to talk, but they do not understand me, and they do not comprehend what I am talking about . . . I might not clearly explain my opinion or have some grammar mistakes. I can say only a few sentences before they continue to talk amongst themselves, ignoring me and never turning to me again. When I want to talk and add something, it is hard to get their attention and I need to repeat my words several times. Due to their attitude, I feel like a stranger . . . Their behavior demoralizes me . . .

Due to the fear of speaking in front of others and anxiety about performing in a second language, classroom activities such as doing simulations of a situation was named as anxiety-provoking. An example was reported by Ms. F:

In one of my classes, we were expected to collaborate with the instructor and with partners to demonstrate family counseling techniques in-class by serving as both “clients” and as “counselors.” However, I was anxious about role-playing spontaneously due to having language barriers and not expressing my words clearly and quickly. When the instructor looked at my eyes to request I participate, I told him that I could not do it. Thankfully, he understood my concern and did not insist . . .

If the nature of the class requires student participation, students indicate higher levels of anxiety due to the difficulty of performing in a second language. Anxiety was also related to the nature of certain classes in which student conversations or lectures go very rapidly and leads to the inability of struggling students to comprehend the course subject. Besides the class nature, being familiar or unfamiliar with the course subject in its native language was also stated as an essential factor that affects anxiety. Mr. E cited the importance of being familiar with the terminology of the course subject by overcoming language barriers such as time spent reading and enhancement of the understanding of the lectures. Similar comments were made by Mr. G. He also thought that if he had been familiar with the course content in Turkish, he would not have become frustrated in some of his classes when the lectures or readings did not make any sense. He said:

I did not have a background in my master’s program when I first began.

Therefore, the terminology and course subject did not make any sense to me. It

was totally unfamiliar. I was frustrated from the beginning since I did not have any idea about what was said in class . . .

### *Language skills*

Interview transcripts appeared to indicate that being an international graduate student in a social science program was highly challenging and difficult due to the high requirements of their major in terms of language. Based on the transcripts, the experiences of Turkish graduate students in social sciences stemmed from various sources of different language skills. Therefore, their personal experiences with language anxiety will be presented into the four basic language skills: speaking, writing, listening and reading.

Almost all of the interviewees cited anxiety and stress associated with the writing requirements of their major. As social science students, all of them indicated that the requirement of their major was very high for an international student in terms of using English in writing. Some expressions they used to describe their language anxiety regarding writing was “unsatisfied,” “stressed,” “insufficient,” “hopeless,” and “uncomfortable.” As a part of the students’ complaints, problems of writing were listed as “dissatisfaction” in relation to academic papers, stress due to the challenges of theses, worry from grammar mistakes and appropriate usage of language, frustration resulting from a professor’s evaluation, pressure of meeting a deadline of writing assignments, and anxiety over answering essay questions on exams.

Among the interviewees, Ms. F and Mr. G cited writing as the main cause of their problems that led to experiencing anxiety and they made an astonishing amount of negative comments on writing. Ms. F stated that the main reason for her anxiety was

related to encountering many problems with writing. She continued by stating that experiencing many problems caused her to lose joy of writing, and she postponed assignments due to dissatisfaction with her writing ability. She expressed her feelings over writings assignments:

I am not good at expressing my thought in English. Because I do not consider myself to naturally write everything that I want, I spent much time on thinking about how I am going to write it. This is the main reason behind not doing anything until the last moment because I do not want to write and know that I cannot write it as I want to. I feel limited while writing due to my limited vocabulary and inadequate grammar knowledge and feeling limited makes me nervous. I am stressed and feeling tense while doing my writing assignments . . .

As an international student, every interviewee complained about the amount of time they spent on writing assignments in comparison to their native friends. Even two of interviewees who consider themselves advanced and sufficient in writing complained about the time they devoted to papers. Mr. G complained that even though he spent a long amount of time on writing assignments as an international student, the effort he put forth did not help him succeed. He stated that he felt frustrated and lost his self confidence when success did not follow his hard work. He mentioned two different negative experiences associated with his inability to write properly in English:

Last year, while I was working on a 30 page paper, I was stuck at some point of it. I was very stressed and overwhelmed and felt lost, so I started to smoke cigarette in every thirty minutes. I did not do what to continue to write. I talked with the professor and mentioned to her that I had problems with writing and requested to

have more time, but the request was not accepted. The only option seemed to write a new paper. I thought so because I lost my self confidence about writing after receiving too many negative comments and was concerned about my professor's evaluation of my paper. I sat and wrote a totally new assignment but I was a few minutes late for submitting it. Because of submitting late, my grade was declared later than my friends. Also, my professor complained about my writing problems to the chair of the program. During the break, I did not do anything and was in a cold sweat due to being suspend for a while. This was a very hard experience for me. It was very hard. And I have been in the counseling services for eight months.

Mr. G said that he was not able to concentrate on writing long papers right now due to enduring mental health problems. While he explained another unpleasant experience, he expressed anger and disappointment to his professor:

During the first semester in the program, I was afraid of failing in one of my classes because I got a "D" grade from my exam and my presentation and paper were not considered successful. I returned my paper to modify it. I asked from seven different people to check this paper. I called my American family with whom I stayed after coming to U.S., and several of my classmates. I went to the writing center and got help on editing. I was a scarred stiff due to the fear of failing. Believe me if you had seen me at that time, even you could have helped me. I checked and edit it many times. The instructor wanted to look at the paper and she did some modifications. Finally, when I submitted my paper to the instructor, she told me that she intentionally pushed me so

hard. And, recommended me to get 15 days rest without worrying about anything but I had already lost my mind.

Listening was the other language skill that created anxiety except for two of the interviewees. Ms. B stated that she did not encounter anxiety due to listening because her graduate program, economics, that was primarily based on mathematical expressions and universal terminology and did not require comprehending verbal and linguistic expressions. Ms. F cited that she experienced anxiety over comprehending listening only in one class whose instructor used to speak in old-fashioned English. Otherwise, she did not indicate any problems with listening skills due to practicing comprehension for so many years and by watching movies and listening to songs in English since a child. Although comprehending listening was not stated as an important concern for two participants, several anxiety provoking problems with listening comprehension were indicated by the other interviewees.

While interviewees were describing their problems, they characterized their feelings as “frustrated,” “nervous,” “uncomfortable,” and “hesitant.” Ms. A used the terms “being nervous and worried” when she described her listening comprehension problems because of difficulty in catching up with conversations. Similarly, Mr. D and Mr. E mentioned that comprehending the listening was challenging especially in the first semester in their major. Mr. D provided an example of a common experience for international students who have difficulty with listening comprehension:

One day, while I was talking with one of my professors, he asked me a question.

Although I did not understand what was asked, I answered it as yes. The professor looked at my face and asked what was yes? And continued saying that I did not

ask you a yes or no question. I felt myself bad on that day after he repeated the questions and I understood that I had totally misunderstood him.

Ms. C claimed that although her listening ability was gradually improving over time and she was not as anxious anymore when following lectures, she still displayed nervousness when having to catch up with the whole class during discussions.

Due to the inability of following conversation which keeps going fast, I was nervous in class. In order to not miss anything, I try to sit closer to one of my classmates and asked him/her the parts that I missed. However, I was upset when I understood that she became bored with my questions.

Mr. G cited the speech rate and the unfamiliarity with the terminology as the other reasons of inability to comprehend listening and complained about the challenging process of comprehending everything in the whole class.

Due to being not familiar with subject and terminology, I did not understand the lectures during my first semester. Therefore, I did not contribute to class. I was like a drunk . . .

I lost the conversations and got disconnected with the class. It was terrible to follow few people in class. Follow them if you can. Will I try to catch up with them every time?

Speaking was cited as a highly challenging language skill and a huge source of anxiety by almost all of the interviewees. Based on the interview transcripts, participants revealed many speaking related problems and made numerous comments about the difficulties of speaking. As non-native speakers of English, they did not consider themselves to have sufficient oral-English proficiency. As being an international

graduate student in social sciences, all of them also complained about the high expectations of their professors and the difficult requirements of their graduate program with speaking performance in English. Ms. F claimed that based on her supervisor's decision about her oral proficiency in English, she was not allowed to provide some services during practicum in her site. She was worried of failing and felt unsure of her ability.

I must meet the requirement of my program by providing every service that I learnt. However, my supervisor told me that I was not eligible to practice every skill due to having language barriers. I am doing my best and spending much more time in the practicum site than the other students. Also, I think I am better of communicating with people than some others. Even she told me that I am good at communicating with people, and people like me. She still does not allow me to see individual clients by myself and never gives me chance to perform. This made me feel unsure about myself and I was scared about failing in class and was very stressed until talking with my professor.

Interviewees indicated that poor pronunciation of English words, miscommunication issues, difficulty of overcoming accent, and the inability to speak rapidly and correctly as some of their speaking related problems that caused less involvement in class activities, lack of confidence in using English, fear of losing face, and anxiety over performance. In addressing these problems they described their feelings as "shy," "silly," "nervous," "unsatisfied," "scared," and "unsecure." Even the interviewees who were less worried about their oral language proficiency, Mr. D and Mr. E, stated anxiety over not being able to fully use and show their potential due to limited

vocabulary and their inability to express their thoughts in English with rich expressions.

Mr. E cited that due to limitations in expressing thoughts, he sometimes became less motivated in his studies.

Being called on in class for an answer, seeing a professor in an office, and making casual conversations with friends, presenting opinions or themselves adequately in class were also named as anxiety producing and caused avoidance of communicating with people. Mr. G admitted that he avoided speaking. When he was supposed to speak, he stated that he was “hesitant” and “ashamed”. In addressing this issue, he said: “I feel silly by using simple vocabulary while speaking. I am not a young and in middle age but the vocabulary I use is so childish”. Ms. C stated that she considered herself to be like a cat on a hot brick due to the possibility of being called on to speak and explained the reason that keeps her from speaking:

I was uncomfortable while speaking and considered myself very slow in speaking. When I had to talk in English, I spoke very slowly. People who listened to me became bored; I made many mistakes and wasn't able to express my thoughts properly. People do not understand what I was talking about...Also, I feel anxious to go my professors' office because I can see in their eyes that I am expected to speak in English, effectively. They think that because I passed the TOEFL, I can speak in English very well. However, I cannot and have a fear of not meeting their expectations.

Reading was one of the other struggling skills of international students. Due to the nature of their graduate program, most of the participants spoke about having difficulty with the assigned long readings for almost every class. Spending too much time on

reading assignments, difficulty of comprehending the written language, challenges of reading articles from a critical eye, and feeling anxious over catching up with the deadline were some common problems of reading revealed by the participants. Mr. D complained about spending a whole day reading an article in his first semester and mentioned his concern about spending too much time on comprehending reading.

As a student in social sciences, I am required to look for a thesis subject by reading numerous articles and being very familiar with literature in comparison to students in natural sciences. However having language barriers causes an individual to read one article instead of having the opportunity to read many. If I were a native speaker, I would have read and understood more articles, decided on my thesis subject quicker, and graduated earlier. Also, my thesis subject would have been more original.

Similar comments were made by Mr. G. He noted that due to the difficulty of comprehending written language, he felt unsuccessful and frustrated.

Sometimes, I have a hard time understanding the articles. At those times, I looked at the first pages, last pages but nothing helped me to understand and I felt unsuccessful. Then, I read the first sentences of each paragraph to get at least a sense from the article and have something to say. When I went to classroom and realized that it was not as hard as I thought while reading, I became crazy. I thought about how simple a subject they are talking about why I could not understand it. This drives me really crazy.

**Research Question 4**

*What coping strategies are the Turkish graduate students in social sciences using to handle their language anxiety?*

Interviewees reported a wide range of coping strategies for handling language anxiety and language problems. Most of these strategies served for improving language skills because students indicated that strategies for improving language skills helped students gradually improve language skills and decreased anxiety by overcoming language problems over time. In other words, being more competent in English by handling language problems is connected to being less anxious over language. Students also mentioned several strategies for handling anxiety in an immediate time. All of the seven participants were quite clear on noting this connection between language proficiency and anxiety and offered numerous strategies for improving language proficiency. Based on the transcripts, strategies for improving language skills and alleviating language anxiety fell into four categories: strategies for reading, listening comprehension, writing, and speaking. These strategies are explained below.

***Coping strategies for handling language anxiety***

As noted earlier, participants complained about large volumes of assigned readings due to spending a great deal of time and meeting the deadlines. To overcome these anxiety producing problems, five of the seven Turkish graduate students offered some tactics for saving time. For instance, Mr. D and Mr. E offered reading the introduction and conclusion as well as all section headings instead of being compelled to read every sentence in order to improve reading speed and decrease time spent. Comprehending the written language and reading with a critical eye were the other

reading related problems for most of the participants. In order to cope with these problems, students proposed taking notes on main points during reading, collaborating with friends to better comprehend and confirm understanding, enhancing vocabulary, and guessing the meaning instead of looking to a dictionary for every single word.

All of the participants stated anxiety stemming from writing problems. Four of the participants reported getting help from the writing center or a native friend was very useful to minimize grammar mistakes and problems with structure or organization. Although they believed having someone to edit would be very effective and useful, they mentioned difficulties of finding an available person and the quality of the services of the writing center. For instance, Ms. F stated that due to the limited time of services at the writing center, she was unable to have her long assignment checked within that period, so she was concerned about the quality provided in a limited time. Mr. G stated that getting stuck was a huge and stressful problem of writing for him. He cited that at those moments he felt tense and nervous. To cope, smoking a cigarette was his way of reducing anxiety.

The misuse of vocabulary and the stress over a professor's evaluation were cited earlier as two of the problems with writing. Ms. B reported that for appropriate usage of vocabulary, she wrote part of the sentence that included the vocabulary on the Google bar and checked the results to learn if there were any similar usages or not. To cope with stress over evaluation, Mr. E mentioned that he thought about the benefits of receiving feedback from assignments instead of worrying about them. He appreciated professors who gave a detailed feedback that helped to improve writing skills, know what was to be expected, and avoid repeating the same mistakes.

Oral performance was also cited as a big obstacle for all of the participants. To cope with speaking problems, participants revealed several coping strategies. Making English speaking friends and spending time with them was a strategy offered by six of the participants. Ms. B cited that talking with classmates was the most useful method for practicing thought expression and overcoming accent and mispronunciation problems. Some similar statements of Ms. B were also voiced by Ms. C and Mr. D. Like those participants, Ms. F reported that socializing with American friends and being corrected by them not only helped her to express thoughts properly, but also aided her in becoming more fluent in oral English. As another method of dealing with speaking difficulties, Ms. C noted that requiring herself to speak by making a comment or asking a question in class was an effective strategy to overcome anxiety. With regard to anxiety from speaking, Mr. D cited that when being called on class or being required to speak, the thought of not being the only nonnative speaker in class made him feel relaxed and reduced his anxiety.

To cope with anxiety over talking with professors, participation in classroom activities, and giving presentations, students proposed some useful strategies. For instance, three of the participants cited that before seeing a professor in his/her office, they prepared their speech in mind and made outlines in order to be fluent while speaking and not miss anything. Several strategies for handling presentation were also addressed by almost all of the participants. Ms. A cited that she used PowerPoint for her presentations and wrote every single point into the slides. This way, she only read the slides instead of explaining the presentation subject. Ms. B mentioned that she coped with the problems of giving a presentation by memorizing every single word she was

going to say during her speech. Mr. E suggested to practice at least once in front of a person briefly and found out that his method was highly effective to apply.

Mr. G provided another coping method and stated that after trying several times to explain his thesis subject to the professor, he was still not understood, and as a result, he gave up talking with him. Instead of experiencing anxiety due to not being understood again, he believed that the professor did not have any knowledge about his subject and that was the reason for the miscommunication and not because of the language barriers. Lastly, Ms. F reported using visual materials such as videos, and provided an environment for classmates to collaborate and participate in order to speak less as an alternative coping strategy in giving a presentation.

As for dealing with the problems of listening comprehension, the most common suggestion was watching movies or series without subtitles to acquire knowledge of spoken English and to also learn academic as well as daily English. Several useful strategies for listening problems with lectures and class discussion were also offered by all interviewees. For example, Mr. A reported that she recorded lectures and class discussions and listened to them at home in order to not miss any essential information and have a better understanding of the subject. Ms. B suggested two effective strategies for handling problems with listening that included asking the speaker to repeat the parts missed and request them to slow down if they were speaking too fast.

Ms. C provided two examples about her way of coping with listening problems. She stated that she experienced difficulty understanding her professor in her online class. Therefore, instead of attending the class from home online, she went the professor's office and followed the lecture from there. The other strategy that she used in class was

sitting closer to one classmate and asking for clarification on the parts she did not understand or missed. Lastly, collaboration with friends, previewing the subject, and trying to understand the general concept instead of every single detail were suggested to cope with listening related problems.

Consequently, interview findings of this study presented a wide range of language provoking experiences of Turkish graduate students. Based on these findings, it was realized that language anxiety stemmed not only from the poor language skills of the participants, but also from the instructional practices and the negative attitudes of classmates. Therefore, experiences of the participants with language anxiety were discussed under three major categories: instructor and pedagogy related experiences, experiences related to participant's language skills, and experiences related to classroom environment. Although numerous problems with language anxiety were indicated by the interviewees, it was surprising to observe that their motivation of pursuing study in the U.S. remained very strong by six of the seven participants. To deal with language anxiety, participants stated a variety of coping strategies that were discussed under four domains of the language: reading, listening comprehension, writing, and speaking. Most of these coping strategies were determined to be highly effective for reducing the anxiety and fear of the participants over language and improving their language proficiency in English.

## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion**

The previous chapter presented the results of the questionnaire and the summative data of the experiences of Turkish graduate students in social sciences in the U.S. In this chapter, the connection between the quantitative as well as qualitative data and previous research was discussed, some comments on the unique findings were noted, and the researcher's reflections of her own experiences were stated. Additionally, implications for helping professionals were offered, and the chapter was closed with a discussion of limitations and suggestions for future research.

#### **Relationship of Results with the Previous Research**

Given the results of the quantitative part of the present study, the mean score of the Turkish graduate students on the FLCAS was 98.58. Whereas this mean score is higher than those of Horwitz's (1986) study of American students of Spanish (mean: 94.5), and Aida's (1994) study of American students of Japanese (mean: 96.7), it is lower than those of Truitt's (1995) study of Korean EFL students (mean: 101.22) and Chao's (2003) study of Taiwanese college students (108.51). These findings seem relevant to the concept that level of language anxiety may vary in different cultural groups, as suggested by studies of language anxiety and achievement.

To compare the language anxiety scores of Turkish graduate students with a previous study that was conducted among eighteen Taiwanese graduate students, the results indicate that the percentage of Turkish graduate students who fall within the anxious (24%) and fairly anxious (11%) category is less than the percentage of Taiwanese graduate students who fall within the anxious (33%) and fairly anxious (17%)

level. However, the sample of the Taiwanese graduate students was not restricted to students majoring in social sciences. Moreover, the number of participants was respectively less compared with the sample of the present study.

With respect to the second research question, the relation between language anxiety and the following variables: (a) self-perceived English proficiency, (b) year in the specific program, (c) age, and (d) medium of instruction in college were found to be statistically significant. The statistically significant negative relation between language anxiety score and self-perceived English language proficiency meant that students who perceive their English language proficiency as good or excellent have lower language anxiety scores compared with students who indicated their language proficiency as poor, fair or satisfactory. This finding was consistent with a previous study by Kunt (1997) of the relation between language FLCAS score and English proficiency level of Turkish university students learning English in North Cyprus, which determined that students' anxiety level decreases as their proficiency in English increases. The negative relation between self perceived deficiency and language performance was also cited by Horwitz and Young (1991). Similarly, Wang and Mallinckrodt (2006) concluded in their study that students' self perceived English language proficiency was negatively related to their anxiety.

The finding that there was a statistically significant positive relation between language anxiety and length in the degree program lends support to a recent study that was conducted among Chinese graduate students by Cheng and Erben (2011) who found that students who were at the beginning of their programs had the highest anxiety scores. This finding of the survey is consistent with interview results of this study that all seven

interviewees reported more unpleasant experiences with language anxiety at the beginning of their degree program than during their current term. The relation between language anxiety and age was also found to be positively correlated, but this finding contradicts with the previous study of Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) who found older students had higher language anxiety than did younger students.

The relation between language anxiety and gender did not indicate a statistically significant relation. This finding echoes the finding of Aida (1994) and Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) that there was no statistically significant gender difference found in foreign language anxiety. On the other side, this result is somewhat contradictory to some previous studies. For instance, a recent study by Cheng and Erben (2011) revealed that there was a statistically significant gender difference between language anxiety and the gender of the participant and supported the idea that male students were more anxious than their female counterparts. The results from Chao's study (2003) indicated a significant difference between gender and language anxiety and showed that female students' mean score on the FLCAS was slightly higher than male students' mean score on the FLCAS. Lastly, Cheng (2008) found a significant relation between gender and second language writing anxiety. His findings revealed that level of second language writing anxiety differed according to gender, and that female learners experience significantly higher language writing anxiety than do male learners. Therefore, studies are not in agreement about this question.

With respect to the interview findings, Turkish graduate students in social sciences disclosed experiencing various problems as a result of language barriers and language anxiety, and the majority of these findings were found to be consistent with the

previous research on language anxiety. As an international graduate student in social sciences, complaints about high requirements of social sciences in terms of English proficiency were indicated by all of the interviewees. This finding is consistent with Zhao's (1993) study that expectations from students in social sciences and humanities in terms of English proficiency were higher than expectations of students in natural sciences and engineering. Some expectations that were cited as a significant stressor were writing long academic papers, participating in classroom discussions, presenting oral reports, and the huge amount of article or textbook readings. It was determined that these expectations were anxiety producing when the student had poor language proficiency and did not meet those requirements.

Oral performance in English was stated as anxiety-producing by six of the seven participants. Speaking in class was associated primarily with anxiety over the inability to express opinions and thoughts freely and effectively. This finding is consistent with the results of Price's (1991) study that language anxiety stemmed from stress over one's lack of performance when communicating thoughts and feelings in a second language. Several situations that required practicing orally in English were associated with language anxiety. Examples include communicating with native friends, being called for an answer, and talking with professors in their offices. These situations were reported as increasing anxiety in previous studies as well. For instance, being unexpectedly called on for an answer in class was also indicated as anxiety-producing by Young (1990) and Cheng (2011), communication with native friends was related with anxiety by Huang (2009), and fear of professors' evaluation of their speaking was noted in Worde's (2003) study.

Due to the inability to deliver thought and their limited vocabulary in English, students reported avoidance behaviors for speaking. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies that language anxiety is the reason behind avoidance behaviors for speaking situations (e.g., Daily, 1991; Horwitz et al., 1986). Also, giving presentations in class was named a challenging class requirement, and all of the interviewees reported experiencing less or more anxiety over presenting oral reports. This finding echoed the results of Daly (1991), MacIntyre's (1991), and Price's (1991) study that speaking in front of others is a primary source of anxiety. Participants offered several coping strategies that they have employed. Socializing with native classmates and forming relationships with them was one of the most common coping strategies reported in the interviews. This finding echoed the findings of Humphries's (2011) studies with Chinese students that forming friendships with native speakers was vital to lowering the language anxiety of students.

With regard to interview findings, the large amount of time required for academic work was identified as a significant stressor for reading and writing in English by most participants. Similar to the findings of this study, Burkholder (2010) determined in her study with Turkish graduate students that taking courses in English drastically increased the amount of time spent on assignments, thus distressing students. Similarly, Peterson (1991) highlighted the high amount of time spent on academic work, which caused feelings of stress among students. Fear of making grammatical mistakes in assignments was named anxiety-producing in the interviews. This finding echoed the results of Huang's (2009) and Cheng's (2010) studies that the fear of making errors was one of the primary reasons behind experiencing language anxiety. All of the interviewees reported

a gradual decrease of language difficulties and anxiety with the increase in language proficiency over time. This finding supports several studies in the literature (Cheng, 2010; Huang, 2009).

Interview findings also revealed that instructional practice as well as the instructors, themselves, was an essential source of language anxiety. Based on the interviews, professors who are empathic, tolerant, and supportive reduce the anxiety and stress of students, whereas professors who are critical, unsupportive, and discouraging made students feel nervous and frustrated while performing in English. These findings evoke the findings of Wörde's (2003) study that instructors are "paramount in alleviating language anxiety", and Young's (1990) findings that instructors play a vital role in the experiencing of language anxiety. Similarly, Price (1991) noted the essential role of the teacher's attitudes and behaviors on the amount of anxiety that students experienced. Comparison with native students and error correction were the two anxiety-producing instructional practices named by the interviewees. The finding that comparing student's language abilities with natives intensified students' language anxiety is consistent with Huang's (2009) study that professors' high expectations of non-native ability in English increased the amount of anxiety experienced by students. Several interviewees reported concern over error correction practices of instructors. This finding of the current study is also consistent with Wörde's (2003) study that overreacting to the mistakes of students created language anxiety and stress among students.

Based on the interview findings, language anxiety was closely related to the classroom environment of the student. It was determined in the current study that the attitude of classmates had a big influence on creating either a warm and supportive

environment that reduced anxiety or a stressful and unrelaxed classroom environment that increased anxiety. Ignorance and their classmates' lack of empathy toward language barriers experienced by Turkish students were associated with unpleasant experiences that caused language anxiety. This finding is consistent with the finding of Huang (2009) that the perceived negative attitudes of American peers were closely related to anxiety over performing in English in class. Due to the perceived negative attitudes of American peers, several participants indicated that being more relaxed and less stressed interacting with international classmates rather than native friends. This finding is consistent with the finding of Huang (2009) that the perceived negative attitudes of the American friends were closely related to anxiety over performing in English in class. This finding of the current study is also consistent to some extent with the finding of Wörde's (2003) study with ESL students and Huang's (2009) study with Taiwanese graduate students that interacting with target language speakers might have been the reason why the students experienced language anxiety.

Classroom formats as well as various classroom activities were also related to language anxiety. Based on the interview transcripts, several students reported experiencing more anxiety in seminar and discussion-oriented classes rather than in lecture-style classes. Discussion-oriented classes either as whole class or in a group were cited as a central source of anxiety by participants because of difficulties with language. Examples of language difficulties include the inability to follow topics due to delivery of speech, fewer experiences with the discussion-oriented classroom format, and hesitation to express thoughts due to insecurity over oral performance. Similar to the findings of this current study, Tatar's (2005) study with Turkish students revealed that discussion-

oriented courses were anxiety-provoking. As a classroom activity, doing group work was found to increase language anxiety due to the attitudes of classmates and feelings of isolation. This finding is consistent with Huang's (2009) study that group discussions or activities are a source of language anxiety because of perceived attitudes of American peers and a sense of exclusion. However, this finding contradicts previous studies by Price (1991) and Young (1990) who concluded that performing in a second language in a group might alleviate the language anxiety of the students.

As the researcher of this study, using a mixed methodology on language anxiety gave me the pleasure of hearing the real stories as well as the genuine acknowledgements of the participants with language anxiety. I greatly appreciated all of the interviewees' willingness to take part in this study and share their personal experiences with me. However, my desire to conduct a study on language anxiety was sometimes struck by the reluctance of the participants to share their genuine feelings and experiences during the interviews. At those times, sharing my own experiences with language anxiety served to normalize their experiences, and help them open up and relax. Another surprising observation was realizing that the participants experienced difficulty naming their feelings. Lastly, I understood how important it was to conduct interviews in Turkish. Being able to speak comfortably, and express opinions freely helped me obtain a rich amount of data and find participants to take part in this study.

### **Implications for the Helping Professionals**

In this study, six of the interviewees did not report any usage of the counseling services due to academic problems and anxiety associated with language. Only one interviewee was said to have sought counseling to deal with his problems. Although

utilization of the counseling services were reported less, the findings of the study revealed the counseling needs of Turkish students due to academic problems that stemmed from poor language skills and the negative effect of anxiety over language ability. Similarly, several previous research studies have determined that dealing with the issues of academics as well as anxiety were two of the top reasons for utilization of the counseling centers by international students (Johanna et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2007; Yi et al., 2003). Since coping with anxiety and academic problems are of two of the study areas of mental health professionals and counselors, helping professionals could be a great source for international students by providing the tools of coping with language anxiety.

Arthur (1997) indicated that the reluctance of international students to seek counseling services might be overcome by offering assistance to students in psycho-educational formats. Providing services in a group-based psycho-educational format which includes students who struggle with language anxiety might increase the utilization rate of the counseling services among students. Group sessions can be more effective rather than one to one sessions with the psychologist because the group allows students to share their experiences and coping techniques and to gain perhaps a different perspective in dealing with the same problems.

The results of Kilinc and Granello's (2003) study among Turkish students in the U.S. indicated that the common source of psychological assistance among Turkish students was their own friends instead of helping professionals. Therefore, offering psycho-educational groups that include a friend, a colleague, and a person from the same culture might decrease the distress and anxiety by making them to feel that they are not

alone and by creating a familiar and safe environment for students. As a psycho-educational service format, organizing workshops or designing outreach programs that provide effective studying skills and coping skills with anxiety might also be a solution for reaching international students who struggle with language problems. Experienced international students who have successfully coped with the problems of anxiety due to poor language skills could be also invited for the workshops as a support system for the new and inexperienced students.

During the individual counseling sessions, students might feel hesitance or anxiety due to the language barriers when disclosing feelings and expressing thoughts. These language barriers might not only cause distress, but also result in an early termination or reluctance from counseling. Therefore, helping professionals should be very patient when communicating with the international students, should show willingness to understand what is being said, and should avoid the anxiety provoking behaviors such as: correcting the speaking errors, asking the meaning instead of clarification, and showing impatient facial expressions.

Several studies in the literature revealed that cultural stigma against the use of counseling services is a reason for avoidance from mental health services (Aubrey, 1991; Lin, 1996). Therefore, counselors should reach out to the international student community and promote the counseling services and increase awareness of the effectiveness of the counseling services. Based on the interview transcripts, Turkish graduate students considered their anxiety over language as an academic issue instead of mental health problem. However, academic problems affect students' psychological well being as well and lead students to have depression or severe mental health problems.

Therefore, mental health professionals on campus should engage with the faculty and advisors for providing assistance to the at-risk students. Furthermore, rather than waiting for international students to come to the counseling services and to ask for help, counselors instead should access the networks of international students such as: international student organizations, international student and scholar services and etc.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations were identified in this study. First, this study's qualitative findings lack generalization due to the small sample size. It was recognized that most of the Turkish graduate students at UH are majoring in natural sciences and engineering programs rather than in social sciences. Furthermore, although the social sciences consist of a wide range of fields of studies (e.g., anthropology, archaeology, criminology, economics, education, government, linguistics, international relations, political science, sociology, geography, history, law, psychology), interviewees in this study majored in only four fields of social sciences: sociology, education, political science, and education.

Moreover, the quantitative data of this study were collected online. Even though the potential sample was defined in the recruitment emails as Turkish graduate students majoring in social sciences, and the questionnaires were sent only to online groups which included the potential survey candidates, there is the risk of having accepted entries from participants who did not meet the criteria. This means that the sample might not be 100% representative of the intended population. Furthermore, it should be taken into account that this study was reported from an insider's perspective who is a member of this cultural group and has had experiences with language anxiety, as well.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study responded to the need to conduct research on Turkish students' experiences with language anxiety. Several research questions were explored to understand the unique aspects of language anxiety among the members of one cultural group in the U.S. by employing both quantitative and qualitative methodology. However, the findings of this current study were limited to the experiences of Turkish students only inside the classroom. Like most of the previous research, this study focused on students' experiences in academic settings and their experiences with language anxiety in their social life remained unexplored. Therefore, the need exists to investigate Turkish students' experiences with language anxiety outside of the classroom in order to increase understanding of this phenomenon.

The participants of this study were majoring in social sciences. Although academic English needs and academic problems of social science students were found to be higher than the needs and problems of students majoring in sciences or engineering (Zhao, 1993), further research should investigate and compare the language anxiety of students majoring in sciences and engineering with the results of the present study. This current study concentrated on a particular ethnic group: Turkish graduate students. Therefore, this research model could be recreated to study students from different ethnic backgrounds in order to uncover a fuller account of this research topic.

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**Appendix A**  
**Interview Questions**

1. What is your major?
2. How long have you been in the United States?
3. How comfortable have you felt generally in your classroom?
4. How do you feel using English in your assignments?
5. Characterize your language use in the class?
6. Describe a class which you feel anxious while using English? What do you think made you feel anxious?
7. Describe a class which you do not feel anxious while using English? What do you think made you feel comfortable?
8. What was your worst experience using the English language at school?
9. What was your best experience using the English language here at school?
10. What kind of unique learning experiences do graduate students in social sciences have comparison to the students in other field of studies?
11. What kind of requirements do graduate students in social sciences have comparison to the students in other field of studies?
12. How do you describe your experience of studying in social sciences as an international student? What are the benefits of studying in social sciences with your second language? What are the difficulties of studying in social sciences with your second language?
13. What are the coping strategies do you use in meeting the challenges of language anxiety?

14. How do you evaluate each of these strategies? Which strategies do you see as helpful or successful in overcoming language anxiety? Which strategies do you feel may not have helped them?
15. How your professors/teachers could make you more comfortable with English?
16. What pieces of advice can you offer for the future students do to lessen their language anxiety?

**Appendix B**

**Demographic Information Sheet**

## Background Information

(Please choose the answer that best describes you)

1. What is your gender?

☐ female ☐ male

2. What is your length of time in your degree program?

☐ less than a year ☐ 1 to 2 years☐ 2 to 3 years ☐ 3 to 4 years ☐ more than 4 years

3. How old are you?

☐ 22-24 ☐ 25-27 ☐ 28-30 ☐ 31 and older

4. What is the level of your program?

Master's ☐ PhD ☐

5. What is your medium of instruction in college?

☐ Turkish ☐ English

6. How do you consider your English language proficiency in this rating scale?

Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **Appendix C**

#### **Adapted Version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale**

(The original Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale is created by Horwitz,  
Horwitz, and  
Cope in 1986)

Please circle the response that best represents your reaction to each of these statements.  
SA means 'strongly agree,' A means 'agree,' N means 'neither agree nor disagree,' D means  
'disagree,' and SD means 'strongly disagree'.

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my classes in English in the U.S.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

2. I don't worry about making mistakes in class in the U.S.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in class in the U.S.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more classes in the U.S.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

6. During my classes in the U.S., I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with  
the courses.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

8. I am usually at ease during tests in my classes in the U.S.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my classes in the U.S.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

10. I worry about the consequences of failing my classes in the U.S.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over classes in English.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

12. In class in the U.S., I can get so nervous I forget things I know.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my classes in the U.S.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

14. I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

16. Even if I am well prepared for the classes in the U.S., I feel anxious about it.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

17. I often feel like not going to my classes in the U.S.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

18. I feel confident when I speak in class in the U.S.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

19. I am afraid that my teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

20. I can feel my heart pounding when I 'm going to be called on in class in the U.S.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

21. The more I study for a test, the more confused I get.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

22. I *don't* feel pressure to prepare very well for my classes in the U.S.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

23. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.

SA A N D SD  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

25. Class in the U.S. moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

26. I feel more tense and nervous in my classes in the U.S. than in my other classes in Turkey.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my class in the U.S.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

28. When I'm on my way to classes in the U.S., I feel very sure and relaxed.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the teacher says in the U.S.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak English.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

31. I am afraid that the other student will laugh at me when I speak English.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

33. I get nervous when the teacher asks questions in the U.S. which I haven't prepared in advance.

SA A N D SD

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

**Appendix D**

**Recruitment Mail for The Turkish Graduate Students**

Hello,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology at University of Houston. I am conducting a research study about the language anxiety among Turkish graduate students in social sciences in the U.S. The purpose of this study is to provide guidance to helping professionals, so; they may assist international students to alleviate language anxiety. Therefore, your participation to this study is highly valued.

If you are studying in one the following fields of social sciences; anthropology, archaeology, criminology, economics, education, government, linguistics, international relations, political science, sociology, geography, history, law, and psychology you are invited to take part of this study. To be able to take part in this study, you must complete the online survey along with the demographic sheet which is sent via this email. If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to call me Elif Turan at 713-743-4999 or e-mail me at elifmerveturan@hotmail.com.

Thanks

Elif Merve Turan

**Appendix E**  
**Recruitment Mail for the Administrators of the Online Groups of Turkish**  
**Graduate Students**

Hello,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology at University of Houston. I am conducting a research study about the language anxiety among Turkish graduate students in social sciences in the U.S. The purpose of this study is to provide guidance to helping professionals; so, they may assist international students to alleviate language anxiety. Therefore, your participation to this study is highly valued.

I am sending this email to obtain your permission to contact with your members to explain my study and invite them to take part of this study. To be able to take part in this study, they must complete an online survey along with the demographic sheet which is approximately 20 minutes in length.

If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to call me Elif Turan at 713-743-4999 or e-mail me at elifmerveturan@hotmail.com.

Thanks

Elif Merve Turan

**Appendix F**

**Items Statistics of the FLCAS**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my classes in English in the US	3.26	1.093	127
I don't worry about making mistakes in class in the U S	3.26	1.156	127
I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in class in the U S	2.98	1.127	127
It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English	3.20	1.217	127
It wouldn't bother me at all to take more classes in the U S	2.67	1.209	127
During my classes in the U S , I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the courses	2.88	1.081	127
I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am	3.49	1.147	127
I am usually at ease during tests in my classes in the U S	2.65	.963	127
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my classes in the U S	3.24	1.160	127
I worry about the consequences of failing my classes in the U	3.41	1.262	127
I don't understand why some people get so upset over classes in English	3.12	1.044	127
In class in the U S , I can get so nervous when I forget things I know	3.40	1.056	127
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my classes in the U S	2.80	1.064	127
I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers	2.87	1.129	127
I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting	3.11	1.121	127
Even if I am well prepared for the classes in the U S , I feel anxious about it	3.03	1.195	127
I often feel like not going to my classes in the U S	2.39	1.176	127
I feel confident when I speak in class in the U S	2.96	1.065	127
I am afraid that my teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make statements	2.47	1.083	127
I can feel my heart pounding when I 'm going to be called on in class in the U S	3.13	1.164	127
The more I study for a test, the more confused I get	2.13	1.008	127
I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for class in the U S	3.14	1.132	127
I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do	3.36	1.103	127
I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students	3.02	.992	127
Class in the U S moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind	2.81	1.139	127
I feel more tense and nervous in my class in the U S than in my other classes in Turkey	3.51	1.246	127
I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my class in the U S	3.09	1.127	127
When I'm on my way to classes in the U S , I feel very sure and relaxed	2.69	.965	127
I get nervous when I don't understand every word the teacher says in the U S	2.87	1.161	127
I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak English	2.87	1.094	127
I am afraid that the other student will laugh at me when I speak English	2.53	1.194	127
I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English	2.86	1.067	127
I get nervous when the teacher asks questions in the U S which I haven't prepared in advance	3.38	1.133	127

### **Appendix G**

#### **The Anxiety Level of Participants from Low to High**

	Frequency		Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.39	1	0.8	0.8	0.8
	1.45	1	0.8	0.8	1.6
	1.58	2	1.6	1.6	3.1
	1.67	1	0.8	0.8	3.9
	1.76	1	0.8	0.8	4.7
	1.82	1	0.8	0.8	5.5
	1.91	1	0.8	0.8	6.3
	1.94	1	0.8	0.8	7.1
	2.06	3	2.4	2.4	9.4
	2.09	3	2.4	2.4	11.8
	2.12	1	0.8	0.8	12.6
	2.15	1	0.8	0.8	13.4
	2.21	1	0.8	0.8	14.2
	2.24	3	2.4	2.4	16.5
	2.27	1	0.8	0.8	17.3
	2.3	1	0.8	0.8	18.1
	2.36	2	1.6	1.6	19.7
	2.39	1	0.8	0.8	20.5
	2.42	2	1.6	1.6	22
	2.45	1	0.8	0.8	22.8
	2.48	1	0.8	0.8	23.6
	2.52	3	2.4	2.4	26
	2.55	2	1.6	1.6	27.6
	2.58	1	0.8	0.8	28.3
	2.61	2	1.6	1.6	29.9
	2.7	1	0.8	0.8	30.7
	2.73	1	0.8	0.8	31.5
	2.76	1	0.8	0.8	32.3
	2.79	4	3.1	3.1	35.4
	2.82	2	1.6	1.6	37
	2.85	3	2.4	2.4	39.4
	2.91	3	2.4	2.4	41.7
	2.97	5	3.9	3.9	45.7
	3	5	3.9	3.9	49.6
	3.03	3	2.4	2.4	52
	3.06	1	0.8	0.8	52.8
	3.09	2	1.6	1.6	54.3
	3.15	2	1.6	1.6	55.9
	3.18	2	1.6	1.6	57.5
	3.21	3	2.4	2.4	59.8
	3.24	6	4.7	4.7	64.6
	3.27	1	0.8	0.8	65.4
	3.3	4	3.1	3.1	68.5
	3.36	2	1.6	1.6	70.1
	3.39	2	1.6	1.6	71.7
	3.42	3	2.4	2.4	74
	3.45	4	3.1	3.1	77.2
	3.48	4	3.1	3.1	80.3
	3.52	3	2.4	2.4	82.7
	3.55	1	0.8	0.8	83.5
	3.58	1	0.8	0.8	84.3
	3.61	1	0.8	0.8	85
	3.67	2	1.6	1.6	86.6
	3.73	3	2.4	2.4	89
	3.76	3	2.4	2.4	91.3
	3.79	1	0.8	0.8	92.1
	3.82	2	1.6	1.6	93.7
	3.88	1	0.8	0.8	94.5
	3.94	1	0.8	0.8	95.3
	3.97	1	0.8	0.8	96.1
	4.09	1	0.8	0.8	96.9
	4.39	1	0.8	0.8	97.6
	4.48	1	0.8	0.8	98.4
	4.52	1	0.8	0.8	99.2
	4.76	1	0.8	0.8	100
Total		127	100	100	

2.42 2 1.6 1.6 22.0

2.45 1 .8 .8 22.8

2.48 1 .8 .8 23.6

2.52 3 2.4 2.4 26.0

2.55 2 1.6 1.6 27.6

