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**An investigation into the Relationship between EFL Learners' Foreign Music Listening Habits and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety**

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**ABSTRACT**

Current study investigated whether there is a relationship between foreign music listening and classroom anxiety level with regard to foreign language learning. The effect of listening to music in the target language both as a habit in daily life and prior to the foreign language classes was the main concern of this study. The data were gathered from EFL learners at a health college of a state university in Turkey by implementing Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The participants were chosen according to the purposeful voluntary bases. Statistical technique of Mann Whitney U Test was applied to the data by using software, and the results were reported. The study primarily found that the anxiety level in foreign language learning classes shows a significant difference in terms of listening to music in the target language prior to the foreign language classes. The results also showed that there is not a statistically significant difference between the participants related to foreign music listening habit in terms of their anxiety levels. Based on the results, it can be concluded that listening to music in the target language before EFL classes can be an effective way for overcoming the problems which stem from foreign language learning anxiety at health colleges.

**Key Words:** Foreign language learning, classroom anxiety, listening to music, foreign music.

**1. Introduction**

Anxiety is a significant factor affecting language learning in our country in which medium of instruction is Turkish, and foreign language, mostly English, is learned in classroom either as an elective or a compulsory lesson in the curricula at different levels from primary education to higher education. Anxiety is termed as a personal feeling of uneasiness, worry and being disquite which stems from nervous systems of the individuals (Spielberger, 1983 in Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986). Foreign language learning environments, as in other subjects, may be very disturbing for many learners; and, experts in the area have an understanding of the anxiety of this kind for a long time (Horwitz et al, 1986). Many factors cause problems in learning and feelings or perceptions of the learners are attributed to these factors as they can either promote or block the language learning processes (Schumann, 2004), and anxiety is one reason of insufficient language learning in many learners as they experience foreign language anxiety (FLA) either mostly or partly in different aspects of language learning (Horwitz, 2001; Horwitz et al, 1986). According to the literature (Aida, 1994;

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Woodrow, 2006; Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009), language performance and language anxiety are negatively correlated.

Here, with this study, the researcher investigated the FLA levels of students, who studied at a health college, as the students provide services related to health problems. A misunderstanding in a health care context, in which foreign language used a medium of communication, can cause irreversible damages in the health of patients. The results of the current study can promote the effectiveness of the foreign language (FL) classes at health colleges. Creating a context in which mutual understanding is provided between health workers and patients is necessary to distribute better health care services. Failures or disagreements in the communication about the situation of patient may cause undesirable consequences about the health services provided by the institutions and health workers. Many problems may arise in medical contexts as a result of language barriers between health workers and patients coming from different language backgrounds (Clark, Sleath, & Rubin, 2004). Exchanging information between different languages clearly can establish valuable communication between patient and health worker which in turn is reflected in the services (Flores, 2005). Health service distributing processes can be affected from the fears of the patients and their unwillingness to provide information regarding their health problems through describing, asking or interpreting in another language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Ganschow & Sparks, 1996; Booth-Butterfield, Chory, & Beynon, 1997). The situation may be the same for the health workers, who have FLA. This study, for this reason, was carried out at a health college in Turkey to define the levels of foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) of the students, who were expected to work at hospitals or medical centers for different branches after graduating the college. After defining students' FLCA levels, the study focused on the relationship between foreign music listening and FLCA to provide a solution to the participants' language anxiety problems. This study can be regarded as an important one because for the first time, as indicated in the literature, the FLCA levels of health college students were elucidated, and a solution was suggested by investigating the effects of foreign music listening habit on language learning. There are several studies which were carried out at medical office (Guntzville, Jensen, King and Davis, 2011) and investigated the efficiency of teaching songs on FLCA (Dolean and Dolean, 2014; Dolean, 2015); but, this study is the first both in terms of the participants and the methodology to have been followed.

## 2. Literature Review

For more than the last two decades, the language learning and teaching contexts have witnessed many studies, which have explored the connection between language learning or teaching either as a second language or as a foreign language and anxiety. The scope of the studies has expanded with the contributions stemming from novice ideas. Some of the studies focused on the relationships between FLA and its role on spoken language and communication or willingness to communicate (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017; Mejía, 2014; Wu & Lin, 2014; Rassaei, 2015; Effiong, 2015; Anandari, 2015; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012; Rastegar & Karami, 2015; Lee, 2015; Kralova, Skorvagova, Tirpakova and Markechova, 2017; Nargis & Ali, 2016; Čepon, 2016; Sanaei, Zafarghandi and Sabet, 2015; Elmenfi & Gaibani, 2016; Ghanbarpour, 2016); some others addressed the relationships between FLA and motivation, academic/language achievement and other factors such as strategies, attitudes or views, metacognition, ambiguity tolerance, emotional intelligence (Liu & Chen, 2015; Wu & Lin, 2014; Genç, 2016; Shao, Ji and Yu, 2013; Lien, 2016; Han, Tanriöver, Şahan, 2016; Tuncer & Doğan, 2015; Sajedi, 2016; Ghorbandordinejad & Ahmadabad, 2015; Lu & Liu, 2011; Liu, 2016; Wu & Lin, 2016; Basco &

Han, 2016; Dewaele & Ip, 2013; Cakıcı, 2016; Čepon, 2016; Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013; Lababidi, 2016; Scullin & Baron, 2013). Different methods from the qualitative ones to the quantitative ones (Kasbi & Shirvan, 2017; Shao, Ji and Yu, 2013; Nodoushan, 2015; El-Hariri, 2017; Effiong, 2015) were implemented to different age groups of learners from adult bilinguals, university students to college students, high school students, 8th grade students (Gargalianou, Muehlfeld, Urbig and Witteloostuijn, 2016; Basco, 2016; Lien, 2016; Dolean, 2015) to reach the valuable and reliable data about the issue. Here, the researcher will mention some current ones.

Cocoradă and Maican (2013) studied the anxiety of English language of Romanian students in terms of the participants' ages, achievements and number of the years. Mejía (2014) enlarged the study by handling out the relationship between the teacher's role, strategies carried out by the students and the anxiety of language in a Spanish language classroom during oral activities. The results indicated that a certain level of anxiety was experienced by the learners, who were studying at second-year classes for learning Spanish. Sajedi (2016) supported them by analyzing the language achievement and language anxiety relationship in Iranian context. According to the results, a connection was defined in terms of students' anxiety levels and their achievements in language learning; and it was suggested that higher levels of anxiety may affect performances of learners in a negative way.

Karatas, Alcı, Bademcioğlu and Ergin (2016) tried to identify FLA in speaking in a Turkish EFL context in terms of language levels, prep class education, type of the graduated high school and gender by using quantitative methods. The results showed different results regarding the genders of the participants, English prep class education; but, language levels and the type of the graduated high school had not affected the results. Likewise, connected with the foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA), Han, Tanrıöver and Şahan (2016) investigated the native teacher and non-native teacher effects on FLSA of the students in communication classes. The results did not show any significant difference among students in terms of FLSA attitudes in connection with attendance to either a class with a native speaker or non-native speaker; but, a significant variance was detected between the two groups in which courses were carried out by a non-native teacher. Accordingly, the boys and girls were not different in terms of attitudes, and qualitative results showed that mistakes observed during the oral production of the target language were handled positively by both the teachers and students.

Qualitative methods included also diary studies. For example, Gkonou (2012) conducted a research concerned with the diaries of Greek EFL learners in settings of private language schools. The researcher employed a qualitative method to analyze the data gathered from diaries of EFL learners. The results reported that language anxiety had situation-specific and dynamic nature in the contexts of L2. Likewise, the research revealed that language learning was affected from both linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties. Wei (2013) tried to find out solutions to these kinds of difficulties and investigated English FLCA of the Chinese Bouyei college students. The strategies to overcome classroom anxiety were questioned through qualitative inquiry method. The results revealed that the students had five categories of classroom anxiety overcoming strategies and some implications were proposed based on the findings.

Liu and Chen (2015) investigated the language anxiety and motivation of learning of EFL learners at academic and vocational track high schools. Three research questions were investigated by using quantitative method. They found that the students from both high schools experienced language anxiety at a moderate level and the extrinsic motivation of the students studying at the academic high

school was higher than the other group. Furthermore, the study found an important negative relationship between motivation and anxiety. Accordingly, Sinnasamy and Karim (2014) examined the correlation between FLA and the undergraduate students' library anxiety at a university in Malaysian context. Library Anxiety Scale (LAS) and FLCAS were implemented to the participants. Significant correlations related to the sub-dimensions of the scales were identified and suggestions for the librarians were proposed in planning and delivery of the services to help the students at the end.

Metalinguistic aspects of language learning and employees at international workplaces were also investigated in the studies to understand the nature of the foreign language anxiety. For example, Rassaei (2015) studied whether the recasts and metalinguistic feedbacks affect language learners' foreign language anxiety either in high or low levels. The participants were categorized as low-anxiety and high anxiety groups through a questionnaire. After defining the main groups, they were again subdivided into two groups for the treatments of recasts and metalinguistic corrective feedbacks and pre-tests and post-tests were applied to the groups. According to the results, metalinguistic feedbacks and recasts affected the learners with low-anxiety levels positively. While the effect of the metalinguistic feedback was higher than the recasts for the learners with low anxiety levels, the effect of the recasts were higher than the metalinguistic feedbacks for the learners with high anxiety levels. Additionally, Aichorn and Puck (2017) investigated FLA of the employees of MNCs that they experienced while using the FL. The FLA manifested itself in the form of withdrawal, code-switching and avoidance in the target language. They found that the interpersonal communication is affected from communicative behaviors, content and relationship dimensions of the communication in MNCs.

Current study investigated the relationship between FLCA and foreign music listening both as a habit in daily life and before the foreign language classes at the health college. Based on the results, EFL instructors can pay attention to the effects of the application of the foreign music as an integral part of the EFL courses in order to deal with the problems, which stem from the FLCA, and redesign their EFL practices accordingly. Three research questions of this study can be sequenced as follows:

1. What is the overall success of the FLCAS of the EFL students at the health college?
2. Is there a meaningful difference between the EFL students' FLCAS levels and foreign music listening habits at the health college?
3. Is there a meaningful difference between the EFL students' FLCAS levels and foreign music listening prior to the foreign language courses at the health college?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Data Collection**

The students studying at a health college of a state university in Turkey were participants of this study. The study implemented a cross-sectional approach to gather the data. The students participated in the study within the principle of purposeful voluntary bases.

### 3.2. Participants

45 students participated in this study in total and there were 13 males (28,9%) and 32 females (71,1%). 57,8% (n=26) of the students were between the ages of 20 and 21; 37,8% (n=17) of the students were between the ages of 22 and 23 and 4,4% (n=2) of the students were between the ages of 24 and 25. Lastly, 28,9% (n=13) of the students have been studying foreign language between 5 and 10 years; 66,7% (n=30) of these students have been studying foreign language between 11 and 15 years, and 4,4% (n=2) of these students have been studying foreign language more than 21 years.

### 3.3. Instrument

The data collection instrument of the study was Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). The scale comprised 33 Likert-type items ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The FLCAS has a high internal reliability with all item scale correlation (an alpha .93) and test-retest reliability of  $r=.83$  ( $p < .001$ ) (Horwitz et al., 1986). The researcher graded Likert-type items from 5 to 1 (strongly disagree=1 disagree=2, undecided=3, agree=4, strongly agree=5). Within the purpose of this study, the researcher added two independent variables as habit of listening to music in foreign language in daily life and listening to music in foreign language prior to FL courses in the background information part of the scale to investigate the relationship between listening to music in foreign language and FLCA.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

Quantitative research method was applied to interpret the data obtained from the participants. The researcher implemented Mann Whitney U Test model as the participants did not show a normal distribution. While one of the groups consisted of 10 participants, the other group consisted of 35 participants. Non-parametric distribution of the participants necessitated Mann Whitney U Test instead of applying T-Tests. Mann Whitney U Test model was carried out through computer software to analyze the data. The results were reported as Mean (m) and Standard Deviation (sd) to summarize the data.

## 4. Results

The first research question investigated overall success of the FLCAS after the implementation to the target group. According to the table (Table 1), the results obtained from the scale after the application to the participants showed that the lowest value was 1,88 (closer to the disagree option) while the highest value is 4,21 (closer to the agree option). Table 1 summarizes the results obtained from the scale:

Table 1 FLCAS results of the participants (n=45; Min=1; Max= 5)

Average Anxiety Score and Prominent Scale Items	$\bar{X}$	Sd.
<i>Foreign Language Learning Classroom Average Anxiety (Min=1,88; Max=4,21)</i>	2,71	0,50
<i>2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.</i>	3,60	1,17
<i>5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.</i>	2,91	1,36
<i>8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.</i>	3,70	1,18

14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	2,97	1,15
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	2,88	1,28
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	1,95	0,92

The average value obtained from the results is closer to the option of undecided ( $\bar{X}=2,71\pm 0,50$ ). The second item was "I don't worry about making mistakes in language class." and the results showed that the participants were closer to the agree option. The fifth item was "It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes." and the participants were closer to the undecided option. The eighth item was "I am usually at ease during tests in my language class." and the participants were closer the agree option. The fourteenth item was "I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers." and the participants were closer to the undecided option. The fifteenth item was "I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting." and the participants were closer to the undecided option. Lastly, thirty-first item was "I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language." and the participants were closer to the disagree option.

The second research question aimed to figure out whether there is a relationship between foreign music listening habits of the EFL learners and FLCA. While more than half of the participants ( $n = 25$ ) expressed that they listen to foreign music in their daily lives, the others ( $n = 20$ ) expressed that they do not listen to music in their daily lives. Mann Whitney U Test results obtained from the participants regarding the responses to the FLCAS whether they listen to foreign music in their daily lives as habit or not were presented in the following table (Table 2).

Table 2 Foreign music listening habit and FLCA relationship

Model	Foreign Music Listening Habit		n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
	1. Yes	2. No					
FLCA	1. Yes	25	21,38	534,5	209,5	0,355	
	2. No	20	25,03	500,5			

When we analyze the mean ranks, it is clear that the FLCA of the participants who don't listen to foreign music in their lives as a habit is higher than the FLCA of the participants who listen to foreign music as a habit in their lives. However, there is not a statistically significant difference between the participants related to foreign music listening habit in terms of FLCA ( $U=209$ ;  $p>0,05$ ). This result showed that the foreign music listening habit is not an important factor on the FLCA.

The third research question investigated whether there is a connection between foreign music listening prior to the FL courses and FLCA. While most of the participants ( $n = 35$ ) expressed that they do not listen to foreign music prior to FL courses, the others ( $n = 10$ ) expressed that they listen to foreign music prior to FL courses. Mann Whitney U Test results obtained from the participants regarding the responses to the FLCA scale whether they listen to foreign music prior to the foreign language courses or not were presented in the following table (Table 3).

Table 3 Foreign music listening prior to FL courses and FLCA relationship

Model	Foreign Music Listening Prior to FL Courses		n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
	1.	2.					
FLCA	Yes		10	14,20	142	87	0,016*
	No		35	25,51	893		

\* p<0,05

When we analyze the mean ranks in the table (Table 3), it is clear that the FLCA of the participants who listen to foreign music prior to the foreign language courses is lower than the FLCA of the participants who do not listen to foreign music prior to the foreign language courses. Accordingly, there is a statistically significant difference between the participants with regard to foreign music listening prior to the foreign language courses in terms of FLCA, ( $U= 87$ ;  $p< 0,05$ ). This result showed that the foreign music listening prior to the foreign language courses is an important factor on the FLCA.

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

The effect of listening to music in the target language on FLCA levels of the students at the health college was the main concern of the current study. The average values obtained from the responses of the participants to the scale showed that the students studying at the health college were closer to the undecided option which shows that they had moderate level of FLCA. This shows that they had neither low nor high anxiety levels in general at the health college. Furthermore, the study showed that the habit of listening to music in the foreign language as a habit in normal life does not affect the students' FLCA levels at the health college. This means that the students' habits of listening to music in the foreign language are not among the factors that decrease the FLCA levels of the students, a result of contrasting with the findings of the third research question of this study. At this point, the result showed that further studies are necessary to highlight the contributing factors to this situation.

In contrast to the results obtained from the first and second research question, the results of the third research question supported findings of several previous studies. Dolean (2015) found that the French language classes in which songs were taught were accepted as enjoyable for the language learners who had both low and high anxiety levels; and, teaching songs during the language courses decreased the high levels of the FLCA of the students. The third research question also indicated that the students who listen to music in the target language before the foreign language courses had low levels of FLCA when compared to those who do not listen to music prior to the foreign language courses at the health college. Dolean & Dolean (2014) implemented six weeks of treatment to the experimental group in which English was taught through music while conventional methods were applied to the control group. The results showed that anxiety levels of the students in the experimental group decreased significantly which is a result in line with the result of the third research question of this study that indicated FLA levels of the student who listen to music in the target language before attending the foreign language courses were lower than the others who do not listen to music in the foreign language prior to the foreign language courses.

## 6. Pedagogical Implications

Referring to the result of the third research question, it can be suggested that FLCA levels of the EFL learners at health colleges can be lowered through music in the target language at the beginning of the classes. The soothing effect of the lyrics can be implemented as an integrative activity to EFL classes to enhance the motivation of learners by eliminating the anxiety factor in classrooms at health colleges. Thus, the efficiency of health workers in foreign language in an international health service context can be increased.

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