An Analysis of the Speaking Anxiety of Turkish Teacher Candidates

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyse the speaking anxiety of Turkish teacher candidates studying in Kafkas University. The sample group of the research designed in the survey model consists of 181 Turkish teacher candidates studying in Kafkas University Faculty of Education in fall term of the 2018-2019 Academic Year, who are selected by the random sampling method. The "Speaking Anxiety Scale for the Teacher Candidates" consisting of three sub-dimensions, namely the "physiological symptoms", "skill-related anxiety" and "psychological state" and 40 items developed by Kinay and Ozkan (2014) has been used in the study as the data collection tool. The findings of the study where the SPSS 17.0 software package is used for data analysis have revealed that; while the speaking anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates are not high and do not change depending on their gender or their willingness to become a teacher, they change significantly depending on their grade and public speaking experience.

Keywords: speaking anxiety, Turkish teacher candidate, survey study

1. Introduction

Speaking is defined as "explaining one's thoughts using the words of a language" (Turkish Language Association [TDK], 2011). Speaking, which is acquired during babyhood, is a language skill used frequently by humans in terms of expressing themselves (Temizyurek, Erdem and Temizkan, 2017; Demir and Melanlioglu, 2014). Speaking skill is also the most significant characteristic distinguishing human beings from animals (Ozdemir, 2008; Kurudayioglu, 2014).

Despite the ever-increasing diversification of the means of communication, the speaking skill still has impact on the position of the person in social and public contexts, such as his/her milieu of family, friends and business, just as in the past. In this respect, not only what you say, but also how you say it, is important. As you reflect your personality when speaking, both the information you give during your business or education-related meetings and the way you deliver such information, i.e. your speaking skill are taken into account.

Although human beings come to life with a natural speaking skill, this skill needs to be developed by means of education so that it can be used in an appropriate and effective manner (Ucgun, 2007; Sever, Kaya and Aslan, 2008; Aktas and Gunduz, 2014). Since the preschool times, the basic goal of language education has been to help people learn the rules of the language and be able to express themselves. In the curriculum of Turkish Lesson, basic goals of language education are specified as follows: "to develop the listening/watching, speaking, reading and writing skills of students", "to help the students use Turkish language in a conscious, proper and careful manner in line with the rules of speaking and writing" and "to help the students express their thoughts, views, feelings and arguments orally and in writing in an effective and explicit manner" (Ministry of National Education [MEB], 2018). According to Gunes (2007, p. 97), the main objectives of speaking education are as follows: "1. To develop language skills, 2. To develop communication skills, 3. To develop learning and comprehension skills, 4. To develop mental skills, 5. To develop social skills and 6. To develop mental independence skills".

A person may have speaking defects throughout the long education period and even after this period. These are: "a. Stress, intonation, rhythm or pausing defects, b. Use of the local dialect, c. Phonation defects, d. Poor vocabulary knowledge, e. Use of unnecessary body language during speaking" (Ucgun, 2007, p. 62). A person's ineffective use of the speaking skill may be arising from speaking defects or from the anxiety the person feels particularly when talking before a small or large group of people.

In general, anxiety is defined as the uneasiness or fear felt for no reason (Seyyar, 2017), which is a common problem mostly causing harm to people (Parker, 2002). Speaking anxiety is one of the psychological barriers hindering one from speaking in an effective way (Addison et. al., 2003). In this type of anxiety, advanced level of which is called as the

"Public Anxiety Disorder" (Harris, Kemmerling and North, 2002; DSM V, 2014), the person may have mental and physical troubles particularly when talking before the public (Daly, Vangelisti and Lawrence, 1989). High anxiety may lead to mental and physical problems such as losing one's train of thought, persistent drying of throat, uneasiness and shaking in hands and arms (Demir and Melanlioglu, 2014; Sevim and Gedik, 2014).

Accurate and effective use of the speaking skill is a trait of a teacher, particularly a language teacher by nature. So in order to be a good teacher, one needs a language free from speaking defects and a psychological state free from factors such as anxiety, which would have a negative impact on speaking. Therefore, research on speaking defects and speaking anxieties of particularly Turkish teacher candidates is deemed to be significant considering the fact that they will become language teachers. Literature review revealed research on speaking anxieties of teacher candidates from different branches (Ozkan and Kinay, 2015; Deringol, 2018; Kuru, 2018) as well as Turkish teacher candidates (Kardas, 2015; Iscan and Karagoz, 2016; Ozdemir, 2018; Hasirci, 2018). On the other hand, both the diversity of the variables analysed for their impact on speaking anxiety and the diversity of the features of the teacher candidates studying in different universities are considered to be requiring further research in different universities with different variables. Therefore, it is believed that; a research on speaking anxieties of the Turkish teacher candidates studying in Kafkas University, which has no previous research on the subject, will contribute to the field. This research, which aims to analyse the speaking anxieties of the Turkish teacher candidates studying in Kafkas University, seeks to find answers to the following questions:

- What is the level of speaking anxiety in Turkish teacher candidates?

- Does the level of speaking anxiety change depending on the gender of Turkish teacher candidates?

- Does the level of speaking anxiety change depending on the grades of Turkish teacher candidates?

- Does the level of speaking anxiety change depending on the public speaking experience of Turkish teacher candidates?

- Does the level of speaking anxiety change depending on the willingness of Turkish teacher candidates in their choice of profession?

2. Method

2.1 Research Model

The research is carried out in descriptive survey model. Descriptive survey studies intend to describe certain events and phenomena and their reflections on the society (Forza, 2002).

2.2 Sample Group

Personal features of the Turkish teacher candidates participating in the research are as displayed in Table 1: The sample group of the research, which is designed in the survey model, consists of 181 Turkish teacher candidates studying in Kafkas University Faculty of Education in fall term of the 2018-2019 academic year, which are selected by the random sampling method. In random sampling method, "samples are randomly selected among the items to represent the whole mass" (Serper, Aytac and Bayram, 2013, p. 17).

Table 1. Personal features of the participants

Personal Features		f	%	Total
Gender	Female	97	53.6	181
	Male	84	46.4	
Grade	1	63	34.8	
	2	33	18.2	181
	3	52	28.7	
	4	33	18.2	

According to Table 1, 97 of the participants are male (53.6%) and 84 of them are female (46.4%). 63 of the participants are studying in Grade 1 (34.8%), 33 of them are studying in Grade 2 (17.9%), 54 of them are studying in Grade 3 (29.3%) and 33 of them are studying in Grade 4.

2.3 Data Collection Tool

The "Speaking Anxiety Scale for Teacher Candidates" developed by Kinay and Ozkan (2014) is used in the research as

the data collection tool. The scale consists of three sub-dimensions, namely the "physiological symptoms", "skill-related anxiety" and "psychological state" and 40 items. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients calculated by the developers of the scale for the sub-dimensions of "physiological symptoms", "skill-related anxiety" and "psychological state" are .92, .83 and .78, respectively and it is .94 for the scale in general. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients calculated for the sub-dimensions in this research are .90, .84 and .83, respectively and it is .96 for the scale in general.

2.4 Data Analysis

The SPSS 17.0 package software is used in the analysis of the data collected in research. As the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test performed to determine whether the data is homogenous or not, has revealed a normal distribution, parametric tests have been used in data analysis. Accordingly, descriptive statistics is used to determine the speaking anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates; the Independent Samples T-test is used to determine whether the level of speaking anxiety changes depending on gender, public speaking experience and their willingness to become a teacher and the One-Way ANOVA analysis is used to determine whether it changes depending on their grade at school.

3. Findings

3.1 Speaking Anxiety Levels of the Turkish Teacher Candidates

Table 2. Speaking anxiety average scores of the participants

Scale Dimensions	N	$\bar{X}$	S
Physiological symptoms	181	26.21	9.30
Skill-related anxiety	181	15.93	5.12
Psychological state	181	54.77	18.42
Scale Total	181	96.93	30.25

According to Table 2, average score of the Turkish teacher candidates participating in study is 26.21 in the sub-dimension of "physiological symptoms", 15.93 in the sub-dimension of "skill-related anxiety", 54.77 in the sub-dimension of "psychological state" and 96.93 for the scale in general. The minimum score to be acquired in scale's "physiological symptoms" sub-dimension consisting of 11 items is 11 and the maximum score is 55; the minimum score to be acquired in scale's "skill-related anxiety" sub-dimension consisting of six items is 6 and the maximum score is 30; the minimum score to be acquired in scale's "psychological state" sub-dimension consisting of 23 items is 23 and the maximum score is 115 and the minimum score to be acquired from the scale in general is 40 and the maximum score is 200. Consequently it can be stated that Turkish teacher candidates do not have a high level speaking anxiety.

3.2 Speaking Anxiety Levels of Turkish Teacher Candidates Depending on Gender

Table 3. T-test results regarding the speaking anxiety levels of the participants depending on gender

	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	t	df	p
Physiological symptoms	Female	97	26.81	9.35	.935	179	.351
	Male	84	25.52	9.26			
Skill-related anxiety	Female	97	15.91	5.20	-.062	179	.950
	Male	84	15.96	5.05			
Psychological state	Female	97	55.40	18.18	.491	179	.624
	Male	84	54.05	18.76			
Total	Female	97	98.14	30.43	.575	179	.566
	Male	84	95.54	30.17			

According to Table 3, the speaking anxiety levels of the Turkish teacher candidates do not significantly change with depending on gender ["physiological symptoms" (t= .935, p>.05), "skill-related anxiety" (t=-.062, p>.05), "psychological state" (t= .491, p>.05) total (t= .575, p>.05)]. Consequently it can be stated that gender has no significant impact on the speaking anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates.

3.3 Speaking Anxiety Levels of Turkish Teacher Candidates Depending on Their Grade

Table 4. ANOVA test result regarding the anxiety levels of the participants depending on grade

	Source of Variance	Squares Total	df	Squares Average	F	p	Source of Difference
Physiological symptoms	Between-groups	1417.039	3	472.34	5.89	.001[*]	1-3, 1-4
	Within-group	14176.80	177	80.09			
	Total	15593.84	180				
Skill-related anxiety	Between-groups	371.09	3	123.69	5.03	.002[*]	1-2, 1-3, 1-4
	Within-group	4349.57	177	24.57			
	Total	4720.66	180				
Psychological state	Between-groups	6815.01	3	2271.67	7.40	.000[*]	1-3, 1-4
	Within-group	54272.39	177	306.62			
	Total	61087.40	180				
Total	Between-groups	19262.97	3	6420.99	7.80	.000[*]	1-2, 1-3, 1-4
	Within-group	145540.07	177	822.26			
	Total	164803.04	180				

(*$p < .05$)

According to Table 4, speaking anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates significantly vary in all sub-dimensions and in total anxiety points depending on the grades of the students. Results of the Tukey HSD Test performed to identify the groups displaying difference have shown that: 1st grader Turkish teacher candidates have significantly higher anxiety scores in the sub-dimension of "physiological symptoms" than the 2nd or 3rd graders; 1st grader Turkish teacher candidates have significantly higher anxiety scores in the sub-dimension of "skill-related anxiety" than the 2nd, 3rd or 4th graders; 1st grader Turkish teacher candidates have significantly higher anxiety scores in the sub-dimension of "psychological state" than the 3rd or 4th graders and 1st grader Turkish teacher candidates have significantly higher anxiety scores throughout the scale than the 2nd, 3rd or 4th graders.

3.4 Speaking Anxiety Levels of Turkish Teacher Candidates Depending on Their Public Speaking Experience

Table 5. T test result regarding the anxiety levels of the participants depending on their public speaking experience

	Experience	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	t	df	p
Physiological symptoms	Yes	134	24.87	8.80	-3.357	179	.001[*]
	No	47	30.03	9.72			
Skill-related anxiety	Yes	134	15.05	4.90	-4.086	179	.000[*]
	No	47	18.45	4.92			
Psychological state	Yes	134	51.38	16.77	-4,390	179	.000[*]
	No	47	64.45	19.62			
Total	Yes	134	91.32	27.92	-4.427	179	.000[*]
	No	47	112.93	31.21			

(*$p < .05$)

According to Table 5, speaking anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates significantly vary in all sub-dimensions and in total anxiety scores depending on their public speaking experience. Accordingly, Turkish teacher candidates with no public speaking experience have a higher level of speaking anxiety than those with experience.

3.5 Speaking Anxiety Levels of Turkish Teacher Candidates Depending on Their Willingness in Their Choice of Profession

Table 6. T test result regarding the speaking anxiety levels of the participants depending on their willingness in their choice of profession

	Willingness	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	t	df	p
Physiological symptoms	Yes	139	26.31	9.55	.254	179	.799
	No	42	25.89	8.52			
Skill-related anxiety	Yes	139	16.05	5.23	.563	179	.574
	No	42	15.54	4.76			
Psychological state	Yes	139	54.60	18.24	-.224	179	.823
	No	42	55.33	19.21			
Total	Yes	139	96.97	30.48	.037	179	.971
	No	42	96.78	29.85			

According to Table 6, there is no significant difference among the speaking anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates depending on their willingness in their choice of profession ["physiological symptoms" (t= .254, p>.05), "skill-related anxiety" (t= .563, p>.05), "psychological state" (t= -.224, p>.05), total (t= .037, p>.05)]. Accordingly, willingness of Turkish teacher candidates in their choice of profession has no significant impact on their speaking anxiety.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, Turkish teacher candidates studying in Kafkas University were studied with respect to their speaking anxiety levels and the effects of gender, grade, public speaking experience and willingness in their choice of the profession, on the speaking anxiety levels.

Speaking anxiety levels of the participants were discussed in the research at first. Analysis of the sub-dimensions and the scores obtained from the scale in general revealed that participants had speaking anxiety, though it was not at a high level. This research finding is consistent with the researches of Kardas (2015) and Ozdemir (2018). While in the study performed by Kardas (2015) Turkish teacher candidates were found to have a low level of speaking anxiety, the research performed by Ozdemir (2018) revealed a moderate level of speaking anxiety in Turkish teacher candidates. Unlike these studies, Iscan and Karagoz (2016) revealed a high level of speaking anxiety in Turkish teacher candidates. The absence of high level of speaking anxiety in Turkish teacher candidates may be resulting from their sense of high self-adequacy regarding speaking. Furthermore, Katranci (2014) and Baki (2018) stated that teacher candidates' sense of self-adequacy had a positive impact on their communication skills. Hence, it can be concluded that research participants have a sense of high self-adequacy regarding speaking helping the reduction of speaking anxiety.

The results of the study have revealed that gender or willingness in the choice of profession had no impact on the speaking anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates whereas speaking anxiety levels significantly changed depending on the grade of the students and their public speaking experience.

The gender-related result is consistent with the literature. Kardas (2015) also notes that gender has no significant effect on speaking anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates. The results of certain researches carried out on teacher candidates from different branches are consistent with the results of this research which is conducted with Turkish teacher candidates. Studies conducted by Ozkan and Kinay (2015) and Deringol (2018) revealed that gender had no impact on speaking anxieties of the teacher candidates. On the other hand, the study carried out by Kuru (2018) highlighted that gender significantly changed the speaking anxiety levels of the teacher candidates in the sub-dimension of "physiological symptoms" and the high speaking anxiety level of female Turkish teacher candidates was attributed to the uncomfortable feeling arising from their exposure to attentive observation of others. Another variable which was found to have no significant impact on the speaking anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates was their willingness in their choice of profession. It can be concluded that while the participants may have different reasons for choosing their department of study, they get adapted to the idea of becoming a teacher.

Results of the study revealing that the grade of the students and their public speaking experience significantly change the speaking anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates are consistent with similar researches. The study has shown that Turkish teacher candidates studying in the 1st grade have a higher level of speaking anxiety compared to students

studying in all other grades. Researches conducted by Ozkan and Kinay (2015) and Deringol also emphasized that speaking anxiety levels decreased as the grade of the teacher candidates increased. In view of the Turkish teacher candidates it is considered that, courses included in the curricula such as Oral Expression, Speaking and Effective Communication which intend to the improve the speaking skills of the students both in theory and in practice, help the reduction of the speaking anxiety of the participants as their grade increases. Hasirci (2018) reports that peer communication and teacher feedback have a speaking anxiety-lowering effect on Turkish teacher candidates. When the result of the study concerning the grades is considered along with the research of Hasirci (2018) it can be concluded that, expansion of the social milieu of the participants and the teacher feedbacks on speaking skills particularly in the foregoing courses reduce the speaking anxiety of the research participants.

The results of the study revealing public speaking experience has a significant impact on the speaking anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates are consistent with the studies in literature reporting that public speaking experience of teacher candidates has a positive impact on their speaking anxiety. Ozkan and Kinay (2015) report that previous public speaking experience has a speaking anxiety-reducing impact on teacher candidates. In a research conducted by Iscan and Karagoz (2016), Turkish teacher candidates are reported to have a high speaking anxiety, one of the reasons of which is identified to be their lack of public speaking experience. Ozden (2018) argues that Turkish teacher candidates feel inadequate and nervous especially about unprepared speaking. Therefore, allowing Turkish teacher candidates to gain public speaking experience particularly with prepared public speaking scenarios could help the reduction of their speaking anxiety.

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