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Sources of Reading Anxiety among the Learners of Turkish as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

Language instruction is conducted by utilizing the data provided by contemporary educational sciences and based on the fact that learning is both a cognitive and affective process. Instruction of reading skills, one of the four basic language skills in Turkish as a foreign language instruction, is a complex process that range from the introduction of sounds to the reading comprehension process. During this education, in addition to cognitive training of learners, reading anxiety, which is considered as an affective dimension of reading, can also be considered as a factor that affect the reading process. The present study was conducted with the interview technique, which is one of the qualitative research methods. A focus group interview was conducted with six Turkish instructors as a foreign language and eight students learning Turkish as a foreign language using the developed semi-structured interview form. In the study, the sources of reading anxiety in learning Turkish as a foreign language were determined as "tonal attributes and pronunciation", "language levels (Course levels A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2)", "the fact that Turkish is an agglutinative language", "properties of reading texts", "unknown words" "unknown topics", "culture" and "fear of making mistakes".

Keywords: Turkish as a foreign language, Reading, Reading anxiety.

Contents

1. Introduction

Language skills include expression skills of speech and writing, and comprehension skills of listening and reading. The aim of both native and foreign language education is the acquisition of the four basic language skills by the student. It was reported in various studies that reading has a crucial role in learning a language (Anderson, 1994; Celce-Murcia *et al.*, 1995; Day and Bamford, 1998). A student who learns Turkish as a foreign language begins to learn Turkish language sounds, including those that are not found in her or his native language. The student would encounter factors such as reading the sounds, the perception of the words, the recognition of the language structure, agglutinative characteristics of the Turkish language, and the differences in sentence structure when reading aloud. In this process, as the students try to learn this complex process cognitively, affective factors such as motivation, self-efficacy and anxiety would come into effect and play a decisive role in the achievement of the student. A part of the affective dimension of reading, anxiety includes the emotions such as avoidance, fear of assessment, fear of not able to read and making mistakes when the student is required to read a text aloud or otherwise. Anxiety has negative effects on achievement, while it also stimulates and motivates the individual. Thus, the level of anxiety is the key element. According to Kennedy (2010) although anxiety is considered healthy at a certain level, extreme anxiety is considered harmful. Chastain (1975) and Kleinmann (1977) stated that foreign language anxiety triggers student achievement. Horwitz *et al.* (1986) described foreign language reading anxiety as a separate compound of students' self-perceptions, beliefs, emotions and behaviors related to learning language in the classroom due to the uniqueness of the process of learning a language. Research on foreign language reading anxiety have focused on teaching English as a foreign language. In the literature, there are several studies that reported the negative impact of reading anxiety on achievement (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; Macıntyre and Gardner, 1989; Saito and Samimy, 1996; Sellers, 2000; Matsuda and Gobel, 2004; Zhao, 2009; Lien, 2011; Mohammadpur and Ghafournia, 2015; Altunkaya and Erdem, 2017; İşcan, 2017).

Students who learn Turkish as a foreign language may encounter cases that are different than their native languages and may lead to anxiety such as unfamiliar phonetics, sentential structure, vocabulary, and a different cultural structure. These differences may trigger anxiety, which includes the sub-dimensions of discomfort, concern, fear, etc. (Altunkaya and Erdem, 2017).

Altunkaya and Erdem (2017) investigated the correlation between reading anxiety and reading comprehension in a quantitative study conducted on the anxiety about reading Turkish as a foreign language and found that high reading anxiety had a negative effect on reading comprehension. Several studies were conducted on reading anxiety in the field of learning a foreign language. Zhao *et al.* (2013) reported a negative correlation between reading anxiety and reading performance. Xiao and Wong (2014) utilized speech, listening, reading, writing and general anxiety scales in their research and found that writing anxiety was the most prominent type of anxiety among students. In the study, writing anxiety was followed by reading, speech and listening anxiety in prevalence. Al-Shboul *et al.* (2013) investigated the sources of reading anxiety among the students learning English as a foreign language at Yarmouk University in Jordan and found that there were two main factors, namely personal factors and textual properties. In the study, it was determined that the personal factors that caused anxiety included fear of making mistakes and reading anxiety, while textual properties included unknown words, unknown topic and the unfamiliar culture. In the literature review conduced on reading skills education in learning Turkish as a foreign language, it was determined that there was no previous study on the sources of reading anxiety. Students who read in a foreign language attempts to acquire reading skills in a complex process that entails learning different voices, improving the vocabulary, comprehension of foreign cultural elements, etc. In this process, identifying the sources of reading anxiety, which has an impact on reading achievements, could illuminate the reading skills instruction and learning process.

1. 1. The Objective of the Study

Turkish as a foreign language instruction has become a significant teaching field with the ever-increasing number of foreign students in Turkish universities and the global activities of the Yunus Emre Institute for Turkish as a foreign language. In this field, several studies are required to conduct successful instructions. Reading skills, which are the basis of language instruction, is a key factor in learning. Based on the significance of reading skills, the present study aimed to determine the sources of reading anxiety among the students who learn Turkish as a foreign language.

2. Method

The study was conducted as a case study, a qualitative research design. Case study is used to analyze one or more specific cases in depth (Creswell, 2005).

Focus group interview, a qualitative research method, was preferred in the study. The focus group interview was defined by Krueger and Casey (2000) as "a carefully planned series of discussions that aim to obtain the perceptions about a predetermined subject in a moderate and non-hostile environment". In other words, the main objective of focus group interviews is to understand the thoughts and emotions of individuals about a topic, product, or service (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

2.1. Study Group

The groups that the focus group interviews were conducted with included eight students attending B2 level courses at İnönü-TÖMER during the 2017-2018 academic year and 6 teachers who taught Turkish as a foreign language at the same institution. The demographics of the students attending the B2 level are presented in Table 1:

Table-1. Student demographics

Participants	Age	Gender	Nationality
1. student	18	Female	Iraq
2. student	25	Female	Iraq
3. student	18	Female	Syria
4. student	18	Female	Syria
5. student	18	Female	Syria
6. student	25	Male	Afghanistan
7. student	19	Male	Afghanistan
8. student	18	Male	Turkmenistan

Table 1 demonstrates that the student age varied between 18 and 25. Furthermore, one Iraqi female student was learning Turkish towards her master's degree. The other students stated that they were learning Turkish to attend undergraduate level courses.

The instructors that participated in the interviews were employed in the field of teaching Turkish as a foreign language. The demographics of the instructors are presented in Table 2:

Table-2. Instructor demographics

Participants	Years in teaching Turkish	Gender Instructed Course Levels	
1. instructor	5 years	Male	All
2. instructor	1 year	Male	B1, B2, C1
3. instructor	5 years	Male	All
4. instructor	6 years	Female	All
5. instructor	1,5 years	Male	All
6. instructor	4 years	Male	All

Table 2 demonstrates that the instructors that participated in the interviews were experienced in almost every course level. It was determined that one of the instructors had a PhD in Turkish education and another had a PhD in Turkish language and the remaining 4 instructors were in the process of giving their dissertations.

2.2. Data Collection Instrument

A semi-structured interview form was used as the data collection instrument in the study. The most important convenience provided by the semi-structured interview technique for the researcher is to provide more systematic and comparable data based on the fact that the interviews are conducted with a predetermined interview protocol (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). In the present study, initially, the literature on reading anxiety in learning Turkish as a foreign language was reviewed and a semi-structured interview form for students and instructors was developed. The interview questions were read to ten separate students who were learning Turkish as a foreign language and were not included in the study group to test the comprehensibility of the study and their feedbacks were recorded. The questions developed for the students and instructors were also presented to 6 experts, who teach Turkish as a foreign language and not included in the interview group, and 2 experts in the field of measurement and evaluation. Based on the expert feedback, interview questions were finalized.

2.3. Data Collection Instrument Validity and Reliability

Semi-structured interview questions designed to collect data were developed to include reading anxiety topic and presented to 6 instructors who teach Turkish as a foreign language to obtain expert opinion. The questions revised based on the expert feedback were applied to eight students who were not in the study group and at the same level with the study group (B2) as a pilot scheme. The data obtained in the interviews were coded separately by two field expert authors of the present study, then the codes and themes were finalized with inter-author agreement.

2.4. Data Collection Process Steps

The study data were collected on a voluntary basis. Separate dates were set up to conduct the focus group interviews with the students and the instructors. Prior to the interviews, the study group members were informed about the objective and duration of the interview and the details on the use of interview data in the present scientific study. Participants were informed that their names were kept confidential and face-to-face interviews were conducted, the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder upon receipt of participant approval and the researcher took notes. The interview data that included voice recordings between 45 minutes and 1 hour were transcribed as interview forms.

The following questions were included in the student interview form:

1. Do you feel comfortable or anxious when reading Turkish texts?

Advanced Analysis Questions:

a) Why do you feel anxious when reading Turkish texts?

b) What makes you feel comfortable when reading?

c) How are you affected by unknown words when reading Turkish texts?

d) Does reading a Turkish text on a subject that you are not familiar with influence your comprehension? How?

e) What are your views on reading comprehension of texts on Turkish culture when reading Turkish texts?

f) What are your emotions and thoughts about making mistakes when reading Turkish texts aloud or silently?

g) What are the factors that reduce your motivation to read? What are the factors that increase your motivation to read?

2. Does the type of the text you read make you feel comfortable ot anxious in the reading process?

Advanced Analysis Questions

a) How do the types of text such as story, novel, tale, article affect your reading comprehension in the reading process?

b) Reading and comprehension of what type of texts cause anxiety?

The following questions were included in the instructor interview form:

1. What are the moods of your students when reading Turkish texts? Do they feel comfortable or anxious?

Advanced Analysis Questions:

a) What factors affect the anxiety of your students when reading Turkish texts?

b) What makes your students comfortable when reading?

c) How do unfamiliar words affect your students when reading texts?

d) How is the reading comprehension capacity of your students affected when reading a Turkish text on an unfamiliar topic?

e) What are your views on reading comprehension levels of your students when reading texts on Turkish culture?

f) Do your students have the fear of making mistakes when reading Turkish texts aloud or silently? How does this factor affect their reading comprehension?

g) In your opinion, what could be the factors that reduce the desire of your students to read Turkish texts? What could be the factors that increase the desire of your students to read Turkish texts?

h) Can you provide examples for the behavior of your students with high reading anxiety?

g) Can you provide examples for the behavior of your students with low reading anxiety?

2.5. Data Analysis

Content analysis method was used in the study. Content analysis requires in-depth analysis of the collected data and allows for the clarification of previously ambiguous themes and dimensions (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). Content analysis was reported to be a research method that includes the organization, classification and comparison of the texts, and the deriving theoretical conclusions from the texts. For data analysis, initially, the data were coded, the themes were constructed based on reading anxiety in Turkish as a foreign language, the codes and themes were organized separately based on the student and instructor views and finally the findings were described and interpreted. In document analysis conducted on the interviews, the students were code-named as 1. Student, 2. Student, and instructors as 1. Instructor, 2. Instructor, etc. The data were coded separately by the two authors. And to conduct reliability analysis on these codes, Miles and Huberman (1994) Reliability = [Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement)] x 100 formula was used and the result was obtained as 0.85 between the codes assigned by the two authors. Since coding reliability should be at least 70% (Miles and Huberman, 1994) the obtained value (85%) demonstrated that the coding was reliable. In the presentation of the codes and themes, the student and instructor views are presented in italics and between quotation marks, supporting the conclusions.

3. Findings

The findings of the present study that aimed to investigate the sources of reading anxiety of the students who learn Turkish as a foreign language were assigned themes based on the teacher and student views and presented under the theme titles.

3.1. Tonal Attributes and Pronunciation of Turkish Language

Language education should utilize the data provided by several scientific fields such as physiology, psychology, sociology and neurology. In the beginning of the education, initially the sounds of the target language are learned. According to constructivist approach, reading is a process where the preliminary information is integrated with the information available in the manuscript and re-interpreted. This process consists of several processes that occur in the eye, audio and brain including sight, voicing and structuring (Güneş, 2014). The students start the foreign language learning process with the voice repertoire that they transfer from their native language. They advance by adding new voices to this repertoire. On this process, instructor 3 emphasized the anxiety experienced in the process of learning the tonal attributes of Turkish: "*They are concerned about the pronunciation, that is when voicing the new sounds. They care a lot about pronunciation. They care very much about the pronunciation of the words in the text. They check if their pronunciation is correct in A1 and A2. They are concerned about other topics as well. They mainly experience problems in pronunciation. They experience difficulties in the pronunciation of long words. In A1 and A2, they feel anxious. But as long as they are accustomed to the basics of the language, they start to feel comfortable starting from B1 and B2. There are voices in Turkish that do not exist in their native languages. They can read these words incorrectly. Then, they feel anxious.*" As the students try to learn the sound that do not exist in their native language, they may experience various problems. This issue was stated by the instructor 2 as follows: "*There are sounds that exist in their language, but missing in Turkish, and they try to speak by adapting their language to ours, for example, my student in Ukraine makes a different sound for the letter 'r'.*" Learning the sounds completely in the basic courses is absolutely necessary to build a sound foundation for the advanced course levels. The significance of this fact was emphasized by instructor 1 as follows: "*If the sounds were not instructed completely in the basic course and a firm grammatical foundation was not established, the child would not be able to read fully.*" The requirement of establishing the sounds and pronunciation in the initial courses mentioned by the instructor 1 was also indicated by the instructor 5: "*There could be students who did npt comprehend the Turkish vowel system. There may pronunciation issues. This would reduce the desire to read. Such problems could be observed even in students who attend C1 level. They may be worried about being belittled in the class.*" The instructor stressed that these skills should be given in the basic level to avoid reading anxiety of the students. The

instructor 3 emphasized that pronunciation is one of the basic sources of reading anxiety: "*They feel anxious when they pronounce new words, producing unfamiliar sounds. They care a lot about pronunciation. They care very much about the pronunciation of the words in the text. They check if their pronunciation is correct in A1 and A2. They are concerned about other topics as well. They mainly experience problems in pronunciation when reading. They experience difficulties in the pronunciation of long words.*"

In the theme of the tonal attributes and pronunciation of Turkish language, students generally stated that they experienced anxiety about pronouncing the words incorrectly when reading. Student 5 stated the following: "*I am concerned when a word is long. I feel comfortable with short words. I am shy about reading aloud.*" Student 7 stressed the anxiety they felt about pronunciation: "*We read aloud in the classroom when the teacher asks us to read. We are more relaxed when we read the texts silently at home. I am more comfortable when I read the text silently I'm more relaxed when I read it quietly. My friends do not my mistakes when I read it silently.*" The student 3 who had lower reading anxiety considered it as an opportunity for him to read the texts aloud: "*I do not recognize my mistakes when I read silently, but when I read the texts aloud, I hear my mistakes and am not ashamed, if the teacher would not correct my pronunciation, how can I learn it? When another student laughs, I would be ashamed, but the students do not laugh.*" As of this statement, it could be stated that students with low reading anxiety would not be concerned about pronunciation mistakes they make in the class and would be able to receive a more accurate vocal education.

3.2. Language Levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 Course Levels)

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages indicates six different language levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2. The language skills that students should acquire in each language level are detailed in the abovementioned document. Teaching Turkish as a foreign language also aims the students to achieve the language competencies required for these levels. Instructors who teach Turkish as a foreign language stated that they observed changes in students' reading comprehension levels based on the language levels. Instructor 3 stated that the reading anxiety of the students decreased as their language levels increased: "*They feel anxious in A1 and A2. But as long as they are used to the sound fundamentals of Turkish, they start to feel comfortable from B1 and B2*".

Instructor 5 also stated that students feel less anxious in advanced courses and added that student traits also affect their anxiety levels: "*Students are more comfortable in C1. Probably, they were more relaxed and carefree in reading with confidence. Personal problems can be a bit of a problem. The child is not a stutterer, but I had a student stuttering when reading. The student was always anxious in the class. Because, the student was comfortable talking to me. But (s)he was excited in the class.*"

Although instructors generally indicated that reading anxiety levels were reduced at advanced levels, instructor 1 stated that students who encounter words formed with different suffixes in Turkish, which is an agglutinative language, in advanced levels could feel additional reading anxiety: "*Starting in B1, the student could experience problems due to the length or the word when they encounter different words with different suffixes. Even when they encounter the suffixes they already know in new words, this could be a problem. This might alleviate reading anxiety.*"

Students stated that their reading anxiety levels increased in advanced levels. Similar to the instructor 1, students also stated that, at advanced levels, the new words they encounter and increasing vocabulary such as proverbs increased their reading anxiety. Student 3: "*Some books may be easy. I felt no anxiety when I was reading in A1, but I was concerned when I encountered the different sentences in the second book.*" Student 7: "*I was not concerned too much in A1 and A2, because they were easy. But since B1, there are new words and proverbs, but I do not feel anxious because of these, but I feel anxious about (reading) Turkish and other books.*"

3.3. The Fact that Turkish is an Agglutinative Language and The Properties of Reading Texts

The general characteristic of agglutinative languages is the addition of certain suffixes to the word root to obtain new words. Since Turkish is an agglutinative language, this could lead to reading stress in individuals whose native language is not an agglutinative language. Instructors and students both expressed during the interviews that the sources of reading anxiety included the long words (with several suffixes), long texts, or non-interesting text or genres.

Manuscripts are the main tools in language education. The use of manuscripts in language instruction has a long and established history. This practice was not based on actual theoretical and practical research. However, it was always emphasized that language instruction using texts is easier, and different types of texts are used in language instruction. These texts are presented to the students as a model and are considered as a special assistance in the language instruction process. Furthermore, the use of texts is considered useful for students in learning new vocabulary and grammatical rules, to conduct various researches and to improve their comprehension skills (Cuq and Gruca, 2005 cited by Güneş (2013)). The instructors stated the following on the manuscripts that are considered beneficial in language education:

Instructor 2: "*When they encounter a long text, they develop a prejudice or a concern. Students also think they will be challenged. Or when they encounter a long word, they start to stutter since they are worried about making a mistake due to this prejudice. Generally, students do not experience serious problems. They do not worry too much, with a few exceptions, students are generally good.*"

Instructor 1: "*When a word contains too many suffixes, usually a blockage occurs. Starting with B1, when there are different suffixes in different words, the student may experience difficulties due to the length of the word. Newly encountered words may lead to problems, even when they contain familiar suffixes. The student could feel reading anxiety.*"

Instructor 3: "*I think that the text should be read by different students. I think that each sentence or paragraph should be read by different students. The student feels comfortable when the text is short. Thus, the student does not feel discomfort. The student feels uncomfortable when the reading text is long. This leads to the concentration of other students; they remain ready, and also when the student makes a mistake, it happens in a short period of time. The student thinks about making mistakes when the text is long, and eventually (s)he makes mistakes.*"

Instructor 3 stated that the subject matter of the text, the words it contains and the rate of unknown words were also important: "*An uninteresting text, several unknown words, several long words are among the factors that increase*

reading anxiety." Instructor 6 stated that the sources of reading anxiety were based on individual and environmental factors: *"The lack of knowledge, vocabulary, and reading level of the student could lead to reading anxiety. As environmental factors, the class the student attends, friends, teacher's attitude are the sources of reading anxiety. The type of text can also lead to reading anxiety. While storytelling texts draw attention, students may feel anxious when reading informative texts such as articles. Furthermore, the length of the sentences in the text is also influential. They are afraid of reading long sentences, they do not want to read these."*

Students stated that they feel anxious when they encounter words with several suffixes. Student 2: "*Sometimes I cannot find the word in the dictionary when it has too many suffixes. This stresses me. I am relieved when I encounter adequate words.*" Student 3; "*The presence of words with less number of suffixes increases my desire to read.*"

Almost all students stated that they experienced difficulties and felt tense when reading long texts. According to student views, they preferred to stories and tales when compared to informative texts. Student 1: "*Tales are more fun, so I feel more comfortable. Novels makes me feel anxious.*" Student 7: "*I feel more comfortable and carefree when I understand all the text. We feel comfortable with stories and tales, but I do not feel comfortable in science and article. I comprehend the stories and tales better. I do not understand it when there are new words in articles.*" Student 3 agreed: "*For instance, we are not worried about reading a story or a tale.*" Student 1 added that they can also feel anxious about reading poetry: "*Understanding the poems is a problem, I feel anxious*".

3.4. Unknown Words

Contemporary language instruction methods emphasize learning a word by imprinting the word cognitively instead of memorizing the words one by one and by deducting the unknown words using the context. Vocabulary plays a significant in conveyance of the meaning, while the lack of vocabulary is a major obstacle to transfer of meaning, and vocabulary plays an important role in utilization of basic language skills (Krashen, 1989; Kocaman and Kızılkaya, 2014).

In the interviews, the instructors mostly stated that they tried to instruct the class to prevent the students to develop anxiety, promoted the use of dictionary, and attempted to make them learn new words with feedbacks. Instructor 1 explained this as follows: "*When they encounter an unknown word, they check it out using the dictionary on their mobile phones immediately. First, I read the text and analyze it, and then I ask the children to read it, it usually contains words that they do not know, it can contain idioms and proverbs. The student cannot always rely on context. For example, they can encounter the word "test light" in a text. The student may not know the meaning of test light, so I think dictionaries are necessary as well.*" Instructor 3: "*They stop (while reading) the text and ask the (meaning of the word) they do not know. I read sentence by sentence. I explain the (meanings of) the words they do not know. If I would not explain, they might feel anxious.*"

The student interviews demonstrated that unknown words were among the sources of reading anxiety. The students expressed this fact as follows:

Student 4: "*I do not feel anxious when I understand all the words. I feel comfortable. However, if there are a few unknown words, then I can feel anxious.*"

Student 2: "*When there is a word that I do not know, it breaks the chain. I check it out in the dictionary and I feel anxious. I can even stop reading. I may close the book and leave it aside.*"

Student 7: "*I get bored, I do not want to read. When there is a word that I do not know, when there were two or three words, I could not read it and I did not understand and that stressed me. I do not want to read. Two or three words do not matter. This is not difficult to understand, but when there are too many words, I get really bored.*"

Student 6: "*I sometimes read poems in Turkish. I do not understand many words and I look up (these words) in the dictionary. They do not appear, and I feel completely bored and I stop reading. If there are too many words, for example, if there are more than 10 words that I do not know in a text, it bothers me, and it spoils the text, and the meaning of this text is no longer good.*"

Certain students considered the unknown words in a text as an opportunity for learning. These were as follows:

Student 3: "*I do not feel worried when I encounter words that I do not know, I feel happy. Because, I learn new words and I underline the words I do not know while reading the text. Then I look these up the dictionary. So, I am not concerned. If there are 10 words in the first text, there could be 5 words in the second text, which could reduce gradually.*"

Student 5: "*How would I learn if there are no words that I do not know, as long as there are not many words, I am not bored.*"

It was determined in the interviews conducted with the students that a certain number of unknown words in the texts helped improving the vocabulary. However, when the number of unknown words in the texts is increased, this was a source of reading anxiety.

3.5. Unknown Topic

In the interviews, all instructors stated that the students felt anxious when they encountered a text on a previously unknown topic. Instructors indicated that previous knowledge on the text topic could be a factor that reduces reading anxiety. Instructor 3: "*We learn the language with our experiences in life. They experienced problems in a text about the invention of the stethoscope. Because, they were exposed to a part of life that they could not experience. If you provide a text to a farmer on farming, he would understand it better. As long as (the text) is relevant to their areas of interest, students would understand (this text) better.*" Instructor 4: "*Females can understood a text on food a lot better, also male students can understand a text on soccer better.*"

In student interviews, it was also determined that they felt reading anxiety when they read a text on an unknown topic. In texts on unknown topics, the lack of knowledge about the meanings of idioms and proverbs was also indicated by most students as a source of reading anxiety. Student 2: "*I am concerned when I do not know the meaning of the words and proverbs. I know the meaning of all the words that make up the idioms and proverbs, but I may not know the meaning of the whole phrase. That is why I am worried.*" Student 4 expressed the impact of a text on an unknown topic on reading comprehension as follows: "*The exam included a topic that I knew nothing about and I did*

not understand it at all. I did not understand the words and I did not know how to answer the questions. I felt bad and I tried to translate it, but I could not understand it very well, I was worried when reading."

3.6. Culture

Culture is an important factor as a basic element that kneads the texts that form the language in foreign language instruction. In every language, the traces of the culture of that society can be found. Kramsch (1993) stated that foreign language/second language learners should also learn the culture of the target language, and the language cannot be learned without learning the cultural context.

İşcan (2017) stated that one of the most important goals in teaching Turkish as a foreign language is to convey all aspects of the cultural elements of Turkish society to the students. Instructors stated the following on the instruction of culture:

Instructor 1: *"There are statements such as '40 meat pastries can fit in a spoon' in the texts. It is very difficult for them to understand this, they fee anxious."*

Instructor 6: *"I instructed a topic about jerid in the past and students can experience problems in texts about our culture. Naturally, that affects their comprehension capacity as well. Because, the texts include terms. The terms used are elements of the national culture, thus reducing the comprehension capacity of the students."*

It was determined in the interviews conducted with students that the students generally considered learning the related culture as necessary in the process of learning a language. Sample student responses are as follows:

Student 2: *"Learning a language is learning another culture. I like the texts on Turkish culture better If I feel that culture as such, I do not feel concern."*

Student 8: *"Learning Turkish culture makes it easier for me to learn new words."*

Student 5: *"I would like to read (the texts) on Turkish culture, I do not like to read (the texts) on other topics, I am familiar with the words related to Turkish culture since I watch the serials (on TV)."*

3.7. Fear of Making Mistakes

In the study designed to investigate the sources of reading anxiety, it was revealed that affective personality traits of the students and especially the fear of making mistakes were among the sources of the reading anxiety in the interviews conducted with both students and instructors. Instructor 2 stressed this as follows: "*There are several differences between the students reading the texts aloud and silently. Since the mistakes are more obvious when reading aloud and they are ashamed of other students, the students are concerned more when reading loud. This naturally would affect the reading comprehension.*" Instructor 1 stated that the students said that "*I do not experience any problems when I read silently or reading in front of a mirror, but when I read in front of an audience, I make mistakes and I feel anxious.*" Instructor 6, on the other hand, indicated the differences between the achievement levels of the students: "*If there is a difference between the level of students, this can lead to reading anxiety among the students. I provide feedback to the students during the reading. It is possible that students could be shy and anxious due to problems induced by personality traits such as feeling uncomfortable in the class, thinking that they would be belittled in the class, being ashamed, correction of even the smallest mistakes by the teachers, correction of the problems by other students.*" Instructor 4 stated her/his efforts to reduce reading anxiety in the class as follows: "*I do not want students to correct their friends under any circumstances. I want to provide the feedback myself. Thus, I try to prevent them to feel ashamed.*"

In the interviews conducted with the students, all students stated that they were afraid of making mistakes and other students making fun of them due to these mistakes in the classroom. Student responses are as follows:

Student 5: *"I feel really ashamed when I make a mistake. I feel more ashamed when the teacher corrects my mistake."*

Student 6: *"I am so ashamed that I can even leave the classroom at that moment."*

Student 7: *"I am not ashamed when I make mistakes when I read in my native language, but when I read in Turkish, I am ashamed, five people are ashamed, three people are not."*

4. Conclusion and Discussion

The sources of reading anxiety among the learners of Turkish as a foreign language were determined based on teacher and student views. In the light of these views, it was observed that the first source of reading anxiety was the tonal attributes of Turkish language, and consequently, the factor of pronunciation. One of the biggest problems in teaching Turkish as a foreign language is that the inability of the students to fluently and accurately pronounce the phonemes and the fact that different pronunciation of the same symbols in their native languages in Turkish or the presence of different symbols that do not exist in their native languages, thus preventing the communication of the students. Furthermore, it was suggested that especially the words that include problematic phonemes should be repeated and these words and phonemes should be supported with visuals in order for the students to recognize the Turkish phonemes and the location of the accents and intonations. Tüm (2014) examined the most significant difficulties faced by individuals learning English as a foreign language in six categories: 1) the native language, 2) pronunciation ability, 3) the environment where the subject is exposed to the language, 4) personality and attitude, 5) age, and 6) motivation (Şenel, 2006, cited by Tüm (2014)).

In the study, language level was determined as the second source of reading anxiety and accordingly, the instructor and student views were presented in detail. It was determined that the students who have encountered different vocabulary elements as a result of the advanced language levels could experience reading anxiety, however since the students would apprehend the tonal attributes of Turkish in advanced levels, their anxiety associated with pronunciation decreased in these levels.

It was determined that the agglutinative nature of Turkish language and longer texts caused reading anxiety in the theme of Turkish as an agglutinative language and the properties of reading texts. Both instructors and students stated that reading anxiety could increase in informative texts depending on textual properties. Bahmani and Farvardin (2017) investigated the impact of different manuscript types on reading comprehension and reading anxiety of learners of English as a foreign language and reported that the different text types did not result in different reading comprehension levels in the study and control groups, however they found that reading anxiety

was higher among the students in the group with the higher text difficulty. Güneş (2013) stated that the view "language is a social interaction instrument" became prominent with the constructivist education approach and the activities, tasks and projects that would improve the language, cognitive, emotional and social skills of the students are emphasized, and unique and special texts and activities are used in the learning-teaching process. It can be argued that it would be beneficial to design the texts specially for teaching Turkish as a foreign language and the difficulty of the texts should be adjusted based on the levels of students.

Study findings demonstrated that unknown words were among the sources of reading anxiety experienced by the students. The students considered the presence of a limited number of unknown words in the texts as a motivating factor to learn new words, however they stated that higher number of stated that unknown words in the texts was a source of reading anxiety. Zhou (2017) investigated the reading anxiety of students learning Chinese as a foreign language in the United States and indicated three major sources: the unknown subject, the unknown tones, and the feeling of uneasiness they experienced when reading aloud in the classroom.

In the present study, it was determined that the students experienced reading anxiety when they encountered texts written on a topic that they had no previous knowledge. The reading comprehension process entails combining, interpretation and synthesizing the preliminary knowledge and the information provided in the text. In this process, it was observed that the lack of preliminary knowledge about the text being read was among the sources of reading anxiety. Saito *et al.* (1999) stated that the sources of reading anxiety in a foreign language are the unknown writing system, unknown culture and unfamiliar topics.

As a result of the present study, it was determined that students who were learning Turkish as a foreign language experienced reading anxiety due to their lack of knowledge on Turkish culture. Kutlu (2015) stated that in teaching Turkish to foreigners, determination of Turkish cultural elements and acquisition of these elements at the appropriate skills levels would contribute significantly to learning, and it should be noted that texts should reflect Turkish language and culture adequately. Byram and Morgan (1994) also emphasized the significance of learning the culture in learning a language and stated that learning the culture is an integral part of learning a language.

The study findings also demonstrated that the students' fear of making mistakes was a source of reading anxiety. All students and instructors stated that the fear of making mistakes while reading the texts aloud in the classroom was a source of reading anxiety. Zhou (2017) reported that the reading anxiety was triggered when students learning Chinese as a foreign language in the United States attempted to read the texts aloud in the classroom and could not pronounce the words accurately.

The study results demonstrated that the sources of reading anxiety among the learners of Turkish as a foreign language were identified as "Turkish tonal attributes and pronunciation", "language course levels" (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 Course Levels), "the fact that Turkish is an agglutinative language and the properties of reading texts", "unknown words", "unknown topic", "culture" and "fear of making mistakes". Shboul *et al.* (2013) found that the sources of reading anxiety among students who were learning English as a foreign language included textual properties such as unknown words, unknown topic and unfamiliar culture and personal traits such as anxiety about the impact of reading and fear of making mistakes. These findings are consistent with the results of the present study.

Reading anxiety, which is a part of the affective dimension of reading skills, is a factor that has an impact on instructional achievements. Thus, in order to prevent the reading anxiety to reach a level to obstruct learning, the textual properties should be well defined as observed in the study result.

- Texts should be adequate for the student level,
- Texts should contain elements of Turkish culture,
- Include unknown words that are adequate for the student level,
- The text topics should be selected with care and topics that are likely to be unfamiliar should be included in the texts reserved for advanced levels,

Another factor that leads to reading anxiety is the fear of making mistakes. To prevent this;

- A classroom environment where the students would not mock each other's mistakes should be established,
- Adequate reinforcers should be used to motivate the students during the reading aloud process,
- A classroom environment where the students would feel comfortable, are not afraid to make mistakes and support each other in the learning process should be established.

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