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Investigating the Language Anxiety Levels of Students who will take LGS

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Abstract

Foreign language anxiety and foreign language test anxiety is one of the most researched topics today due to the requirements of our age. This study investigates the language anxiety of 8th grade students who will take LGS in Afyonkarahisar. The study investigates teacher-student interactions, peer connections, coping methods, resource use, parental support and developmental theories related to language anxiety. The study utilizes semi-structured interviews to illustrate the complex effects of language anxiety on language acquisition and test performance. Taking a qualitative approach, the study was conducted with 12 8th grade students who are currently studying in Afyonkarahisar. The findings were deciphered through thematic analysis. According to the findings, students experience moderate to high levels of language anxiety and the reasons for this are varied and fear of failure, peer relationships, parental support and teaching methods affect the language anxiety levels of young people. The study also discussed students' techniques for coping with anxiety and language learning tips. Students used mindfulness, deep breathing relaxation and positive self-talk to reduce anxiety.

Keywords: LGS, language anxiety levels of students

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Introduction

Educational psychology research has revealed that language anxiety can influence language learning and performance (MacIntyre, 2002). Students transitioning from secondary to high school in Turkey face pressure from the "High School Transition Examination" (LGS). LGS exams impact students' educational trajectories and place intellectual and emotional pressure on them. Language anxiety has been examined in various educational settings, but 8th graders preparing for the LGS encounter distinct challenges. Teachers must grasp language anxiety in this context to assist students build a successful future. This study tackles this literature gap and explores these students' language anxiety. Language anxiety factors in 8th grade LGS students may suggest the educational environment, classroom procedures, and individual attributes that increase or decrease language anxiety. Studying anxiety management may help students acquire language and reduce stress (Horwitz et al., 1986).

This study examines linguistic anxiety in Afyonkarahisar 8th students taking the LGS. Language anxiety is examined in this study to understand the psychological and emotional challenges students confront throughout this academic transition. To reduce suffering and improve learning, understanding how language anxiety affects language learning and test performance may help create individualized solutions and support systems. These findings will assist teachers design language learning methods and a comfortable setting to lessen LGS preparation anxiety. This study examines 8th graders' LGS linguistic anxiety. Students' language anxiety, contributing reasons, and coping techniques are assessed to affect instructional approaches, interventions, and support networks to promote wellbeing, anxiety, and LGS language acquisition.

Educational and psychological stakeholders need this study on language anxiety in 8th graders taking the LGS in Afyonkarahisar. This study's theory and practice can improve education and student well-being. This project will further language anxiety research by targeting 8th graders taking the LGS. By measuring language anxiety and other characteristics, the study will assist us understand these adolescents' academic transition issues. This study is important in that it has the potential to improve theoretical frameworks of language anxiety by revealing the effects of language anxiety on LGS preparation.

In practice, this study will help educators to create specific interventions and support systems. Understanding the causes of language anxiety in LGS Grade 8 students can help educators create supportive classrooms and use effective teaching methods to minimize anxiety and enhance learning. Identifying students' coping methods will also help in the creation of treatments and support networks to help students manage their anxiety and improve their well-being throughout LGS preparation. This study is important in that it has the potential to validate students' experiences and illuminate their language anxiety management practices to help them prepare for the LGS exam with confidence and resilience.

This study has three research questions. These are:

1. What are the language anxiety levels of 8th-grade students who will take the LGS in Afyonkarahisar?
2. How do 8th-grade students perceive the LGS exam?
3. What coping strategies do 8th-grade students employ to manage language anxiety in the context of the LGS exam?

This study aims to understand the LGS exam language anxiety of 8th grade students, but the limitations of the study may restrict its generalisability and breadth. Firstly, this study only covers 8th grade students of a secondary school in Afyonkarahisar. The findings may not be valid for all students taking the LGS or for students from different schools or locations. Generalizing the results beyond the sample requires caution.

Secondly, self-report assessments of language anxiety and coping methods are open to biases and perceptions. Participants may skew statistics by under- or over-reporting anxiety or coping mechanisms. Participants may also feel obliged to conform to societal norms or to present themselves in a positive light. This social desirability bias may alter responses and data validity. Third, this cross-sectional study collects data at a single point in time. Therefore, causal links or long-term conclusions cannot be proven. A longitudinal study would better grasp the dynamic character of language anxiety and its impact on academic achievement.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher, which may lead to interviewer bias. Moreover, the researcher teaches English to the students. Therefore, there is a teacher-student relationship between the researcher and the participants. The presence and participation of the teacher/researcher during the interviews may affect the participants' responses and the objectivity of the data.

In this study on the language anxiety levels of eighth grade students before the LGS exam, it is believed that the semi-structured interview questions prepared are valid and reliable. It is assumed that these questions were designed, adapted and validated for the target group. Participants are expected to answer the interview questions honestly and truthfully. It is assumed that they honestly describe their language anxiety and LGS exam experiences, feelings and perspectives. This study is important for 8th grade students preparing for the LGS exam. It is assumed that the educational, cultural and social elements in the environment in which the students live will affect the language anxiety experiences and perceptions of the participants.

Since the early 1970s, foreign language teaching has focused on anxiety, a common and long-lasting emotional condition. Krashen (1982) discusses the learner's affective filter and how anxiety may influence language learning and acquisition. He also examines studies on foreign language anxiety (FLA) causes, effects, and treatments. These characteristics are examined to explain language anxiety and language education.

Uneasiness and uncertainty prompted extensive research on anxiety (Rachman & Rachman, 2013). Language anxiety is stress, unease, emotional reactivity, and worry about learning a second language, according to MacIntyre (1999). Language teaching and learning anxiety research focuses on state, trait, and situational anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). Spielberger (2013) found that trait anxiety was constant whereas state anxiety changed. These distinctions have helped us comprehend language learning anxiety.

Language anxiety has long been known to impact language acquisition and performance. Language anxiety is a complicated psychological condition that causes uncertainty, stress, and panic in language-related circumstances (Liu & Huang, 2011). In EFL study, Matsuda and Gobel (2004) examined the relationship between FLA and foreign language competency or performance. According to Von Worde (2003), FLA research has consistently shown that anxiety can hinder second language learning.

FLA has been linked to certain linguistic skills (Cheng: 1999; Mills: 2006; Saito: 1999). These studies expand the literature. Debilitating anxiety negatively affects linguistic skills, according to Elkhafaifi (2005). Facilitative anxiety, when task-related stress or fear stimulates learners to perform better, is also seen (Brown, 2000). These data suggest that debilitating and facilitative anxiety affect language learning.

Previous research on test anxiety and language acquisition have repeatedly found it to be a key component. Aida's (1994) study examined linguistic anxiety and Japanese learning. Test anxiety, speech anxiety, fear of failure, and class dislike greatly affected Japanese language acquisition. Petridou and Williams (2007) examined how test anxiety influences personal conduct and found that high-scoring students and, to a lesser extent, second-language learners are more likely to act out. Therefore, exam anxiety is a major factor in language learning.

Salehi and Marefat examined how test anxiety and foreign language performance affect each other. They also sought correlations between foreign language anxiety and exam anxiety. Both the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale and the exam Anxiety Scale were used to assess foreign language and exam anxiety. Students' final test grades were matched to these scores. Both foreign language anxiety and test anxiety negatively correlated with exam grades, showing that they hampered test performance. The study also found a substantial positive correlation between foreign language anxiety and exam anxiety.

Çakıcı's study (2016) examined how test anxiety (TA), foreign language anxiety (FLA), and language proficiency affect university preparation students studying English as a foreign language. Gender effects on TA and FLA were also examined. The results showed no association between TA and linguistic proficiency. However, students' TA and FLA correlated positively. A substantial inverse association was found between students' FLA and linguistic competency. Females had higher mean TAI and FLCAS scores than males,

according to t-tests. The study recommended EFL educators reduce exam anxiety and language learning apprehension in foreign language classrooms.

Previous study synthesis shows distinct aspects causing exam anxiety in foreign language acquisition. Neely and Shaughnessy (1984) reviewed cultural disparities in test performance and evaluation, including test anxiety. Inappropriate material, inadequate standardized samples, examiner and language bias, uneven social ramifications, assessing separate conceptions, and inconsistent predictive validity are six typical test use concerns.

Turkey requires a test for high school admission. The Ministry of Education replaced TEOG with the High School Entrance Examination (LGS) in 2018. Students' LGS results determine their high school placement, which is limited. Students are sent to a high school near their home if exam results do not match admission standards. LGS is given to 8th graders. (MONE, 2018).

Like TEOG, the LGS Foreign Language portion has multiple-choice questions. LGS students only have 10 English questions, unlike TEOG's 20. According to the 2018 Turkish Ministry of Education data, 9.50% of LGS test takers left English questions unanswered more often than Religion and History. This suggests students struggled with English questions. However, the raw score distribution showed that 41.11% of students who qualified for admission to relevant schools answered all English section questions correctly.

Demir (2019) offers two main exam system improvements. First, separate the English language component from the main test for independent evaluation. Second, English language education professionals should prepare and analyze the exam. Finally, the test should cover grammar, vocabulary, and English communication, and there should be enough time for it.

Methodology

Conducting a qualitative research methodology, this study will examine the language anxiety of 8th grade students taking the LGS exam. The study paradigm uses qualitative data from semi-structured interviews to investigate students' experiences of language anxiety. This qualitative study examines 8th graders' linguistic anxiety, its origins, and their coping strategies. Qualitative data will show language anxiety levels, reasons, coping methods, and educational consequences.

The core research model component is semi-structured interviews with chosen participants. The interviews will examine students' LGS test language anxiety perspectives, coping mechanisms, and beliefs. In semi-structured interviews, language anxiety sufferers can freely express themselves. Individual opinions, coping methods, and test performance are detailed in qualitative interview data on language anxiety.

Twelve 8th graders from an Afyonkarahisar secondary school were purposively sampled to represent diverse language competence levels. LGS preparation students have diverse language anxiety experiences and viewpoints, which the selection criterion reflects. The survey included only 8th-graders from Afyonkarahisar secondary schools. This cohort intentionally includes students with varied language competence levels to portray language anxiety.

Students were chosen for their desire to participate, language competency, language learning experiences, and exam comfort. Ethics were observed throughout the study. Students and parents obtained informed consent before data collection. The study anonymized all data to safeguard participant identities. The research was approved by Afyonkarahisar school administration. 6 boys and 6 girls participated in the study and their ages were 15-16.

Data was collected via Turkish semi-structured interviews. These interviews sought detailed comments from participants regarding their language learning experiences, language acquisition viewpoints, and LGS preparation concerns. Semi-structured interviews study language learning and anxiety using open-ended questions. Questionnaires sought narratives and perspectives.

Participants were asked to introduce themselves, explain their language learning experiences, and express their feelings. Additionally, students' language anxiety levels, triggers, LGS attitudes, and worries were examined. Lastly, how classroom and parental influences affect students anxiety and how they manage were examined.

Quality data was collected from Afyonkarahisar secondary school 8th graders preparing for LGS through semi-structured interviews. Different degrees of language competence were used to describe language anxiety feelings and opinions. Participants were selected in cooperation with the school administration. The school administration liaised with the participants and their parents. Before data collection, participants and parents signed informed consent documents explaining the purpose, methods and confidentiality of the study.

Turkish, the native language of the participants, was used for the semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in a private, one-on-one classroom setting to encourage free dialogue. Each interview began with an introduction that summarized the purpose of the study and put the participants at ease. In semi-structured interviews, participants could ask questions freely while maintaining consistency. With permission, the interviews were audio-recorded to capture the responses accurately. The researcher analyzed language learning experiences, language acquisition concerns and LGS exam concerns. To analyze the interviews, the researcher transcribed the interviews and translated them into English. For data reliability, the participants' transcribed responses were reviewed and verified.

The Turkish interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated into English for analysis, preserving the participants' responses. Data analysis was first used to evaluate the interviews, focusing on linguistic anxiety triggers, worry triggers and LGS preparation anxiety levels. This approach classified and quantified textual data patterns and recurrent language features. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis and content analysis. Thematic analysis revealed hidden themes, implicit meanings and subjective experiences in the transcripts. It included context beyond the explicit material to understand participants' perceptions, feelings and expressions of language anxiety.

The researcher read the transcripts several times to comprehend the participants' responses and to identify significant statements, emotions and recurring expressions related to LGS language anxiety. Initial codes were created to group the sections of data that revealed language anxiety, language learning and LGS exam concerns. The clustering of codes to reflect common experiences, feelings and opinions about language anxiety during LGS preparation formed emerging themes. The themes were interpreted within the framework of the research objectives to provide a comprehensive perspective on the multidimensional language anxiety of 8th grade students before LGS. The integration of content and theme analysis increased the knowledge about language anxiety.

The researcher reflected on her biases and assumptions throughout the analysis to maintain methodological rigor. She sought comments from colleagues and read the results to gain their input and support the findings. This audit enhanced the credibility of the study by providing clarity in the data analysis decision-making process.

Findings

The findings obtained as a result of the thematic analysis of the semi-structured research and answering the research questions are presented in this section. As a result of the thematic analysis of the interviews with 12 8th grade students who will take the LGS, some codes and themes were found. The themes are presented in Table 4.1 with their explanations.

Tablo 4.1. Themes and explanations

Theme	Explanation
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Language Anxiety Level	Students ratings for their anxiety level.
LGS Exam Concerns the LGS.	Participants' thoughts, feelings, and worries related to
Anxiety Triggers anxiety.	Examining specific situations that cause language
Teacher-Student Dynamics language anxiety and confidence.	Examining how teacher-student relationships affect
Peer Interaction Effects anxiety and confidence.	Examining how peer interactions affect language
Coping Mechanisms	Analysis of participants' language anxiety management practices such as mindfulness and relaxation
Resource Utilization	Participants' language anxiety support contacts.
Parental Support	Understanding parent support for language learning.
Suggestions for Improvement	Participants' suggestions to improve language acquisition and lessen anxiety.

The themes obtained from the analysis of the interviews in Table 4.1 emphasize how different factors affect language anxiety. The theme “Language Anxiety Level” shows the language anxiety levels of the students who will take the LGS according to the findings obtained from the language anxiety scoring given by the participants in the interviews. Participants' opinions and feelings about their anxiety of the upcoming exam are included in the 'LGS Exam Concerns' section. The reasons for the language anxiety experienced by the students are analyzed in the “Anxiety Triggers” theme. The themes “Teacher-Student Dynamics” and “Peer Interaction Dynamics” show how students' relationships with their teachers and classmates or their attitudes affect their language anxiety and confidence. The methods used by students to manage their language anxiety and stress are analyzed under the theme of “Coping Mechanisms” including mindfulness and relaxation techniques. Also, among the main external anxiety support networks that support students in coping with

anxiety, the theme of “Resource Utilization” and the theme of 'Parental Support' are examined within these two themes. The theme of “Suggestions for Improvement” offers advice from participants to minimize anxiety and thus enhance language learning.

The first research question of this study is “What are the language anxiety levels of 8th-grade students who will take the LGS in Afyonkarahisar?”. This part presents detailed information about the findings related to this research question. Language anxiety in 8th grade students preparing for the LGS exam was assessed through interviews. The responses revealed the language learning and test anxiety of these students. Participants described themselves and their language learning. According to the findings, some of the students mentioned learning difficulties, while others were confident in their language skills. St 3 said "I have been learning English for 7 years and English is one of my favorite and best subjects. I also go to English courses on weekends." St 3 showed her interest in English and expressed her success. She stated that she continued to be interested in English outside of school and attended extra courses. St6 "I am neither very good nor very bad at English. My school exam grades are average, but I am not very successful in tests" and mentioned his moderate success in English lessons. He also stated that he was not successful enough in English multiple-choice questions in the tests for LGS. St11 expressed his lack of interest in English, his failure and his lack of language learning by saying, "I don't like English very much, I don't understand it, and the results in the tests are not very good."

When asked about their feelings in language learning, the participants' responses revealed a range of emotions. While some language learners felt scared or anxious, St5 said, "English is my fearful dream, I couldn't love it." others said, St7, "English is my favorite subject." They expressed their positive feelings towards English. When the participants were asked to rate their language learning anxiety from 1 to 10, with 10 being very anxious, the average score was 7,08. This shows that the students have a middle-high level of test anxiety. The students' language anxiety level ratings and their feelings about English are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Students' language anxiety rating

Students	Language Anxiety Level	Feelings about English
St1	7	Negative
St2	8	Positive
St3	5	Positive
St4	6	Neutral
St5	9	Negative
St6	7	Neutral
St7	6	Positive
St8	3	Positive
St9	8	Negative
St10	7	Neutral
St11	10	Negative
St12	8	Positive

The participants' English learning attitudes and anxiety levels are presented in Table 4.2. The mean language test anxiety of the participants is 7.08 on a scale of 1-10. The average score reveals that 8th grade students preparing for LGS are nervous about the exam and their language test anxiety is generally high. According to the information given in the table, students' language test anxiety levels vary between 3 and 10. The language test anxiety scores of 5 students whose feelings towards English were defined as positive were 8, 5, 6, 3 and 8. There is a difference between the students' scores. Some students have high anxiety and some have medium anxiety. This finding suggests that the language test anxiety levels of students with positive feelings towards English differ and that there is another reason behind the language test anxiety of these students. The anxiety scores of the 3 students whose feelings towards English were defined as neutral were 6, 7 and 7. The students' scores are consistent with each other. This finding indicates that students who are neutral towards English have a medium-high level of language test anxiety. The anxiety scores of the 4 students whose feelings towards English were defined as negative were 7, 9, 8 and 10. The students' scores are consistent with each other. This finding indicates that students who have negative feelings towards English have high language test anxiety levels.

The second research question of this study is "How do 8th-grade students perceive the LGS exam?" This part presents detailed information about the findings related to this research question. Participants were asked questions about the LGS exam. St2, "The exam scares me a lot, I want that day to never come." some students were worried about the exam; St7, "Of course I am a little worried." some were less worried; St8, "I am very excited. My trial results

are good. I think I will do well in English in the exam.” some were relaxed and excited. This diversity of feelings showed how customized LGS views were.

Investigating the features of the LGS that intimidate students revealed important information. Some found the format, content, time constraints or risks of the exam intimidating or challenging. Students are mostly concerned that their entire future will be determined by a single exam. In this regard, students expressed their feelings as follows.

St5: “My biggest fear is that I won’t be able to answer all questions on time. I worry a lot.”

St9: “There are many courses and subjects to study. It is very difficult to do them all together.”

St8: “What if I can’t succeed. When I think about it, I have a stomachache.”

St12: “We will be placed in a high school according to the result of only one exam and our whole life will be shaped and this scares me a lot.”

The different answers of the students showed the diversity of the components that cause test anxiety and emphasized the need for special treatments and techniques to overcome anxiety. St5 was anxious about not answering all questions in the exam duration. Timing was a problem for him. St9 was not pleased with studying a lot of courses all together and St12 was not happy about a test deciding her future. St18 was afraid of failure and this feeling was so strong that it affected her physically.

The participants stated that the bonds they established with the language teacher affected their confidence and anxiety. In this regard, St3 said, "I love our teacher very much, she motivates us very well, she always tells us that we can do it. His support increases my self-confidence." St8 agrees with St5 by saying, "When I take the questions I cannot do to my teacher even during the break, he helps me and always supports me." However, St9 said, "Our teacher is a bit nervous, which makes me more anxious. Sometimes she tells us that we will hardly win at this rate. Maybe she says this to encourage us, but my self-confidence decreases even more when the teacher says this." St9 expressed how his tense relationship with his teacher increased his test anxiety and decreased his self-confidence. According to these findings, increasing teacher interactions increases students' self-confidence and decreases language learning anxiety. Tension or unsupportive teacher-student interactions, on the other hand, increase anxiety and self-confidence. Students expect a supportive teacher-student relationship.

Students felt comfort or discomfort when practicing with their classmates. Participants found peer collaboration useful for language practice. In this regard, St7 said, "I work with my friend and we tell each other the questions we cannot do. Then I understand better". Positive

interactions with peers increased confidence and reduced linguistic anxiety. However, some participants expressed tension or discomfort caused by peer interactions while learning a language. "I feel very uncomfortable when I make a mistake and they laugh at me, they make fun of me. This time I hesitate to answer the questions." Anxiety about peer criticism reduced confidence in language practice and negatively affected students' participation in the lesson as they were afraid of making mistakes and being made fun of. These responses showed that peer interactions greatly affected students' language anxiety and confidence and emphasized the need for supportive peer situations in ELT.

The third and the last research question of this study is "What coping strategies do 8th-grade students employ to manage language anxiety in the context of the LGS exam?" This part presents detailed information about the findings related to this research question. The responses received from the students in semi-structured interviews showed coping methods. In order to reduce language anxiety, the participants advocated deep breathing as St1 said, "I take deep breaths, it feels good.", positive self-talk as St4 said, "I tell myself I can do it, what have you achieved?" and breaking the study materials into parts as St10 said, "There are many subjects. First I feel intimidated and then I feel better when I divide them and study them piece by piece". These methods helped the language learners to feel calm during the test preparation. St2 stated that he relaxed himself and reduced his anxiety by using the mindfulness technique by saying "When I get very anxious, I sit by myself. I relax my mind and stay in the moment."

Through this theme, the help networks of students who had language test anxiety for LGS were revealed. Some students, such as St11, received help from their teachers to minimize language learning and test anxiety. In this regard, St11 said, "My teacher is my biggest supporter. She both helps me about how to study and comforts me with her words." St3 stated that he received support from his friends in both studying and coping with anxiety by saying, "My friends help me a lot, we work together and encourage each other." Participants expressed different opinions especially about the support of their families. These views are presented in a sub-heading 4.3.4. Parental support. In terms of support networks, St 2 had a different source compatible with the different technology age. St 2 said, "There are some online forums for students like me who will take the exam. I spend a lot of time especially in one forum for English, where we ask each other questions we cannot do, share useful information and motivate each other. It is very nice to know that you are not alone and to support each other in this way." He stated that he found an online and technology-based way to reduce anxiety. In this forum group, students provide both information and psychological support to each other. According to the findings, students' support networks include teachers, peers, families and online forum groups.

Participants in this study were living in different types of families. When the anxiety levels of the students were matched with their family structures, it was found that there was a

relationship between the language test anxiety level of the students and their family structures. While students living in supportive families had lower levels of anxiety, students living in non-supportive families had higher levels of anxiety. There was also a relationship between different types of family types and student anxiety levels. Table 4.3 shows the information about the family types, supportive status and anxiety levels of the students.

Table 4.3. Family type - degree of support - student language test anxiety level

Student	Family Type	Degree of Support	SLTA
St1	Extended Family	Neutral	7
St2	Single Parent	Unsupportive	8
St3	Nuclear Family	Supportive	5
St4	Nuclear Family	Supportive	6
St5	Single Parent	Supportive	9
St6	Nuclear Family	Neutral	7
St7	Nuclear Family	Supportive	6
St8	Nuclear Family	Supportive	3
St9	Single Parent	Neutral	8
St10	Extended Family	Supportive	7
St11	Blended Family	Unsupportive	10
St12	Extended Family	Neutral	8

Table 4.3 shows the relationship between language test anxiety, family structure and family support. Students from supportive nuclear or extended families had lower language test anxiety. Students from non-supportive families, such as single-parent or blended families, had higher language test anxiety. The fact that the anxiety levels of students from neutral-supportive families were at a moderate level shows that family support is related to language test anxiety in 8th grade students preparing for the LGS exam, although the level of support varies.

According to the data obtained from semi-structured interviews St4 in a supportive nuclear family said, "My family supports me a lot. They buy me whatever I need, such as textbooks." St4, who lives in a supportive nuclear family, stated the material and moral support provided by her family. St2, who lives in a non-supportive single-parent family, said, "My mum

always tells me to do my homework. She always asks me how many problems I chose. If I don't solve enough, she gets angry and gives me advice. Then I feel worse. I wish she wouldn't do that." St2 expressed her discomfort with her mother's insistent and oppressive attitude and how this increased her anxiety. St10, who belongs to a supportive large family, said, "We are crowded at home, my grandmother and grandfather live with us. But despite that, everyone is very understanding, they don't watch TV so that I can study and there is no noise. They always support me." and talked about how they prepared a suitable environment for him to study and the support of his family despite the high number of people in the house. St11 in a non-supportive mixed family said, "Sometimes the subject of exams comes up and I wish they would never talk about it. I feel more overwhelmed at such times." St11 expressed the discomfort and tension he felt when his family talked about the exam. St6 said, "Since my mum and dad work, they come home late anyway. The subject of the exam does not come up much in our house. I mean, I can't say that they support me a lot in this regard, but they don't make me feel bad." St6 mentioned that her parents did not take any action related to their children's exam anxiety due to their busy working life.

The students were also asked how they could make language learning fun or what they would like to be different in the exam preparation phase. In this regard, St2 said, "It would be better to learn English in the classroom in a more fun way with games." and expressed that he would like to experience more gamification elements in his classes. St6 said, "I think it would be better if there were more mock exams" about LGS preparation and stated that exams prepared according to the LGS format could help in this regard. St 7 expressed the need for more practice by saying, "It would be better to solve more examples about the questions that may appear in the English exam in class." Participants offered various suggestions that could improve language learning and reduce anxiety among Grade 8 students preparing for LGS. The students' suggestions can reduce the stress of language acquisition and exam preparation by creating a more positive and engaging learning environment.

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

In this study, many factors on the language anxiety of 8th grade students in Afyonkarahisar were discussed. Language anxiety, LGS exam attitudes, anxiety coping mechanisms, teacher-student interactions, peer connections, parental support were revealed through theme analysis of the data obtained from semi-structured interviews with students.

First of all, the language anxiety levels of the students were examined. According to the answers obtained from the students who were asked to rate their anxiety levels as 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, the average language anxiety score was calculated as 7.08 and it was concluded that the students generally experienced medium-high language anxiety. Students' language test anxiety regarding LGS varied, with most being high anxiety. Some students reported being less anxious or in a desired state of excitement for learning. When the reasons for the concerns were investigated, these included not being able to complete the exam within the given time, difficulty in studying all courses at the same time, anxiety about the future and fear of failure. In this regard, most of the students were under the overwhelming pressure of having their future decided by an exam, and the anxiety

experienced by some of them was so high that it affected them physically and caused them to experience abdominal pain.

According to the findings of the study, it was concluded that teacher-student connections and peer dynamics affected their test anxiety positively or negatively. While supportive teacher-student exchanges increased confidence, tense ones increased anxiety. Likewise, cooperation between students increased confidence, but due to ridicule, some students' anxiety increased and hindered their language development. The importance of supportive teacher and peer relationships was revealed in this study. The students' situations in terms of family support differed greatly from each other. However, there was one common point: the anxiety level of students living in supportive families was relatively lower, while the anxiety level of students living in unsupportive families was higher. As strategies for coping with anxiety, students used positive self-talk, focused relaxation, and mindfulness. Students shared specific strategies, but their different choices revealed the existence of diversity. Participants also made suggestions such as fun language learning environments and more practice on LGS.

These findings demonstrate the complexity of language anxiety among 8th grade students preparing for LGS. When the study findings were examined in general, the biggest common point of the students was that the majority of them experienced test anxiety. Their answers about the cause of anxiety, triggers, support groups, and coping with anxiety were varied. This diversity shows that anxiety is very individual and its causes are very diverse.

This study complements previous studies on language anxiety, test anxiety and the Turkish High School Entrance Exam. The similarities of the research with other studies in the literature are examined in this section. Existing research supports the investigation of language anxiety in second language learning. This study showed that, similar to Krashen's (1982) emotional filter, language anxiety impairs language acquisition by affecting students' emotional responses to learning English. The students' English anxiety levels in Table 4.2 reflect MacIntyre's (1999) definition of tension, restlessness and emotional reactivity.

Previous studies have linked language test anxiety with performance. This study also agrees with Aida (1994) and Petridou and Williams (2007) that test anxiety, language learning and performance of students who are afraid of the LGS exam are highly interconnected (Tables 4.2 and 4.3). Çakıcı's (2016) study revealed a negative relationship between language anxiety and proficiency; this reflects varying levels of anxiety among students with different language proficiency. Table 4.2 shows how English learning attitudes affect language test anxiety.

The scientific study on the Turkish LGS exam includes Demir's (2019) improvement suggestions. LGS's English question analysis, supported by the Ministry of National Education statistics, shared this study's concerns regarding students' English questions and raw score distribution. The findings obtained from the students participating in the study

support Demir (2019). Students are worried about taking the exams for all courses at once and are afraid that there will be insufficient time.

This study overlaps with research on language anxiety and test anxiety, but differs in terms of context and test type. Exam system changes, such as English question types and quantity, can affect anxiety and performance. This study is consistent with Demir's (2019) recommendations for analyzing and preparing the English language component and offers some insights into the language anxiety of children with LGS. In conclusion, this study is consistent with existing literature on language anxiety, language test anxiety, and LGS testing, but the nuanced findings highlight the need for specific strategies to address different levels of anxiety and language testing system improvements to reduce anxiety and improve language learning outcomes.

According to the findings of this study, 8th-graders with language anxiety should be supported before the LGS exam. To alleviate anxiety, these programs should emphasize mindfulness, relaxation, and positive reinforcement. Language teachers should be trained to provide a supportive environment. This involves developing teacher-student interactions to boost confidence and lessen language anxiety. In addition to this, a good learning environment requires helpful and collaborative classroom relationships. It will be useful to establish peer-learning groups or activities that enable language practice without judgment or derision to promote learning. The findings of this study obviously shows how family support affects students' linguistic anxiety. Parents should be educated about how to preserve a stress-free home during exam preparation.

To improve LGS test preparation, teachers should use practice tests, engaging classroom activities, and gamification. They may include varied exam-formatted practice exercises to lessen test anxiety. These techniques address language anxiety holistically, encompassing teacher-student connections, peer interactions, family support, test formats, and mental well-being, to help LGS exam preparation students learn better and stress free.

Language anxiety in different grades may be studied longitudinally. Comparisons of mindfulness, relaxation, and peer support networks may show the best language anxiety therapies. Besides, research on language anxiety and language acquisition or performance outcomes may explain how anxiety influences language learning.

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