

Foreign Language Anxiety and Language Learning Beliefs: A Comparative Study of Six Language Learner Groups

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Abstract

The present study investigates the relationship between foreign language anxiety and beliefs towards foreign language learning, considering personal and social-environmental factors that may influence language learners' beliefs. The participants consisted of 431 college students ($M = 19.99$, $SD = 4.57$ years) enrolled in language preparatory classes in Türkiye, focusing on Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Russian, and Spanish. The students provided self-reports on their levels of foreign language anxiety, including speech anxiety, failure anxiety, and low self-confidence, as well as their beliefs towards foreign language learning. The results of hierarchical regression analysis revealed that failure anxiety was positively associated with students' beliefs towards foreign language learning, indicating that higher levels of failure anxiety were linked to less favorable beliefs. On the other hand, low self-confidence was negatively associated with beliefs towards foreign language learning, suggesting that lower levels of self-confidence were associated with more negative beliefs. Speech anxiety, however, showed no significant association with students' beliefs towards foreign language learning. Furthermore, it was observed that foreign language anxiety and beliefs towards foreign language learning differed based on the specific foreign language being learned. These findings underscore the importance of examining foreign language anxiety in relation to beliefs towards foreign language learning, particularly within diverse language learner populations.

Keywords: foreign language anxiety, foreign language beliefs, college students, Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Russian, Spanish, Türkiye

Introduction

People embark on foreign language learning journeys for a myriad of reasons, such as personal interest, living in a foreign country, career advancement, compulsory education language courses, and curiosity about different cultures (Akçay et al., 2015). Even with shared motivations, each individual follows a unique path in their language-learning process, with some progressing rapidly while others face more gradual progress (Murphy & Msetfi, 2014). Beliefs towards learning a new language are crucial in motivating individuals to dedicate time and effort to their language-learning endeavors (Bernat & Lloyd, 2007). Anxiety experienced during the language-learning process can significantly impact these beliefs, either undermining or supporting them (Wahdah et al., 2018). Recognizing the connection between language learning anxiety and beliefs, this study aims to investigate the association between these two factors among college students. Delving into the

diverse reasons behind language learning and the varying individual journeys, it is important to explore the role of beliefs and anxiety in shaping learners' experiences.

Beliefs towards Learning a Foreign Language

Individuals' beliefs towards language learning play a crucial role in shaping their language acquisition process. These beliefs can either support or jeopardize the learning journey. Bernat and Lloyd (2007) define beliefs as the general conjectures that students hold about themselves, the factors influencing learning, and the nature of teaching and learning. Positive beliefs, such as self-trust and confidence in one's abilities, can foster motivation and create a positive learning environment for acquiring a foreign language. Conversely, negative attitudes towards language learning can hinder progress. For instance, prioritizing grammar over listening skills may lead students to focus too much on one aspect while neglecting others, resulting in failure (Hsiao & Chiang, 2010). Additionally, a student who believes they have inherent limitations in language acquisition may start the learning process with a negative mindset (Bernat & Lloyd, 2007).

The formation of these beliefs is influenced by individual and environmental factors. Individual factors such as meta-cognitive knowledge, social representations, self-confidence, self-regulation beliefs, and self-attributes can either support or undermine the language learning process (Barcelos, 2015; Gabillon, 2005). Environmental factors, including teaching methods, instructors' quality, learning materials, and classroom environment, also impact students' beliefs towards language learning (Crabbe, 2003).

Importantly, students' foreign language anxiety emerges as a significant factor that undermines their beliefs in the language learning process (Kim, 2020; Lee, 2014). Therefore, in this study, we aim to investigate the contribution of language learning anxiety to beliefs towards the foreign language learning process. By exploring this association, we seek to enhance our understanding of the complex dynamics between beliefs and anxiety in language learning, providing insights for more effective language learning interventions.

Foreign Language Anxiety and Beliefs towards Learning a Foreign Language

When students embark on learning a new language, they may experience anxiety regarding the learning process and their ability to achieve their language-learning goals. It is important to distinguish between general anxiety and foreign language anxiety, as the latter specifically refers to the anxiety experienced towards the language being learned (Horwitz et al., 1986). As defined by Gardner and MacIntyre (1993), foreign language anxiety is the fear that arises when individuals with a limited grasp of a foreign language are required to use it. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), foreign language anxiety consists of three main components: communication anxiety, test anxiety, and negative evaluation anxiety. Communication anxiety relates to difficulties in speaking within a group, test anxiety involves the fear of failure, and negative evaluation anxiety entails the belief that one will be negatively judged by others. However, previous studies on foreign language anxiety have revealed that the components of foreign language anxiety may vary across different cultural contexts (Oruç & Demirci, 2020). Consequently, researchers have employed different components of anxiety to assess foreign language anxiety. One such study conducted by Oruç and Demirci (2020), who had a similar sample group to ours, identified three components: speech

anxiety, failure anxiety, and low self-confidence. Speech anxiety refers to the strain experienced when conversing with others, failure anxiety involves the belief of being unable to complete the language learning process successfully, and low self-confidence reflects a lack of belief in one's language learning abilities. These three components of foreign language anxiety provide insight into the sources of anxiety within the language learning process. It is important to examine language anxiety by considering these three components together, rather than focusing solely on individual anxiety factors, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experienced anxiety. Furthermore, foreign language anxiety can pose challenges in acquiring, maintaining, and utilizing the new language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Toyama & Yamazaki, 2021). In other words, foreign language anxiety impacts the initial stages and the continuity of the learning process.

Naturally, one would expect a relationship between language anxiety and beliefs towards learning a foreign language. Anxiety can lead to negative beliefs (Bandura, 1986). For instance, feeling anxious about using a newly learned language due to the fear of making mistakes or experiencing pronunciation difficulties can lead an individual to believe that they are failing in the language learning process, consequently diminishing their motivation (Tsai & Chang, 2013). However, it is important to recognize that the association between language anxiety and beliefs towards learning a language can be bidirectional, with both constructs simultaneously influencing each other (Alamer & Almulhim, 2021; Horwitz, 1988; Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1991).

Individual Factors and Beliefs Towards Learning a Foreign Language

In addition to language anxiety, there are other personal factors that can influence beliefs towards the language learning process. One such factor is sex, which may shape an individual's beliefs and anxiety experienced during language learning. While some studies have found a significant association between foreign language anxiety and sex (Demirdaş & Bozdoğan, 2013; Mesri, 2012; Park & French, 2013), others have reported no significant correlation (Aida, 1994; Batumlu & Erden, 2007; Genç, 2009). For instance, Demirdaş and Bozdoğan (2013) discovered that females exhibited higher levels of anxiety in foreign language learning compared to males. Similarly, Park and French (2013) found that females experienced more anxiety in foreign language learning than males. Thus, we included sex as a covariate in our statistical models to account for its potential influence.

Social background is another factor that can impact foreign language learning processes. Frantzen and Magnan (2005) noted that students' previous educational level influenced their foreign language anxiety, suggesting that those with prior foreign language education exhibited lower levels of anxiety. Additionally, Dutra and Finger (2019) reported a negative association between language proficiency and foreign language anxiety, indicating that students with lower language proficiency experienced higher levels of anxiety during learning. This suggests a potential parallel between proficiency and previous language education. As a result, we included previous language education as a covariate variable in our study.

English is frequently used as a lingua franca among individuals from different nations (Seidlhofer, 2010), making it a dominant foreign language learned in educational systems and society. Consequently, the prevalence of English as a foreign language education may contribute to positive beliefs among new language learners. Positive beliefs towards foreign language learning

are associated with lower anxiety levels and greater success in the learning process. Conversely, individuals studying less commonly used languages may experience higher levels of anxiety due to limited available resources, leading to difficulties in the language learning process. Additionally, differences in writing and phonological systems between a student's native and foreign languages can contribute to foreign language anxiety (Elkhafaifi, 2005). For example, Turkish students learning Chinese or Arabic may experience foreign language anxiety due to the differences in writing and phonological systems between Turkish and these foreign languages. Djafri and Wimbarti (2018) found that students from Indonesia exhibited higher levels of foreign language anxiety in Japanese, Korean, and Arabic, which have different writing and phonological systems compared to Indonesian and English and French. Thus, we aimed to compare Turkish college students' language anxiety and beliefs towards learning a foreign language across different foreign language learners based on these considerations.

The Significance of the Current Study

Numerous studies have examined the association between language anxiety and beliefs towards the language learning process (Aslan & Thompson, 2021; Cheng, 2001). Previous research, however, mainly focused on a single language (e.g., English) while investigating the association between language anxiety and beliefs towards the language learning process (Aslan & Thompson, 2021). In addition, some studies approached language anxiety from a single-construct perspective (e.g., Demirdaş & Bozdoğan, 2013; Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009), which may have a limited comprehensive understanding of anxiety pertaining to the language learning process. Considering these gaps in the literature, we aimed to examine the contributions of language learning anxiety to beliefs towards the foreign language learning process in the current study for Turkish Students who are learning six different foreign languages such as Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Russian, and Spanish. The reason why we chose Arabic, Chinese, and Russian is that the writing system is different from Turkish. Our reason for choosing English is that it is taught in compulsory foreign language courses in Türkiye, and the reason why we chose German and Spanish is that their popularity is increasing day by day.

To fulfill our research purpose, we formulate the following research questions:

RQ-1: To what extent is foreign language anxiety (speech anxiety, failure anxiety, and low self-confidence) related to beliefs towards foreign language learning? We expect that all aspects of language anxiety will be negatively related to students' beliefs towards language learning.

RQ-2: Is there a significant difference between students, who are learning different foreign languages (i.e., Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Russian, and Spanish), foreign language anxiety, and beliefs towards foreign language learning? As this was an exploratory hypothesis, we did not pose any direction.

METHOD

This study employs a cross-sectional design to investigate the association between foreign language anxiety and beliefs towards foreign language learning.

Participants

We collected data from 431 students (147 males, 279 females) whose ages ranged from 17 to 60 ($M = 19.99$, $SD = 4.57$) in foreign language preparatory year in 21 universities in Türkiye, all of whom were native Turkish speakers. Further, the majority (43.4%) of students attended English foreign language preparatory classes, 26.7% attended German foreign language preparatory classes, 10.7% attended Arabic foreign language preparatory classes, 8.4% attended Russian foreign language preparatory classes, 6% attended Chinese foreign language preparatory classes, and 4.9% attended the Spanish foreign language preparatory classes.

We implemented specific categories to gather information on students' backgrounds regarding previous language training, family members with foreign language proficiency, and personal knowledge of foreign languages. The results revealed that 70.3% of the students reported having received foreign language education in the past. Furthermore, 37.4% of the students indicated that they had one or more family members who were capable of speaking at least one foreign language. Additionally, the majority of students (57.5%) reported that they possessed the ability to speak one or more foreign languages. See Table 1 for comparative demographic characteristics.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
Gender					
Female	279	64.7			
Male	147	34.1			
Age			19.99	4.57	17 – 60
Preparatory Class					
Arabic	46	10.7			
Chinese	26	6			
English	187	43.4			
German	115	26.7			
Russian	36	8.4			
Spanish	21	4.9			
Pre-language training					
Yes	303	70.3			
No	128	29.7			
A family member who can speak a foreign language					
Yes	161	37.4			
No	270	62.6			
Knowledge of foreign language					
Yes	248	57.5			

Measures

Beliefs towards Learning a Foreign Language

We used the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI; Horwitz, 1988), which was adapted to Turkish by Aydın (1999) to assess students' beliefs towards learning a foreign language. The scale contains 34 items (e.g., "Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages"). Students reported on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly agree, and 5 = strongly disagree). We found Cronbach's alpha of .71 for the current study, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Foreign Language Anxiety

Students reported Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS; Horwitz et al., 1986) which was adapted to Turkish by Aydın (1999). Turkish version of the FLCAS includes 32 items with three subscales: Speech Anxiety (8 items, e.g. "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class"), Failure Anxiety (5 items, e.g. "I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting"), and Low Self-confidence (4 items, e.g., reversed "I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language"). This measure is scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly agree, and 5 = strongly disagree). We averaged items for each subscale. For the current study, the internal consistency was acceptable ($\alpha = .93$ for speech anxiety, $\alpha = .78$ for failure anxiety, and $\alpha = .72$ for low self-confidence).

Procedure

The study underwent the necessary ethical review and obtained approval from the University Research Ethics Committee. Data collection took place during the academic year of 2020-2021, which coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic. To adhere to safety measures and restrictions, online data collection tools, specifically Qualtrics from Provo, UT, were utilized. We contacted universities that offered preparatory classes in Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Russian, and Spanish, seeking their collaboration. An informative email outlining the study protocol was sent to the relevant departments of these universities, requesting their assistance in sharing the online data collection tools and consent form with their students. Participants were provided with a voluntary consent form at the beginning of the online questionnaire, and upon providing their consent, they proceeded to complete the study as instructed.

We used questionnaires in which all the questions were completed by the participants. The questionnaires were designed to capture relevant information regarding foreign language anxiety, beliefs towards foreign language learning, and personal and social-environmental factors that may influence language learners' beliefs. Participants were instructed to respond to each question based on their own experiences and perceptions. The use of comprehensive questionnaires ensured that a wide range of variables and factors were considered in the study, contributing to a thorough

analysis of the relationship between foreign language anxiety and beliefs towards foreign language learning.

Data Analysis Procedures

To investigate the association between foreign language anxiety and beliefs towards foreign language learning, we employed hierarchical regression analysis. We used the SPSS 27 for the analysis. This analytical approach allowed us to examine the unique contribution of foreign language anxiety variables in predicting beliefs towards language learning while controlling for covariate variables.

Our study did not have any missing data as the questionnaires were completed online and each question was mandatory, ensuring a complete dataset for analysis.

RESULTS

Preliminary Results

Pearson bivariate correlations were conducted to examine the associations among study variables. Results showed that beliefs towards foreign language learning and failure anxiety were significantly and positively correlated ($r(431) = .16, p < .001$). In addition, beliefs towards foreign language learning and low self-confidence were significantly and negatively correlated ($r(431) = -.15, p < .01$). However, there was no significant correlation between students' beliefs towards foreign language learning and speech anxiety ($r(431) = -.093, p = .055$).

Moreover, students' beliefs towards foreign language learning and age were significantly and positively correlated ($r(430) = .13, p < .01$), and their beliefs towards foreign language learning and the knowledge of a foreign language were somewhat significantly and negatively correlated ($r(431) = -.25, p < .001$). In other words, students who possess knowledge of a foreign language tend to exhibit lower levels of belief towards foreign language learning. See Table 2 for complete correlation results.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations of the Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. BFLL ^a	-							
2. Speech anxiety	-.093	-						
3. Failure anxiety	.160**	.668**	-					
4. Low self-confid.	-.146**	.824**	.628**	-				
5. Age	.125**	-.049	.033	-.036	-			
6. Sex ^b	.001	.224**	.074	.172**	-.067	-		
7. PLT ^c	-.246**	.199**	.030	.165**	-.028	.035	-	
8. FMFL ^d	-.064	.161**	.155**	.127**	-.128**	-.016	.151**	-

9. KFL ^e	-.021	.143**	.112*	.115*	-.095*	-.046	.217**	.114*
<i>M</i>	3.39	2.91	2.73	3.05	19.99	-	-	-
<i>SD</i>	0.32	1.01	0.91	0.86	4.57			
<i>Range</i>	2.24-4.44	1-5	1-4.80	1-5	17-60			
<i>Skewness</i>	0.02	0.01	0.13	0.15	4.42			
<i>Kurtosis</i>	0.17	-1.06	-0.73	-0.60	24.01			

Note. * $p < .05$ (2-tailed). ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed). **a**: beliefs towards foreign language learning. **b**: 0 = male and 1 = female. **c**: pre-language training; 1 = available and 2 = none. **d**: family members with foreign language; 1 = available and 2 = none. **e**: knowledge of foreign language; 1 = available and 2 = none.

Regression Results

Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted in which students' beliefs towards foreign language learning were regressed on sex (0 = male and 1 = female), age, knowledge of a foreign language (1 = available and 2 = none), foreign language anxiety (speech anxiety, failure anxiety, and low self-confidence) in two steps respectively.

In the first step, sex, age, and presence of a spoken foreign language accounted for 8% of the variance in beliefs towards foreign language learning, $F(3, 421) = 12.107; p < .001; R^2 = .079$. In block 1, age ($\beta = .120, t = 2.564, p < .05$) and presence of a spoken foreign language ($\beta = -.252, t = 5.386, p < .001$), indicated that students who did not speak other foreign language had lower scores on beliefs towards language learning. In the second step, speech anxiety, failure anxiety, and low self-confidence accounted for 18% of the variance in beliefs towards foreign language learning, $F(3, 418) = 16.967; p < .001; R^2 = .179, \Delta R^2 = .100$. In the block 2, failure anxiety ($\beta = .411, t = 6.622, p < .001$) and low self-confidence ($\beta = -.301, t = -3.718, p < .001$) were significantly related to beliefs towards foreign language learning. See Table 3 for regression results.

Table 3

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Sex, Age, Spoken Foreign Language, and Foreign Language Anxiety Predicting Beliefs about Foreign Language Learning.

Variable	Beliefs towards Foreign Language Learning		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Step 1			
Sex	.014	.032	.021
Age	.008	.003	.120*
Knowledge of foreign language	-.163	.030	-.252**

Total R^2			.079
F			12.107**
Step 2			
Sex	.039	.031	.058
Age	.007	.003	.096*
Knowledge of foreign language	-.128	.030	-.197**
Speech anxiety	-.027	.027	-.084
Failure anxiety	.145	.022	.411**
Low self-confidence	-.112	.030	-.301**
Total R^2			.179
ΔR^2			.100
F			15.226**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$

Differences in Beliefs Towards Foreign Language Learning and Language Anxiety Across Different Language Learners

We used one-way ANOVA to examine the differences in beliefs towards foreign language learning and foreign language anxiety among learners of Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Spanish, and Russian. The results revealed that there was a significant difference among language learners in their beliefs towards foreign language, $F(5,425) = 17.81, p < .001, \eta^2 = .173$. Post-hoc (Tukey) analysis showed that students who are learning English ($M = 3.24, SD = 0.28$) had lower levels of beliefs towards foreign language than the ones who are learning German ($M = 3.53, SD = 0.32$), Arabic ($M = 3.44, SD = 0.28$), and Chinese ($M = 3.50, SD = 0.27$).

In addition, the results from Welch's ANOVA revealed that there was a significant difference among language learners in their failure anxiety, $F(5,91.01) = 7.64, p < .001, \omega^2 = .072$. Results from post-hoc (Games-Howell) analysis showed that the failure anxiety of German learners ($M = 3.03, SD = 0.88$) was higher than Chinese learners ($M = 2.47, SD = 0.67$) and English learners ($M = 2.47, SD = 0.84$). In addition, Arabic learners ($M = 2.92, SD = 0.82$) had higher failure anxiety than English learners did ($M = 2.47, SD = 0.84$). Refer to Table 4 for a detailed breakdown of the ANOVA results.

Table 4

Differences of the variables according to the foreign language learned

Variable	Arabic		Chinese		English		German		Spanish		Russian		F(5, 425)	p	η_p^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
BFLL ^a	3.44	.28	3.50	.28	3.25	.29	3.54	.32	3.49	.24	3.52	.27	17.81	<.001	.17
FLA ^b															
Speech anxiety	2.97	.88	2.75	.88	2.97	1.01	2.91	1.02	2.85	1.07	2.66	1.21	.74	.596	
Failure anxiety	2.93	.83	2.48	.68	2.47	.85	3.04	.89	2.87	.93	2.99	1.10	7.69	<.001	.07
Low self-confidence	2.92	.76	2.93	.80	3.13	.83	3.04	.87	3.08	.93	2.85	1.07	1.004	.415	

Note. a: beliefs towards foreign language learning. b: foreign language anxiety.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined the contributions of foreign language anxiety to beliefs towards the foreign language learning process among Turkish college students. Additionally, we examined the differences in language-learning anxiety and beliefs towards foreign language learning among different language learners. We discussed each main finding accordingly below.

Language Anxiety and Beliefs Towards Language Learning

We hypothesized that there would be a significant association between language anxiety and beliefs towards foreign language learning. Consistent with our first hypothesis, the results showed a significant association between language anxiety and beliefs towards foreign language learning. Specifically, in both bivariate and multivariate analyses, failure anxiety was positively related to beliefs towards foreign language learning, while low self-confidence, as a component of language anxiety, was negatively related to beliefs towards foreign language learning. However, there was no significant relationship between speech anxiety and beliefs towards foreign language learning. These findings are consistent with previous studies that have emphasized the significant relationship between language anxiety and beliefs towards foreign language learning (Aslan & Thompson, 2021; Okay & Balçıklı, 2017; Toghrac & Shahrokhi, 2014).

Interestingly, our results also demonstrated a positive association between beliefs towards foreign language learning and perceived self-confidence, which aligns with the findings reported by Jee (2017). This finding suggests that individuals who have higher levels of self-confidence in their language learning abilities tend to hold more positive beliefs about their potential for success in language learning. One possible explanation for this finding is that the ideal level of anxiety may have an impact on students' beliefs about their academic success. In other words, students' beliefs towards learning a foreign language may be optimal when they experience a "normal level" of foreign language anxiety. According to the Yerkes-Dodson Law, performance increases with moderate levels of psychological and mental arousal, but it decreases when arousal levels exceed a certain threshold (Johnston et al., 2012). Therefore, failure anxiety up to an ideal level may be a factor that increases beliefs towards foreign language learning.

The negative correlation between low self-confidence and beliefs towards learning a foreign language may stem from students' motivational sources. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for inherent satisfaction, while extrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for external rewards or consequences (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Students with low intrinsic motivation may lack the self-confidence necessary for successfully completing language learning tasks. This could explain why students with low self-confidence also hold lower beliefs towards language learning. Similarly, Jee (2017) found that students with low perceived linguistic self-confidence had less intrinsic motivation and experienced more anxiety compared to students with high self-confidence.

Differences in Beliefs Towards Foreign Language Learning and Foreign Language Anxiety across Different Language Learners

We found that students who learn English had less beliefs towards foreign language learning compared to Arabic, Chinese, German, Spanish, and Russian foreign language students. Further, we found that German foreign language students had more failure anxiety than Chinese and English foreign language students, and Arabic foreign language students had more failure anxiety than English foreign language students as well. Findings reflecting diversities in beliefs towards foreign language learning and language anxiety have shown somewhat parallel to our findings in previous studies (Ariogul et al., 2009; Djafri & Wimbari, 2018).

Attending a foreign language course for a long time may undermine students' beliefs towards learning a language. The most studied foreign language in Türkiye is English, and students begin to attend English foreign language courses during primary school. In other words, they have been in the process of learning English for an average of eight years; however, students learning the other languages probably spend less time learning these languages when compared to English learners. When we examined our sample group, we noticed that 65% of English learners spend one year or more learning this language, supporting our prediction (spend one year or more for other languages: German 29%, Arabic 28%, Spanish 19%, Chinese 15%, and Russian 11%). Overall, English-learning students in the current sample may “normalize” their beliefs towards language learning process and display less enthusiasm compared to other language learners. In addition, resources for English as a foreign language and the commonality of English among Turkish students may have created less anxiety among students compared to other languages.

Difference in Language Learning Anxiety by Sex

Female language learners exhibited higher levels of speech anxiety and lower self-confidence compared to their male counterparts. These findings align with some previous studies that have also highlighted gender differences in certain aspects of foreign language anxiety (Aydın et al., 2006; Dalkılıç, 2001; Demirdaş & Bozdoğan, 2013; Fauziah, Wati & Solihati, 2022; Mesri, 2012; Pappamihel, 2001, 2002; Park & French, 2013). However, it is important to note that other studies have not found such differences (Aida, 1994; Bailey, 1983; Batumlu & Erden, 2007; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999). The mixed findings in the literature make it challenging to draw definitive conclusions regarding gender differences in foreign language anxiety.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that studies conducted in Türkiye (e.g., Aydın et al., 2006; Dalkılıç, 2001; Demirdaş & Bozdoğan, 2013) have consistently found significant gender differences in foreign language anxiety. This suggests that cultural norms and expectations may play a role in shaping these differences. In collectivistic societies, there may be a perception that expressing emotions is a sign of weakness for men, leading them to suppress their emotions, including anxiety (Lim, 2016). On the other hand, societal expectations may result in higher levels of speech anxiety among female students. Such gender roles and norms could contribute to the observed differences in anxiety levels and potentially hinder female students' language learning process.

Overall, our findings regarding the gender differences in foreign language anxiety suggest that cultural factors and societal expectations may have an influence on how anxiety is experienced and expressed by male and female language learners. Further research is needed to gain a deeper

understanding of the complex interplay between gender, cultural norms, and foreign language anxiety.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

A notable strength of this study is the comprehensive examination of anxiety dimensions, specifically speech anxiety, failure anxiety, and low self-confidence, in relation to the foreign language learning process. Additionally, the inclusion of students learning six different foreign languages across 21 universities enhanced the generalizability of the findings.

Despite these strengths, there are several limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. Firstly, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to establish causality. Future research could benefit from longitudinal designs to better understand the temporal dynamics of foreign language anxiety and beliefs.

Secondly, the reliability of the measurement tool, the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), was found to be low and consisted of only one dimension. This limitation may have hindered a comprehensive assessment of beliefs towards foreign language learning. Future studies may consider using a more robust scale with multiple dimensions or seek improvements to the BALLI to enhance its reliability and validity.

Thirdly, the study focused exclusively on six specific foreign languages in Türkiye, leaving other languages unexamined. It would be beneficial for future studies to include a broader range of foreign languages to capture potential variations in language anxiety and beliefs.

Lastly, data collection coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, with the participants primarily engaged in distance education due to the circumstances. The unique context of distance education during a pandemic might have influenced students' beliefs and anxieties towards foreign language learning. It is important to acknowledge the potential impact of these circumstances on the study's findings.

Implications of the Current Findings

Our findings underscore the significance of individual differences, such as gender, previous language training, and time spent learning a foreign language in shaping the foreign language learning process. Consequently, foreign language instructors need to adopt an approach that considers these individual factors and their influence on students' language learning experiences.

A key takeaway is the observed variations in beliefs towards foreign language learning and foreign language anxiety among students enrolled in different language courses. Therefore, it is recommended that instructors tailor their approach to the specific language they are teaching rather than relying on a generic instructional approach. Acknowledging each language's unique characteristics, challenges, and cultural contexts can enable instructors to design targeted and effective teaching strategies. Additionally, our analysis revealed that foreign language anxiety significantly predicts beliefs towards foreign language learning. Considering this finding, it is important for instructors to actively address students' anxieties and work towards cultivating positive beliefs and attitudes towards language learning. It may be beneficial for teachers to

provide students with strategies to manage their anxiety and create a supportive learning environment that minimizes anxiety-inducing factors.

Language preparation schools and instructors might adopt the following strategies. Firstly, they should carefully consider their students' characteristics and needs, considering factors such as language background, gender, and prior language learning experiences. This individualized approach can enhance the effectiveness of instruction and support students' language learning progress.

Secondly, language instructors should recognize the unique aspects and challenges of each language they teach. By tailoring their instructional approaches to the specific language, instructors can create more engaging and culturally relevant learning experiences for students. Furthermore, addressing anxiety in the language learning process should be a priority. Instructors can proactively integrate strategies to manage anxiety into their teaching practices, such as promoting a positive and inclusive classroom environment, encouraging open communication, and providing guidance on stress reduction techniques.

Lastly, language instructors should engage in continuous professional development to stay updated with the latest research and best practices in language instruction. By expanding their knowledge and skills, instructors can refine their teaching approaches and better support students' language learning processes.

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