How do language learners feel?: The relationship between emotional state and foreign language anxiety

Aysegul Yurtsever¹, Dilara Ozel²

¹Hacettepe University, MA Student, Turkey
²Middle East Technical University, Turkey

The purpose of the present study is to identify high school students’ anxiety and emotional state in the process of learning English as a foreign language. While looking at the emotional status of students, most studies put an emphasis on the students’ motivation or anxiety. As the emotion is an inseparable part of human beings, it cannot be disregarded through the course of learning. The present study gives some perspective on how emotion and language classroom anxiety is related with learning process.

To construct this study, 82 participants were included from a vocational/technical public high school in Bursa, Turkey in October 2015. 25 female and 57 male students from 9th to 11th grade levels participated in this study. 20-item Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) of Watson et al. (1988) and 33-item Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) of Horwitz et al. (1986) were used for measuring the emotion and anxiety variables.

Through the analysis of the scales, the mean score for FLCAS is found as \( \mu = 3.04 \), while for positive aspects (PA) of PANAS, it is \( \mu = 3.47 \), and negative aspects (NA), it is \( \mu = 2.25 \). Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of reliability value for PANAS is found as .79 for PA and .84 for NA, and for FLCAS, the correlation value is found as .90. Pearson Correlation value between FLCAS and PA is statistically significant \( (r = -.348) \) at the 0.01 level (2-tailed test), and correlation value between FLCAS and NA is statistically significant \( (r = .203) \) at 0.05 level (1-tailed test).

The results of this study show that while vocational high school students’ levels of anxiety increase, as the results of FLCAS and PA are negatively correlated, their positive emotions decrease. However, due to the positively correlated relation of FLCAS and NA, the students’ emotion and anxiety levels increase at the same time.

Keywords: emotion, anxiety, foreign language learning.