SINGING AS AN ANXIETY-REDUCING STRATEGY FOR LEARNERS STRUGGLING WITH DIFFERENT LEVELS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY

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Abstract. Foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) adversely affects learners' performance in foreign language classes. The related literature focuses on the relationship between FLCA and learners' achievement or its potential sources. Considering the possibility of students' having different levels of FLCA in classes, this study was designed to find out whether teaching English songs could decrease FLCA of the students having different levels of anxiety and whether it could increase foreign language examination performance of these learners. The participants consisted of 161 tenth graders. FLCA scale (Horwitz et al., 1986) was administered as a pre-test at the beginning of the study which determined the participating classes as high anxiety (two classes) and low anxiety (two classes). The students in two experimental classes were taught four songs chosen through their votes in four weeks. The results indicated that teaching students' favourite English songs in regular English classes decreased students' FLCA regardless of their anxiety level, though higher anxiety group benefited more. Moreover, the results also showed an increase in students' foreign language examination performance with the use of song teaching due to decreased FLCA.

Key words: foreign language classroom anxiety, music, foreign language learning through songs, EFL learners

INTRODUCTION

With the change in perspective from teacher-centeredness to student-centeredness, especially since the 1990s, the field of language teaching has witnessed growing interest in understanding students' academic emotions and emotional aspects of language learning, such as learners' motivation, willingness to communicate, attitude, personality, and language anxiety (Trang, Moni and Baldouf Jr., 2013). Among these and many other emotional factors affecting language learning either positively or negatively, foreign language anxiety has gained recognition as one of the most significant negative factors influencing second language acquisition (e.g. Young, 1991; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993;

Arnold and Brown, 1999; Dörnyei, 2005; Huang and Hwang, 2013). Mostly associated with an increased level of worry or negative emotions in the course of learning or using the foreign language (MacIntyre, 1999), foreign language anxiety, commonly stemming from inherent linguistic deficit of foreign language learners, seems to vary across the participants' characteristics and context due to its situation-specific nature (Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B. and Cope, 1986).

The popularity of anxiety and its relationship with foreign language learning has always attracted researchers' attention. However, it has provided confusing results, indicating that it is not a simple, but rather a complex construct (Scovel, 1978). The vast majority of studies provided results showing the debilitating effect of anxiety on foreign language performance of the learners (e.g. Young, 1991; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley, 1999; Dörnyei, 2005; Liu and Zhang, 2008; Demirdaş and Bozdoğan, 2013; Huang and Hwang, 2013; Tuncer and Doğan, 2015). Moreover, despite the results of the studies illustrating the potential sources of foreign language anxiety, such as the impact of teacher (Aida, 1994), testing of language (Madsen, Brown and Jones, 1991), the type of instruction (Kim, 2009), and learner-related factors (Jackson, 2002), Krashen states in Young's (1992) interview that beyond all these sources, it is especially the traditional language learning environment that is inherently anxiety-provoking for language learning. MacIntye and Gardner (1989) also claim that anxiety develops gradually, and with increasing negative experiences in foreign language classes, learners develop negative attitudes which further deteriorate their performance in learning a foreign language. Therefore, considering these views, the significance of methodology followed in language classes outweighs that of the personal problems in creating a less stressful learning atmosphere (Young, 1992).

However, despite the general consensus on the deteriorating effect of foreign language anxiety as previously put forward, some situations arousing fear or anxiety for specific group of people may be perceived as comfortable by another group of learners due to its context dependent feature (Horwitz, 2001; Kim, 2010). This creates a further question of how we can decrease anxiety in heterogeneous classes, where the same method may yield different results for each student, to increase performance of foreign language learners. In order to address this issue, several researchers have already studied it and claimed various solutions that may be universally accepted. For instance, immediately apparent Suggestopedia, humanistic and student-centered methodologies (Dörnyei, 2005), allowing learners to recognize their irrational beliefs or fears (Foss and Reitzel, 1988) may be listed among the solutions. Moreover, learners' working with a tutor, joining a language club, practicing self-talk, doing relaxation activities, and instructors' own evaluation of their teaching beliefs as well as their error correction and attitudes toward learners (Young, 1991) are also considered as strategies to decrease anxiety of the learners. In addition to these, personalization of instruction in natural approach, making the message interesting and suitable

for learners' level of proficiency (Young, 1992), playing games (Saunders and Crookall, 1985), assessing exactly what has been taught in class (Madsen et al., 1991), using multimedia environment (Huang and Hwang, 2013) and songs in language classes (Dolean, 2016) have been demonstrated in literature as the alternative strategies to decrease anxiety.

Among these methods, teaching songs has already been proved to contribute learners' language acquisition in several ways ranging from increasing attention to optimizing the operation of learning mechanisms (Schönet et al., 2008). Apart from positive impacts of using music and songs in language learning, it has been found to be decreasing anxiety as well, which may eventually increase learners' foreign language performance (Dolean, D. D. and Dolean, I., 2014; Zoghi and Shoari, 2015; Dolean, D. D., 2016).

Considering that most students with various English language learning backgrounds come together in regular heterogeneous English classes in public schools in Turkey, one of the methods to reduce their foreign language classroom anxiety (hereinafter FLCA) may be to teach songs in English during regular foreign language classes as it is believed to increase their English language learning performance. Although there is evidence to support the fact that teaching songs in foreign language classes reduces overall FLCA of most of the students (Dolean, D. D. and Dolean, I., 2014; Dolean, D. D., 2016), how effective it is for the students having different FLCA levels in these heterogeneous public classes has only been partly investigated in the context of teaching French (Dolean, D. D., 2016). In order to shed more light on this issue, this paper aims to investigate the reactions of different groups of English learners having different FLCA levels in public schools in Turkey through teaching songs in their regular English classes.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND USE OF MUSIC IN LANGUAGE CLASSES

E. K. Horwitz, M. B. Horwitz, and Cope (1986) were the first to conceptualize FLCA as a unique and separate type of anxiety particular to language learning showing low correlations with trait anxiety (Dörnyei, 2005). They also developed a scale called *FLCA Scale* to measure this construct (Horwitz E. K., Horwitz, M. B. and Cope, 1986). This unique concept to language learning was explained to appear due to two factors. One of them includes more general types of anxiety people have, such as test anxiety or communication apprehension and the other type appears as a specific reaction to language learning (Horwitz and Young, 1991). This type of anxiety, which is called FLCA, in the simplest terms, makes learners feel nervous in learning a language.

FLCA has mostly been reported to be negatively correlated with the performance of the language learners (Campbell and Ortiz, 1991; Arnold and Brown, 1999; Dörnyei, 2005; Awan, Azher, Anwar and Naz, 2010; Amiri and

Ghonsooly, 2015). On the other hand, some researchers also claimed facilitating impact of FLCA through motivating students to learn more about the foreign language (Spielmann and Radnofsky, 2001). Moreover, learners' proficiency levels were claimed to be a factor in determining the anxiety of the learners in foreign language classes as well. While Price (1991) and Hembree (1988) claimed negative correlation between the proficiency level of the learners and their language anxiety, the results of the study of Monica and Garau (2009), on the other hand, showed that even advanced learners exhibit the highest level of anxiety. However, they did not show low course achievement despite their anxiety level.

Considering predominantly negative effect of FLCA, in order to neutralize the debilitating effect of it, researchers first attempted to find the potential sources of it. Results identified personality and individual factors of learners (Bailey, 1983; Gregersen and Horwitz, 2002; Bekleyen, 2004), teachers (Aida, 1994), teachers' way of instructing (Liu and Jackson, 2008), and testing (Madsen et al., 1991) as the main sources of foreign language anxiety.

Researchers also put forward various suggestions and proved their effectiveness to decrease foreign language anxiety of the learners. Despite the use of a relaxed and anxiety free classroom atmosphere method of Suggestopedia (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Dörnyei, 2005), 'rarely are instructors given specific examples of how to go about creating a low anxiety atmosphere in the foreign language class' (Young, 1991: 432). One of those rare techniques is using music and songs in foreign language classes (Dolean, D. D., 2016).

Music is originally defined as a form of emotional communication by the theorist Leonard Meyer and its aptitude is positively associated especially with second language pronunciation ability (Levitin and Tirovolas, 2009). In general, music inspires, motivates, soothes, and relaxes learners depending on learners' taste (Israel, 2013). It constitutes a significant part in the activity list of Suggestopedia to lessen students' anxieties, which inhibit learning. Music has already been reported to contribute to learners' academic achievement, creative development, motivation through enhancing their self-esteem, which is mostly negatively correlated with FLCA (Eady and Wilson, 2004).

In the context of language learning, music was claimed to have a profound relationship with language acquisition, in that music and language support each other (Israel, 2013). It has already been proved in several studies that music and use of songs in language classes contribute positively to learners' language learning (e.g. Gatti-Taylor, 1980; Murphey, 1990; Ludke and Medina, 1993; Schön et al., 2008; Ferreira and Overy, 2014). It also captures the attention of academically unsuccessful students and makes them willing to communicate (Israel, 2013). However, the impact of songs and music is not limited just to language learning performance. At this point, Krashen (1983) suggests that fear, anxiety, or boredom affect the optimal learning and they serve as a screen to block comprehensible input reaching language areas of the mind. However, incorporation of songs in language classes results in positive attitudes and high motivation by providing a relaxing and stress-free atmosphere and lowering

learners' affective filter (Adamowski, 1997; Mora, 2000). It encourages students' participation in classes (Gatti-Taylor, 1980) and makes language learning fun and more understandable (Little, 1983). However, using songs in foreign language classes to decrease foreign language anxiety varied considerably between high and low anxiety groups. FLCA decreased only in the group with high anxiety (Dolean, D. D., 2016).

Use of songs creates a harmonic atmosphere in the classroom, which strengthens the rapport between students and teachers (Eleutério, Oliveira, Silva and Feleiros, 2011). This positive relationship contributes to students' language development and their self-esteem that decreases their foreign language anxiety. Especially students' desire to understand the lyrics of popular international songs and their wish to be able to sing them are the other motives that encourage teachers to use songs in language classes. In terms of the song and music type selection, several researchers provided positive results using different kinds of music, such as humorous songs (Rafiee, Kassaian and Dastjerdi, 2010) and pop/rock songs (Little, 1983).

Despite the existing research providing a broad range of results concerning foreign language anxiety of the learners and the use of songs in language classes as stated above, few researchers (Dolean, D.D., 2016) were concerned about the students' anxiety levels and how different anxiety level groups benefit from the use of songs in French language classes. Although this study primarily follows the methodological steps of the study of D.D.Dolean (2016), this research demonstrates its originality in the context of English learners and use of students' favourite songs. Therefore, this study attempts to find answer to the following research questions:

- How does teaching songs during regular English classes affect students of different FLCA levels?
- How does teaching songs during regular English classes affect examination performance of the students of different FLCA levels?

METHOD

The present study is an experimental study employing intact classes as control and experimental groups including a pre-test and a post-test in the design. The main aim was to investigate the impact of teaching songs (the independent variable) on FLCA of the students (the dependent variable). Moreover, it was also examined whether foreign language learners' examination performance (the dependent variable) was affected because of song teaching in regular English classes.

PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

Initially, a total of 161 the 10th grade A2 level students (89 girls) enrolled in the same public high school in Denizli, a province located in the west of Turkey,

participated in this study. These students (aged 16-17) attending one of the 6 participating classes started learning English at the age of 10 in the 4th grade. All students took four 45-minute English classes a week in the 10th grade. At the beginning of the study a pre-test was conducted including foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986), the results of which determined the participating classes as high anxiety (2 classes) and low anxiety (2 classes) (see data collection procedure). The students in these 4 classes were taught by the same English teacher in the 9th and 10th grade.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

At the very beginning of the data collection procedure, FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986), which required students to rate their anxiety in English classes from 1 (low anxiety) to 5 (high anxiety) through 33 items, was translated into Turkish. The students in all classes responded to the questionnaire in approximately 20 minutes. The analysis showed that four classes out of six had rather high (2 classes with mean scores of 2.96 and 2.94 respectively) and rather low FLCA (2 classes with mean score of 2.30) compared to the remaining two classes (2 classes with mean scores of 2.49 and 2.48 respectively). As the values of the scores were not very close to 1 (low anxiety) or 5 (high anxiety), they were considered as moderately high and moderately low. In order to make a rational comparison, the classes having relatively higher and lower FLCA were chosen to take part in the study. These four classes were categorized as 'experimental' and 'control' groups including 2 in each category. They were named as 'high anxiety experimental' (HAE) ($n = 21$, 13 girls), 'high anxiety control' (HAC) ($n = 31$, 14 girls), 'low anxiety experimental' (LAE) ($n = 33$, 19 girls), and 'low anxiety control' (LAC) groups ($n = 34$, 13 girls).

Following this step, independent-samples t tests were conducted to measure the difference in the initial anxiety levels of the experimental and control groups as well as between the high and low anxiety groups before using songs in English classes in the experimental groups. The results indicated no significant difference between the initial anxiety scores for the HAE group and HAC group ($t(52) = .76$, $p > .05$), and the LAE group and LAC group ($t(63) = .07$, $p > .05$).

The average scores of the examinations conducted in the second term of the 9th grade (before the experiment) and the first term of the 10th grade (after the experiment) were considered as the pre-test and post-test examination performance of the participants respectively. In each term, there were three examinations. Vocabulary, reading, listening, and grammar were the skills that were tested in these examinations. The questions of each skill were put in separate sections (each 25 points, 100 total). In this study, the participants' examination performance in English classes was measured by calculating the average scores they received from three examinations each term separately. These scores out of 100 were used as pre-test and post-test data instead of skill-based evaluation.

Therefore, the increase or decrease in the participants' examination scores would show the participants' overall performance in the foreign language examinations. The types of the questions included matching, filling in the gaps, and multiple choice. The subjects to be covered were all decided by the Ministry of National Education for each class and all the students in Turkey follow the same syllabus. This syllabus also includes the functions and use of language, language skills and learning outcomes, suggested materials and tasks to be employed for each class and week. The examinations took place during regular English classes of 40 minutes. Independent-samples t tests were also conducted to see the difference in the 9th grade English scores of the same groups (out of 100). The results indicated no significant difference for the HAE group and LAE group ($t(50) = .12$, $p > .05$), and the HAE group and HAC group ($t(52) = -1.03$, $p > .05$). However, there was a significant difference in the 9th grade English scores of the HAC group and LAC group ($t(65) = -4.05$, $p < .05$), and the LAE group and LAC group ($t(63) = -4.84$, $p < .05$) before the experiment. The 9th and 10th grade students' English class averages as well as the differences between the scores for each class are provided in Table 2 below.

While the control and experimental groups followed the regular English syllabus determined by the Ministry of National Education of Turkey for the 10th grades in their regular English classes, the experimental groups additionally followed a 4-week English program including 4 songs chosen through voting among the many alternatives put forward by the students in these groups. The students in the experimental groups were not informed about the aim of this program. As the English teacher of all groups was the same, this teacher implemented the program including songs in the experimental groups.

At the very beginning of the song selection procedure, a pool of 12 English songs chosen by the students in the experimental groups was written down on the board by the teacher. Each song was voted on and the most popular 4 songs were selected to be used for the first classes of every week in the following 4 weeks in regular English classes. *Somebody that I used to know* (by Gotye), *Diamonds* (by Rihanna), *Hymn for the weekend* (by Coldplay), and *Counting starts* (by OneRepublic) were the four songs to be used. They had 129, 92, 102, and 122 beats per minute respectively. The students were informed about the study plan including when and how to learn each song. The students were provided with worksheets including the lyrics and the activities related to the songs' lyrics, such as filling in the gaps or further discussion questions about the lyrics. The students in the experimental groups were informed about the vocabulary test that would include the words in the songs at the end of the program that would partly affect their English scores. As almost all students feel anxious about examinations, the main aim in informing the students in this way was to create anxiety provoking atmosphere that could take place in any regular English class to obtain more realistic results.

The methodology followed to teach the songs in these 4 weeks was adopted from the study of D.D.Dolean (2016). However, there were some remarkable

differences between his study and the present research with regard to the context, participants, and the design. First of all, the target language is French in the study of D.D. Dolean (ibid.) whereas it is English in this study. Secondly, while the participants in the present study are the tenth graders, D.D. Dolean (ibid.) investigated the eighth graders' anxiety level. As a final difference, the songs were chosen by the votes of the learners in the present research. However, the students in the study of D.D. Dolean (ibid.) did not recognize any of the songs when they were first introduced.

This method, which was adopted from D.D. Dolean's study (ibid.), included the following steps: (a) teacher model reading and group translation, (b) group reading, (c) rhythmic group reading, (d) teacher model singing, (e) repetitions, (f) singing in small groups, and (g) final repetition. In the first step, the teacher read out all the lyrics of the song displayed on the screen reflected through projector in the class. She divided all the students in two experimental groups into the groups involving 5 students in each to translate these lyrics with the help of online dictionaries. In the second step, the teacher read each verse of the song and the students repeated. The pronunciation of some problematic words was repeated several times. The students figured out the rhythm of the songs in this step. In the fourth step, the teacher sang the song once while the students were following the lyrics on the screen. Then, the teacher and the students sang the song all together. Following this step, the students were required to sing the songs separately as a group. In the final step, all the students in the class sang the song with the teacher for the last time. Each week, the worksheets given to the students in the experimental groups were practiced following the last step of singing. At the end of the 4-week period, all students in both control and experimental groups were required to complete the FLCAS one more time. English class averages of the 9th (before the implementation) and the 10th (after the implementation) graders were taken as pre-test and post-test measures respectively to examine the effect of song teaching on the students' performance in their English examination. In order to establish intrarater reliability with the examination scores, the same teacher has evaluated the same examination papers at two different times and the same results have been found.

FINDINGS

1 THE EFFECT OF SONG TEACHING ON THE STUDENTS' FLCA

In order to answer the first research question, which is about the effect of song teaching on FLCA of the students from different levels, the statistics regarding the FLCA scores before and after the implementation of the program were presented in Table 1. As the assumptions of normal distribution and homogeneity of variance need to be met in order to calculate ANOVA, Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was employed to decide whether samples were normally distributed across the groups (HAE, HAC, LAE, LAC) and FLCA scores (pre and post-test). All

Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics were among the acceptable range (between .15 and .19, $p > .20$). Moreover, Levene's test of equality of error variances showed that variances across the groups were homogenously distributed in pre-test $F(3, 115) = 1.045$, $p = .37$ and in post-test $F(3, 115) = 1.608$, $p = .19$ (Geng, Wang and Miller, 1979).

The results gathered through mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) illustrating the foreign language anxiety scores of the 4 groups (2 experimental and 2 control) at 2 different times showed a significant time effect $F(1,115) = 48.775$, $p = .000$ revealing significant differences among the groups over time and a significant interaction effect between the group and time $F(3,115) = 17.36$, $p = .000$, which means the change in scores over time is different in each group (see Table 1).

Table 1 **FLCAS pre-test and post-test scores**

	Groups			
	Experimental		Control	
	High	Low	High	Low
Pre-test mean scores	2.96	2.30	2.94	2.30
Post-test mean scores	2.47	2.08	2.84	2.32
Difference	-.49	-.22	-.10	+.02

Paired-samples *t* tests were conducted to compare foreign language anxiety mean scores of each group in pre-test and post-test. The results indicated no significant increase or decrease in FLCA scores of the LAC group for pre-test (M = 2.30, SD = .70) and post-test (M = 2.32, SD = .64) ($t(34) = -.499$, $p = .621$), and those of the HAC group for pre-test (M = 2.94, SD = .83) and post-test (M = 2.84, SD = .79) ($t(31) = .500$, $p = .621$). On the other hand, the results showed a significant difference in the scores of the HAE group for pre-test (M = 2.96, SD = .68) and post-test (M = 2.47, SD = .53) ($t(21) = 5.589$, $p = .000$) and of the LAE group for pre-test (M = 2.30, SD = .67) and post-test (M = 2.08, SD = .65) ($t(33) = 6.845$, $p = .000$). The statistical information shows that there has been no significant increase or decrease in the FLCA scores of the LAC or HAC groups when their pre-test and post-test FLCA mean scores are compared. However, the significant difference in the FLCA scores between pre-test and post-test can be observed in the HAE and LAE groups.

While the post-test mean scores of the LAC group increased compared to their pre-test anxiety scores, the biggest difference between the mean scores of pre-test and post-test was observed in the scores of the experimental group with high anxiety (HAE) (see Table 1).

2   THE EFFECT OF SONG TEACHING ON THE EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE OF THE STUDENTS

The four groups of the 9th grade English class averages were compared to their 10th grade English class averages to see whether teaching songs in English classes

affects their examination performance in English. Paired-samples *t* test statistics indicated a significant increase in their 10th grade English class averages for the HAE ($t(34) = -3.276$, $p = .002$.) and LAE ($t(33) = -2.380$, $p = .024$) groups, but no significant effect for LAC ($t(21) = -.548$, $p = .589$) and HAC ($t(31) = -.377$, $p = .709$). Although all groups' English class averages increased, the highest increase could be observed in the experimental group with high anxiety (HAE) and low anxiety (LAE).

Table 2 **English class averages (out of 100) in the 9th grade and 10th grade after the implementation**

	Groups			
	Experimental		Control	
	High	Low	High	Low
9th grade English class averages (out of 100)	76.26	59.32	63.90	59.85
English class averages in the 10th grade (out of 100)	85.85	63.90	65.09	61.23
Difference	+9.59	+4.58	+1.19	+1.38

DISCUSSION

Students in language classes feel anxious in both learning and using the foreign language in the classroom due to several reasons, such as the examination-oriented system, the impact of teacher, and the type of instruction. As the feeling of anxiety is common in language classes, the related literature is quite rich. However, suggestions to decrease FLCA in regular English classes have only been provided by a few studies. Teaching songs in foreign language classes is one of those (Dolean, D. D., 2016). Considering the gap, the main aims in this study were to find out whether teaching English songs chosen by the students in regular English classes could decrease foreign language anxiety of the students having different levels of anxiety and whether it could increase foreign language examination performance of these learners.

The results indicated that not only students with high FLCA but also the ones with low anxiety in the experimental groups benefited from song learning in terms of their anxiety level. The learners in both groups had less FLCA after the experimental program. However, when they were compared, it was obvious that this method worked much better with the learners having higher anxiety. Although this result is in line with that of D. D. Dolean (ibid.), in his study, the learners with low anxiety had higher level of FLCA after the implementation of the program contrary to expectations. This result contradicts with the finding concerning low anxiety group in the present study, as there was a significant decrease in the FLCA level of the students in the low anxiety experimental group. On the other hand, the students' FLCA showed a decrease in his study in the low

anxiety control group while there was a slight increase in the same group in the present research.

Learning a second language is mostly anxiety-provoking experience for most learners during which they are asked to provide ideas and thoughts in another language in which they have very limited competence (Young, 1999). This is considered as a serious challenge and a threat to learners' self-concept (Horwitz et al., 1986). Especially the learners at the age of 16 as in this study may be seriously affected from this. Therefore, EFL teachers should reduce learners' FLCA so that students can feel better and easily express themselves in language classes. On the other hand, Terrell states in Young's interview that (Young, 1992) it is also possible for the students not to attend to the input very carefully when teachers reduce anxiety to a minimum level and make students really relaxed. Considering these facts, one of the major challenges of EFL teachers becomes apparent, that is how to reduce learners' FLCA and keep it at an optimum level.

One of the methods is to use music in language classes as music contributes to learners' academic achievement, motivation, creativity, and self-esteem, which is mostly negatively affected by high FLCA (Eady and Wilson, 2004). The decrease in FLCA of the students in both high and low anxiety groups may be attributed to the rapport established between the teacher and the students with the use of music in regular classes as suggested by Eleutério et al. (2011), which is also considered as an indispensable element of effective learning. Moreover, EFL learners always want to sing along with popular international singers in English and understand the lyrics (Ward, 1991). Including these songs in English classes might be another reason for the decrease in FLCA. In addition, as singing returns students to a more playful state by eliminating logical barriers (Bancroft, 1999), it is also possible to establish a relationship between the decrease in FLCA in the two groups and the fun students had in English classes in the experimental groups in the present study.

The findings also showed that when the students' English grades are compared before and after the experimental program, although all groups had higher scores, it is clear that only the learners whose FLCA significantly decreased had significantly higher scores. The increase in students' grades after the program could be attributed to the use of music and teaching songs in English classes as it was reported in the related literature (Gatti-Taylor, 1980; Murphey, 1990; Medina, 1993; Schön et al., 2008; Ludke, Ferreira and Overy, 2014). The increase in students' foreign language performance could also be explained with their low level of anxiety after the implementation as it is mostly reported to be negatively correlated with learners' performance (Arnold and Brown, 1999; Dörnyei, 2005; Amiri and Ghonsooly, 2015).

Most students are used to popular or rock songs in their daily life. Hence, when the regular English classroom turns into the place where they can sing them, they consider lesson as more fun, interesting, and understandable (Little, 1983). In addition, rhythmic songs with a catchy melody attract their attention

and keep them motivated. Apart from affective impact of singing songs, the repetition of words and phrases also enables learners to learn and remember the vocabulary (Mora, 2000). All these factors might be effective not only on decreasing the FLCA of the learners but also on increasing students' performance in English examinations.

Last but not least, the education system in Turkey is very much examination-oriented (Hatipoğlu, 2016). Therefore, EFL teachers mostly employ pen and paper activities including multiple choice tests which can be less interesting for the students while underestimating students' self-confidence, pronunciation, teaching four skills as a whole. All these factors and especially the examination-oriented system may create high anxiety. Considering the fact that relaxed learners perform better, Turkish EFL teachers' use of song teaching in EFL classes might be suggested to decrease FLCA which may hereby increase learners' performance in foreign language examinations.

As Young (1991) suggests, the biggest challenge in foreign language teaching is to set a low-anxiety classroom environment for the learners. From this point forth, there should be particular emphasis on the relaxing effect of music on students learning a foreign language. As the studies addressing this issue suggest, FLCA adversely affects the foreign language examination performance of the learners. In order to increase this performance, as the findings of this study exhibit, FLCA might be decreased through teaching students' favourite songs. From the results it becomes apparent that learners having both high and low FLCA can benefit from song learning. Therefore, EFL teachers might employ this technique in order to decrease students' anxiety in language classes that may eventually result in an increase in students' examination performance.

CONCLUSION

This paper provides findings suggesting that teaching students' favourite English songs in regular English classes decreases students' FLCA regardless of their anxiety level, though a higher anxiety group benefits more. Moreover, the results also indicated an increase in students' foreign language performance in the examination with the use of song teaching due to decreased FLCA of the students.

Apart from the benefits of song teaching in foreign language classes, some problems that may arise during the implementation of this method should not be ignored. As the method followed in song teaching includes group work, some students may stay silent in some songs. Moreover, in some parts of the songs, loud music overlaps the lyrics which may make it more complicated for the learners with limited listening skills to hear, understand, and figure out the lyrics.

Such empirical evidence and results open up new research avenues for further research. Despite the certain impact of teaching songs on decreasing the FLCA and increasing students' foreign language examination performance,

it may still be unclear whether students had a lower FLCA level due to increased foreign language performance or their attitude toward foreign language learning changed. Further research may find answers to these questions by including students' diaries explaining how they felt in each class learning a song and an interview questioning the potential reasons of the change in their FLCA. Moreover, different types of songs may be employed in different groups in order to assess the impact of song type on learners' FLCA.

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