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Why Can't We Learn Foreign Languages in Turkey? Some Psychological Reasons Behind It

Abstract: *Foreign language learning is one of the most significant endeavours for people in all countries in the world. Turkey has given importance to foreign language learning for years. Nevertheless, it has been an unresolved problem for Turkish people. The purpose of the present study is to determine why people fail to learn foreign languages in Turkey and the psychological reasons behind it by focussing on perception, foreign language anxiety and learned helplessness. The participants were 100 volunteer students (56 female, 44 male) who were selected randomly from different faculties and departments at Bursa Uludag University. The data were collected from a questionnaire, which consisted of five main sections to identify participants' background, perception of foreign language learning, level of foreign language anxiety, and level of learned helplessness. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The data were analysed in relation to the research questions that guided the study. The results indicated that the participants' perceptions of foreign language learning were positive owing to past positive experiences, but their level of foreign language anxiety was high due to lack of practice in language skills in the past; and their level of learned helplessness was low because of the positive perceptions they possessed. In addition, the findings suggested that the four language skills should be taken into consideration when the contents of foreign language lessons at schools and foreign language courses at universities are prepared and determined.*
Key words: *foreign language learning, psychology, perception, anxiety, learned helplessness, language skills.*

摘要 *(Ecenaz Yigit, Ömer Faruk Keser & Levent Uzun: 为什么我们在土耳其无法学习外语？ 其背后的一些心理原因）：学习外语是世界各国人民最重要的愿望之一。土耳其多年来一直重视外语的学习。但是，对于土耳其人民来说还有一个尚未解决的问题。本项研究的目的是由于对外语的恐惧和所习得的无助性而使得认知置于中心位置，从而来确定在土耳其缺乏外语学习的原因以及一些心理因素。参与者是100 名大学生志愿者（56 名女性，44 名男性），他们是从布尔萨乌鲁达大学的不同系和部门中随机挑选出来的。数据从五个主要部分的调查表中进行收集，以确定参与者的背景，对外语学习的认知，对外语的恐惧程度以及所习得的无助程度。定量和定性数据都有所收集。根据研究的问题来进行数据分析。研究结果表明，参与者基于以往的积极经验对外语学习有积极的认知，但是由于过去缺乏语言知识的练习，他们对外语的恐惧程度很高； 由于他们拥有积极的认知，他们习得的无助度却很低。此外，研究结果进一步表明，在准备和定义学校里的外语教学内容和大学的外语课程时，应考虑四种语言技能。*
关键词： *学习外语，心理，认知，恐惧，习得的无助，语言知识*

摘要 (*Ecenaz Yigit, Ömer Faruk Keser & Levent Uzun: 為什麼我們在土耳其無法學習外語？ 其背後的一些心理原因）：學習外語是世界各國人民最重要的願望之一。土耳其多年來一直重視外語的學習。但是，對於土耳其人民來說還有一個尚未解決的問題。本項研究的目的是由於對外語的恐懼和所習得的無助性而使得認知置於中心位置，從而來確定在土耳其缺乏外語學習的原因以及一些心理因素。參與者是 100 名大學生志願者（56 名女性，44 名男性），他們是從布爾薩烏魯達大學的不同系和部門中隨機挑選出來的。數據從五個主要部分的調查表中進行收集，以確定參與者的背景，對外語學習的認知，對外語的恐懼程度以及所習得的無助程度。定量和定性數據都有所收集。根據研究的問題來進行數據分析。研究結果表明，參與者基於以往的積極經驗對外語學習有積極的認知，但是由於過去缺乏語言知識的練習，他們對外語的恐懼程度很高； 由於他們擁有積極的認知，他們習得的無助度卻很低。此外，研究結果進一步表明，在準備和定義學校裡的外語教學內容和大學的外語課程時，應考慮四種語言技能。*
關鍵詞： *學習外語，心理，認知，恐懼，習得的無助，語言知識*

Zusammenfassung *(Ecenaz Yigit, Ömer Faruk Keser & Levent Uzun: Warum können wir in der Türkei keine Fremdsprachen lernen? Einige psychologische Gründe dahinter): Das Erlernen von Fremdsprachen ist eines der wichtigsten Bestrebungen für Menschen in allen Ländern der Welt. Die Türkei hat dem Fremdsprachenlernen seit Jahren Bedeutung beigemessen. Dennoch ist es für die türkische Bevölkerung ein ungelöstes Problem. Ziel der vorliegenden Studie ist es, die Gründe für das Ausbleiben des Fremdsprachenerwerbs in der Türkei und die psychologischen Gründe dafür zu ermitteln, indem die Wahrnehmung, die Angst vor der Fremdsprache und die erlernte Hilflosigkeit in den Mittelpunkt gestellt werden. Die Teilnehmer waren 100 ehrenamtliche Studierende (56 weiblich, 44 männlich), die nach dem Zufallsprinzip aus verschiedenen*

Fakultäten und Abteilungen der Universität Bursa Uludag ausgewählt wurden. Die Daten wurden anhand eines Fragebogens erhoben, der aus fünf Hauptabschnitten bestand, um den Hintergrund der Teilnehmer, die Wahrnehmung des Fremdsprachenlernens, den Grad der Fremdsprachenangst und den Grad der erlernten Hilflosigkeit zu ermitteln. Es wurden sowohl quantitative als auch qualitative Daten erhoben. Die Daten wurden in Bezug auf die Forschungsfragen analysiert, die der Studie zugrunde lagen. Die Ergebnisse deuteten darauf hin, dass die Teilnehmer aufgrund früherer positiver Erfahrungen eine positive Wahrnehmung des Fremdsprachenlernens hatten, dass aber ihr Grad an Fremdsprachenangst aufgrund mangelnder Übung in Sprachkenntnissen in der Vergangenheit hoch war; und dass ihr Grad an erlernter Hilflosigkeit aufgrund der positiven Wahrnehmung, die sie besaßen, gering war. Darüber hinaus legten die Ergebnisse nahe, dass die vier Sprachkenntnisse bei der Vorbereitung und Festlegung der Inhalte des Fremdsprachenunterrichts an Schulen und der Fremdsprachenkurse an Universitäten berücksichtigt werden sollten.
***Schlüsselwörter**: Fremdsprachenlernen, Psychologie, Wahrnehmung, Ängste, erlernte Hilflosigkeit, Sprachkenntnisse*

***Резюме** (Есенаш Йигит, Емер Фарук Кезер, Левент Узун: Почему в Турции трудно дается освоение иностранных языков? К вопросу о психологических причинах данной проблемы): Освоение иностранных языков – одно из важнейших устремлений людей во многих странах мира. В Турции на протяжении многих лет изучению иностранных языков придавалось большое значение. И все-таки, несмотря на это, для турецкого народа иностранные языки – до сих пор нерешенная проблема. Цель нашего исследования заключается в том, чтобы выявить причины данной проблемы в Турции, в том числе психологического плана, к которым относятся общее восприятие этой тематики, страх, «запрограммированная» беспомощность по отношению к «языковой» ситуации. Участниками эксперимента стали сто студентов-добровольцев (56 девушек и 44 юноши), которые были отобраны принципом случайной выборки на разных факультетах и отделениях Университета Улудаг. Эмпирические данные собирались по результатам анкетирования. Анкета включала в себя пять разделов, составленных для выявления отношения респондентов к изучению иностранных языков, определения степени страха перед освоением иностранного языка, «измерения» уровня готовности справляться с трудностями, оставшись один на один с иностранным языком. В исследовании были задействованы квантитативные и квалитативные методы. Затем осуществлялась обработка данных, полученных на основе анкетирования. Результаты исследования показали, что участники в целом демонстрировали позитивный настрой на освоение иностранного языка благодаря имевшемуся у них прошлому положительному опыту в этой области. В то же время был зарегистрирован высокий уровень страха респондентов перед освоением нового языка из-за его недостаточной тренировки в прошлом, а степень приобретенной неуверенности оказалась незначительной. Помимо этого, исследование показало, что языковые знания должны учитываться при разработке и утверждении программ по обучению иностранным языкам в школах и вузах, предлагающих в качестве образовательной услуги курсы иностранного языка.*
***Ключевые слова:** изучение иностранного языка, психология, страхи, запрограммированная беспомощность, языковые знания*

Introduction

Language is life, itself. There are various languages spoken all over the world which thus means that there are different aspects, purposes and meanings in life. All of them lead people to learn a foreign language (FL). Learning an FL can help people gain a different point of view about the world, other people and their cultures, as one Chinese proverb says - *to learn a language is to have one more window from which to look at the world. (https://www.lingholic.com/top-ten-best-proverbs-language-learning/?utm_source=feedly)*

Even though foreign language learning (FLL) is one of the most significant endeavours in people's lives, it does include a problem that has been unresolved for years specifically in Turkey. It is a common idea that we have difficulty in learning a foreign language in our country. Academicians, educators, and governmental bodies have carried out a large number of studies to find a solution to why we cannot learn foreign languages so well in Turkey. However, this issue still remains one of the biggest questions. For instance, according to *Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index*, Turkey is ranked as the sixty-second of eighty countries *(https://www.ef.co.uk/epi/regions/europe/turkey/)*, and there it is revealed that FLL really is a problem in our country and that we must take into account the reasons why this is so.

One of the reasons that make FLL a long and challenging process is human psychology, which is quite complicated, varies from person to person and affects learning seriously. If and when human

psychology's effects on FLL are analysed in Turkey, the following three major concepts should be researched: perception, anxiety and learned helplessness.

Perception, Anxiety, and Learned Helplessness

Perception can be defined as "the procedure or outcome of becoming conscious of items, connections, and events by way of the senses'' (Nugent, 2013). It can also be defined as "awareness or consciousness", "view" or "a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem" (Collins English Dictionary, n.d., Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d.). Furthermore, throughout the learning process, teachers' personal characteristics, classroom environment, materials and methods can shape perception. If these factors have negative effects on a person, they raise the person's level of anxiety. According to the Oxford Dictionary, anxiety is described as a feeling of "worry, nervousness'', or "unease about something with an uncertain outcome.'' There are many types of anxiety and FL anxiety is one of them. FL anxiety can be defined as a complicated fact which involves a person's perceptions, feelings, beliefs, behaviours in FLL and as a person's feeling of being stressed, frightened, and restless (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Büyükkarcı, 2016). It is clear that FL anxiety might create negative feelings towards learning a FL. On the other hand, people can face up to these conditions, cope with other people that discourage them, and overcome disappointments or failures. As a result of negative experiences, they may find themselves in a situation of helplessness and believe that they can never be successful, no matter how hard they try, possibly even giving up trying to find a solution to their problems. This situation is known as "learned helplessness'' in the field of psychology. In other words, learned helplessness is related to being exposed to negative stimuli, pessimism and depression. Moreover, the fear of being unsuccessful leads people to be passive (Miller, & Seligman, 1975; Aydoğan, 2016). Furthermore, learned helplessness can occur in every aspect of life and can also occur in FLL in relation to the past negative experiences.

The Problem of the Study

A large number of studies have been carried out, curriculums have been modified, coursebooks have been revised, and new methods have been implemented in the field of FL learning and/or teaching in Turkey to find a way out of this chronic problem. Nevertheless, an effective solution has not been found, yet. Our purpose in this study is to contribute to the field by examining the relationship among perception, anxiety and learned helplessness in terms of FLL. Human psychology, the emotions in other words, cannot be ignored in any aspect of life nor in FLL. To quote C. G. Jung, "Emotion is the chief source of all becoming-conscious. There can be no transforming of darkness into light and of apathy into movement without emotion.'' *(https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Carl_Jung)*.

Literature Review

Perception of Foreign Language Learning

Perception is a complex mental process in which sensations are interpreted by the person. Everything that we hear, see, taste, touch and smell is related to our previous experiences and expectations about the future. Similarly, Mueller (1958, p.167) stated that perceptions are based on past experiences, our interpretations are related to the previous experiences, as well. Therefore, it is clear that perceptions change from person to person; that is, they are subjective, and therefore complex.

Perception is a significant concept in every aspect of life as well as in FLL. There are decisive factors that affect the perception of FLL. Classroom environment is one of them. It is a combination of the physical, emotional, social and intellectual climate in which learning occurs (Jahedizadeh et al., 2015). This indicates that students' perceptions are shaped by classroom environment. Hazari (2014) pointed out that students learn better when they perceive the learning environment positively. Göksu (2015) emphasized that students' positive learning environment perceptions can improve learners' English in an FLL situation. On the other hand, Jannati and Marzban (2015) conducted a similar study in Iran; and, they revealed that students did not appreciate their actual learning environment, and thus, could not perform well in the language proficiency test. In view of the related literature, it can be considered that classroom environment has great importance in determining FLL and the

performance of the students. Prior experience and teachers also play decisive roles in the perception of FL. Pirhonen (2015) showed that the first-year physics students' perceptions of the language were influenced by their past experiences and positive messages that they heard from people, such as the staff of their institution. Another attention-catching point revealed in the research was that some students quit optional language studies at school, as their teachers were not able to motivate them enough. In another study, Şahin, Seçer and Erişen (2016) examined high school students' perception of English with their impressions and images as well as the effect of these perceptions on their motivation to learn English. The results of this study showed that the students who perceive English positively, participate more and are highly motivated in comparison to students who have negative perceptions and construct negative metaphors to describe their perceptions. To sum up, students may show a positive tendency towards a language if they have a positive perception on it, but if their perception is negative, they may show a negative tendency towards the language as this also negatively affects their intrinsic motivation.

Foreign Language Anxiety

One of the reasons that make language learning challenging and demanding is FL anxiety. It is a kind of barrier to students' learning. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986, pp. 126-127) stated that anxious students tend to forget what they know and overstudy or avoid studying. Kayaoğlu and Sağlamel (2013) examined students' perceptions of language anxiety related to speaking at a state university in Turkey. Based on the interviews, they revealed that factors of language anxiety were linguistic problems, cognitive problems like the fear of being unsuccessful in front of people, fear of making mistakes, teachers, competitiveness among peers, and lack of information. Moreover, it was revealed that there were some manifestations of language anxiety such as stomach-ache, trembling, feeling tongue-tied, and changing behaviours. Similarly, Demir (2015) carried out a study on speaking anxiety among Turkish students and revealed that the reasons for FL anxiety among the students were mostly social, such as fear of public speaking, comparison with peers and their reactions, linguistic problems, having problems in understanding and with the speed of communication. Likewise, Suleimenova (2013) examined speaking anxiety among Kazakh students in FL classrooms and concluded that anxiety can cause some consequences such as not being aware of one's abilities, having problems with speaking in public, minimal participation in speaking, and being a shy person. As a result, a high level of anxiety can lead students into having language difficulties, both physical and social. Again, Tzoannopoulou (2016) researched FL anxiety and fear of negative evaluation among Greek university students, and she concluded that factors of student language anxiety are being apprehensive of communication with teachers, peers, and native speakers. On the other hand, tests, English classes, teachers' evaluations and corrections were also found to be other factors that affect language anxiety. Additionally, Landström (2017) investigated FL anxiety among Swedish lower and upper secondary school students and revealed that factors of anxiety were the teacher's changing role in different grades, negative evaluation and general anxiety. Therefore, it is clear that teachers and their evaluation also play a role in FL anxiety.

Another point is that four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are significant elements in FL learning and teaching. In consequence, Yastıbaş (2016) carried out a study on anxieties related to the four language skills in English language teaching and the relationships among them. He concluded that there is no relationship among the four skill-based anxieties. Notwithstanding those results, it was revealed that there is a correlation between speaking anxiety and classroom anxiety.

Consequently, FL anxiety can be considered as a universal problem that affects students' language learning adversely. In view of the related literature, it is obvious that anxiety has negative effects on students both psychologically and physiologically.

Learned Helplessness in Foreign Language Learning

When students have negative perceptions of language learning and a high level of anxiety, they find themselves in a helplessness situation, which is defined as *learned helplessness* in psychology. In addition, when people perceive improbability, they attribute helplessness to a cause (Abramson,

Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978, p.49). Therefore, students attribute their failure to a cause as a result of other failures in previous experiences.

Hsu (2011) examined EFL college students' learned helplessness when learning English in Taiwan, concluding that learners who are neurotic are more sensitive to failure whereas students with traits of openness, extraversion and agreeableness can reactivate their extrinsic motivation when supported externally. Apparently, personality traits have an effect on academic performance. On the other hand, Yaman, Esen and Derkuş (2011) carried out a study to find the relationship between learned helplessness level and academic success in ELT classes at high schools, revealing that there is a negative correlation between learned helplessness and academic success. Likewise, Aydoğan (2016) investigated the influence of learned helplessness and the locus of control on academic success on English grades, and found that students with low levels of learned helplessness and internal locus of control had better grades. They also liked English more than the students with high levels of learned helplessness and external locus of control. In the same study, it was also revealed that there is a negative relationship between learned helplessness and students' academic achievements. On the other hand, Büyükkarcı (2016) investigated the effects of FLL anxiety and language learning attitude in academic achievement of pre-service freshmen students and the relation between attitude and anxiety. It was revealed that there was neither significant correlation between students' anxiety and attitude, nor did they have any effect on students' academic achievement. In the study, it was also found that even if students have positive attitudes towards learning English, they do not want to learn it because of the learned helplessness and negative experiences with the English teachers and classmates in the past.

Regarding the related literature, obviously language learning is seriously affected by past experiences and learned helplessness. Thus, it is possible to conclude that when the level of learned helplessness increases, students' academic success decreases.

The literature analysing FLL in the context of perception, FL anxiety and learned helplessness has fallen behind. The purpose of the present study is to contribute to the literature by investigating why we have difficulty in learning FLs, specifically in Turkey, and researching especially the psychological reasons for this by analysing perception, anxiety and learned helplessness. The study seeks to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of perception factors on foreign language learning?
2. What is the effect of the perceptions related to the language skills on foreign language anxiety?
3. What is the level of the learned helplessness of the participants who have negative perception towards foreign language learning and a high level of foreign language anxiety?
4. What are the feelings and opinions of the participants related to foreign language learning?

Methodology

The present study adopted triangulation methodology in terms of data collection and analyses. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected by means of the questionnaire, which included quantitative and qualitative items, and was prepared by the researchers of the present study. The participants, the materials that were used in the study, and the procedures are explained in the following.

Participants

The sample group in the current study consisted of the university students as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *The number of the participants according to faculties and departments.*

Faculty of Education	**Number of Participants**
Department of German Language Teaching	7
Department of English Language Teaching	12
Department of French Language Teaching	3
Department of Turkish Language Teaching	7
Department of Music Teaching	3

Department of Art Teaching	2
Department of Primary School Teaching	2
Special Needs Education	4
Department of Psychological Counselling and Guidance	4
Department of Mathematics Teaching	1
Department of Social Sciences Teaching	1
Department of Pre School Teaching	1
Department of Science Teaching	1
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	
Department of Economics	3
Department of Business Administration	4
Department of International Relations	2
Department of Political Science and Public Administration	1
Department of Econometrics	2
Faculty of Arts and Science	
Department of Philosophy	2
Department of Physics	2
Department of Chemistry	1
Department of Molecular Biology and Genetics	3
Faculty of Engineering	
Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering	10
Department of Computer Engineering	1
Department of Textile Engineering	2
Faculty of Agriculture	
Department of Biosystem Engineering	5
Department of Horticulture	2
Department of Food Engineering	2
Department of Soil Science and Plant Nutrition	2
Faculty of Veterinary Science	
Department of Veterinary Medicine	1
State Conservatory	
Turkish Music	3
Vocational School of Technical Sciences	
Automotive Technology Programme	1
The Programme of Electricity	2
Total:	**100**

The participants were 100 Turkish students who studied at different faculties and departments at Uludag University in the Province of Bursa in Turkey. 56 of the participants were female whereas 44 of them were male. The participants' age ranged between 18 and 30 and their mean age was 21.25. Table 1 presents the faculties and departments at which the participants studied. Convinience sampling was used, meaning all participants were randomly selected from among the volunteers who were reached by going to the faculties that they studied at. The participants were attending different years and levels at university from undergraduate to graduate. 18 of the participants studied in the first year; 32 participants were in the second year; 27 students studied in the third year, and 19 of them were in the fourth year. Furthermore, 2 of 100 participants were graduate students; 1 participant was a PhD candidate whereas 1 participant was in a preparatory class. Their native language was Turkish

and all of them received their first education in Turkey. Based on their responses, 9 participants started to learn a FL at kindergarten; 68 of them started to learn it at a primary school; 19 participants started at secondary school; 1 participant started to learn it at high school, and 3 of the participants started to learn an FL at university. In addition, they graduated from different types of high schools. Table 2 presents the high schools that they graduated from in detail. The high school information was collected as additional demographic data about the participants since some programs at high schools in Turkey have additional supportive language curriculums that could provide more insight related to the profile of the participants. For instance, the Anatolian High Schools, Science High Schools, Anatolian Teacher Training High Schools, and private Colleges are recognised to have advantageous FLL programs. The number of the participants who graduated from these high schools was 66. This would mean that the majority of the participants graduated under advantageous conditions in terms of FL instruction.

Table 2: *Types of high schools that the participants graduated from.*

Anatolian High School	53
Science High School	2
General High School	10
Vocational/Technical High School	16
Religious High School	3
Anotolian Teacher Training High School	6
College	5
Fine Arts High School	5

While 35 participants stated that they couldn't speak any FL, 65 of them stated that they spoke one FL or more than one, such as English, German, French, Italian, Russian, Albanian, Korean and Spanish. The percentages are stated in Figure 1.

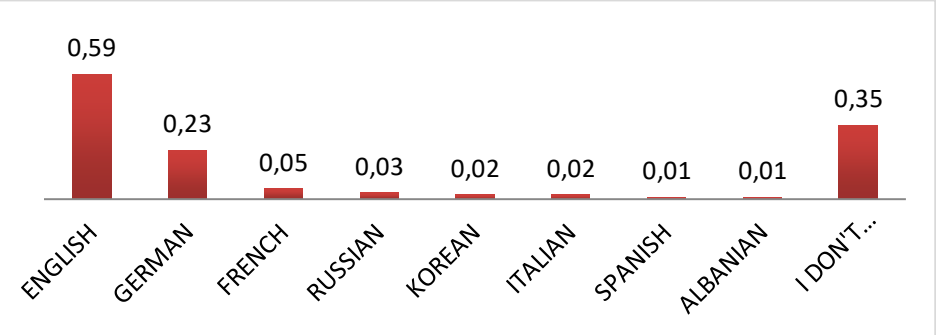

Figure 1. *The percentages of the foreign languages that the participants speak, and of the participants who couldn't speak any foreign language.*

Figure 1 presents useful information in terms of the studied languages, as it might be necessary to discuss and evaluate the difficulty and/or popularity of some languages, and thus, clarify that the probable problems in learning an FL did not stem from factors such as rare alphabet, grammar, or any other extra difficulty-inducing element. English was observed to be the most common language (59%), followed by German (23%). Both of these languages shared the same alphabet with the L1 of the participants as well as many words that were used in daily life.

Materials

While preparing the data collection questionnaire (see Appendix 1), the following scales were examined, adopted and adapted:

a) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986)
b) Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (Soito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999)

c) Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (Kim, 2002)
d) Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (Huang, 2005)
e) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (Cheng, 2004)
f) Learned Helplessness Scale in Mathematics (Biber, & Başer,2014)

The scales stated above and the interviews with a psychologist and a sociologist, who are experts in their field, helped the researchers to prepare the data collection questionnaire. The validity and reliability of the data collection tool was assured by applying it to thirty-five additional subjects, and consulting experts; two linguists, a psychologist, and a sociologist. The consistency and reliability of the questionnaire has been determined to be appropriate. The questionnaire consisted of five main parts (Introduction part, Part A, Part B, Part C, and Part D).

In the introduction part, brief information about the study and instructions were provided to the participants, and there were 9 items about their background such as age, sex, nationality, faculty and department, grade, when they started to learn a foreign language, the type of high schools they graduated from, and FLs that they speak.

Part A (the perceptions section) of the questionnaire was comprised of four sections (A1-A2-A3-A4) that aimed to elicit participants' perceptions towards FLs; whether these were positive or negative. Therefore, items in this part were related to the participants' first experiences with FLs. Section A1 was a checklist that consisted of 4 items, which determined the quality of the participants' first FLL environment and materials. Section A2 involved 7 items to identify the materials' contribution to the participants' learning while they were learning a foreign language for the first time. In Section 3 there was a checklist that comprised of 11 items to find out the techniques that affected the participants' learning positively while learning a foreign language for the first time. Section A4 consisted of a checklist in which there were 6 items related to the traits of the participants' first FL teachers. In summary, Part A was prepared to collect data about the negative and positive perceptions of the participants in terms of a) the quality of the learning environment and materials, b) the learning materials that contributed most to success, c) the techniques that contributed positively to the learning, and d) the traits of the teachers.

Part B (the anxiety section) was designed to determine the participants' level of FL anxiety. There were 10 Likert Scale items ranging from 1- Strongly Agree to 5-Strongly Disagree. Part C (the learned helplessness section) was prepared to elicit information about the learners' level of learned helplessness in FLL. This part involved 10 statements and each statement offered two options *a* and *b* to choose from. And additionally, Part D was prepared to collect qualitative data. There were 2 open-ended questions/items in this part encouraging students to express what they felt in their first FL lesson and whether a foreign language was necessary for their career development or not. The aim in this part was to find out their feelings and thoughts about FLL. As a result, the Introduction part, Part A, Part B, and Part C were prepared to collect quantitative data while Part D was designed to collect qualitative data from the participants.

Procedure

Three steps were followed in the present study. First, the questionnaire was prepared by examining, adopting and adapting sample scales that have been mentioned above as well as conducting interviews with two linguists, a psychologist, and a sociologist. Second, the questionnaire was applied to the subjects who helped in improving and creating the refined version of the data collection tool. Third, the ultimate questionnaire was applied to the one hundred volunteer students. Finally, the collected data were analysed by the researchers.

Step 1- Preparing the Data Collection Tool

After reliable and relevant sources in the literature had been examined, it was decided to use a questionnaire as a data collection tool rather than employing extended interview sessions since the researchers aimed at reaching a relatively large number of participants in a limited time. Before preparing the questionnaire, scales related to FL anxiety and learned helplessness were examined. However, some problems were faced while finding an appropriate scale designed for perception of FLL and FLT. Therefore, the researchers decided to consult experts from the related fields, and thus, the researchers interviewed a psychologist and a sociologist as well as consulting two expert linguists. Utmost

effort was made and attention given to preparing a questionnaire that would collect both quantitative and qualitative data, so that the participants could reflect their perceptions, emotions and thoughts about FLL, and the data could be crosschecked. It took four weeks to design the data collection instrument. In order to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, the researchers piloted it with thirty-five volunteer students in the English Language Teaching Department at Bursa Uludag University. Consequently, it was determined that the questionnaire was reliable and appropriate to apply to other participants.

Step 2 - Data Collection

The study was carried out during two weeks in the middle of the 2017-2018 spring term. The researchers visited different faculties at Bursa Uludag University and approached the participants randomly. The information about the questionnaire was provided to the volunteer participants by the researchers. A printed-out questionnaire was preferred in the study for two reasons: 1) to detect whether the participants had received their first education in Turkey, 2) to provide information when the participants needed it.

Before handing a printed-out questionnaire to the participants, they were asked whether they had received their first education in Turkey or not. It was an important detail because the reasons why foreign languages are learned with some difficulty in Turkey were investigated in the study. The printed-out questionnaire given to the participants was in their L1, so that they could understand the questions and answer them by taking account of their experiences and thoughts with no additional hindrance. It took 7-9 minutes for each participant to complete the questionnaire. At the end of two weeks, 100 participants had been reached by the researchers, and the data collected.

Step 3 - Data Analyses

The questionnaires that each participant completed were classified according to the faculties and departments. Afterwards, each questionnaire was given a number by the researchers. The Microsoft Excel Program 2010 was used during the analyses, as it was fast and convenient to use. This process took four days. First, tables were created for each part in the questionnaire, and second the data were entered into the computer. After all the data had been processed, the mean scores and percentages of the related data were calculated.

Each response that the participants gave to the two open-ended questions in the questionnaire was subjected to content analyses. Furthermore, the negative and positive responses were categorized and clustered. Finally, the graphics and tables were created for all sections in the questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

Both the quantitative and qualitative results obtained from this study as well as the answers to the research questions are presented and explained in the following section.

Quantitative Results

The participants' first experiences were identified to find out their perceptions of FLL by means of the predetermined factors that affected learning. The findings related to their perceptions are presented in Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6. The students selected more than one option in Tables 3, 5, and 6 as stated below.

Table 3: *Items and percentages of the participants' first FLL environments.*

	Percentage % (N=100)
a) Colourful and vibrant	34
b) Dreary and dark	24
c) There were materials and equipment that met my foreign language learning needs	22

d) The materials and equipment were inadequate in the classroom	33

According to the results, as presented in Table 3, the lowest percentage of participants' first FLL experience was 22%, where it was stated that the materials met participants' FLL needs. The highest was 34% informing that the learning environment was colourful and vibrant. The total percentage of the participants who selected options a) and c) was 56%, while the percentage of the participants who selected options b) and d) was 57%. This suggested that 56% of the participants perceived their first FL environment positively in contrast to the 57% who perceived it negatively. No significant difference in terms of percentages was observed between the students who had a positive perception of their first FL environment and those who had a negative perception, although there was a slight tendency towards the negative side. These results showed that, when compared as groups (participants with positive perceptions versus participants with negative perceptions), the participants were affected almost equally by positive and negative experiences, and therefore, the quality of the learning environment and materials did not affect their perceptions of FLL very differently.

Table 4: *Items and percentages of the order of first three materials that contributed most to the participants' learning while they were learning a foreign language for the first time.*

	Percentage % (N=100)		
	1st order	2nd order	3rd order
a) Coursebooks	34	16	12
b) Presentations prepared by the teacher about the topic	22	14	14
c) Pictures	19	29	27
d) Realia brought into the classroom for vocabulary teaching	12	21	17
e) Video	11	15	21
f) Tape Recorder (Audio)	2	5	9

As stated in Table 4, it was revealed that coursebooks contributed most to the participants' learning (34%), pictures were placed second (29%) and third (27%). It was inferred that both written and visual materials had a positive effect on their learning while they were learning a foreign language for the first time. Therefore, it might be suggested that coursebooks with plenty of well-determined visuals would contribute most to the learning process of the novice language students.

Table 5: *Items and percentages of the techniques that had a positive effect on participants' perceptions while they were learning a foreign language for the first time.*

	Percentage % (N=100)
a) Topics were taught with enjoyable activities (games, stories, songs, drama, etc.)	58
b) New words in the foreign language were taught with pictures and realia	44
c) Great importance was given to group work in the lessons	21
d) Grammar rules were taught explicitly	52
e) Mostly the foreign language (L2) was used in the lessons	19
f) Individual studies were preliminary	19
g) Tape/voice recordings were used in listening activities	44
h) Mostly Turkish (L1) was spoken in the lessons	50

i) Activities were frequently done in lessons to improve communication skills	27
j) Short texts/ essays were written in lessons to improve the writing skill	22
k) I was allowed to read texts about the topics in accordance with my interest in lessons	27

According to the data presented in Table 5, the highest percentage of the technique affecting participants' learning positively was "topics were taught with enjoyable activities" (58%). This result indicated that enjoyable activities might have helped the participants to learn. Moments which students enjoyed in the class might have facilitated FLL. When enjoyable activities are adopted as techniques during the learning processes, the students generally tend to remember what they have done in the class and share what they have learned with each other, leading to some degree of natural repetition. Unconscious learning takes place in this way and this increases successful learning in a holistic way (see also Yusuf et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2016).

It was also revealed that the percentage of teaching grammar rules explicitly was 52%. Taking account of the percentage, it might be suggested that teaching the structures and rules of a foreign language might have contributed to successful learning; the participants were able to build sentences and realized that they were able to deal with the FL.

Surprisingly, 50% of the participants stated that it was a useful technique that mostly Turkish (L1) was used in the lessons, meaning that the students were able to interact with their teachers and friends who spoke the same language, understand them and feel comfortable while they were learning the FL for the first time. Therefore, it might be suggested that during the first periods, using the L1 in the lessons is important in order to reduce the stress and anxiety level of the students and to make them feel positive towards the lesson. According to the results, other techniques with high percentages were that new words in the FL were taught with pictures and realia (44%), and tape/voice recordings were used in listening activities (44%). It was understood that audio-visual materials contributed highly to the participants' FLL.

As presented in Table 5, the percentages of activities done to improve communication skills and of reading texts in accordance with pupils' interests were 27%, short texts/essays written for writing skill was 22%, and the percentage of group work in the lessons was 21%. These results make it possible to speculate that techniques related to language skills were not applied enough while the participants were learning a foreign language for the first time; or, although the techniques were right, there might have been inadequacies in the way they were applied. Therefore, learning may not have been activated due to a lack of practice on the material learnt. These observations propose that in fact, language is skill-based, but FLL in Turkey is knowledge-based. Thus, language learners cannot do enough exercises related to what they have learned.

Table 6: *Items and percentages of the characteristics of participants' first foreign language teachers.*

	Percentage % (N=100)
a) S/he was a motivator	53
b) S/he was an authoritarian	38
c) S/he was using the foreign language very well	37
d) S/he led me to develop negative thoughts about foreign language	17
e) S/he led me to develop positive thoughts about the foreign language	45

As presented in Table 6, being a motivator presented 53% as the highest percentage of characteristics in participants' first FL teachers. On the other hand, the percentage of teachers that led the students to develop negative thoughts towards the FL was observed to be the lowest percentage (17%). It is clear that first FL teachers of the participants encouraged their students to learn the FL and provided readiness for learning. 45% of the participants stated that they developed positive thoughts towards the FLL thanks to their first FL teachers. Another observation was that the teachers were steady and

they were able to maintain discipline in the classroom. It is seen that some of the teachers were authoritarian (38%). To sum up, the characteristics of the first FL teachers of the participants were generally positive and that contributed positively to the perceptions of FLL.

Notably, only 37% of all 100 participants' responses pointed out that their teachers were using their FL comfortably, i.e. 'very well'. Naturally it should be expected that this percentage should be close to 100%. Therefore, it was deduced that the first FL teachers of the participants had some inadequacies in their language skills, although they were good at applying the pedagogical methodologies and/or techniques, or other issues related to the teaching profession. Maybe the teachers focused on knowledge such as teaching grammar rules, but not enough on the language skills. Nonetheless, it was observed that generally the students perceived their teachers as experts in the FL. It might be a good recommendation that faculties of education revise the contents of the lessons in order to raise the standard of the language skills with the specific aim to train skilful FL teachers.

The data presented above provide insight related to research question one *"What is the effect of the factors on perception in relation to foreign language learning?"*

In summary, it was observed that the investigated factors generally shaped the participants' perception of FLL positively. The researchers did not observe any attention-catching difference between the students who had an inadequate learning environment (57%) and those who had advantageous learning environment (56%). The audio-visual and written materials used in language classes, specifically the coursebooks and pictures, helped in their FLL and positively affected their perception. Although there were some problems with applying the techniques, the participants were satisfied overall. Most importantly, a great number of the students had a positive perception of their first FL, but their perceptions were negative in terms of teachers' inability to implement the language skills. These current findings are consistent with the results of Pirhonen (2015) who found that past experience and positive messages from teachers influenced students' perceptions of the language.

On the other hand, Hazari (2014) and Göksu (2015) indicated that if students have positive perceptions of their learning environment, they can learn a FL better. In addition, Jannati and Marzban (2015) found that when students did not approve of their learning environment, their performance on the language proficiency test was low. In comparison to the related literature, our study found no significant difference as a group between the students who had a positive perception of their first FL environment and those who had a negative perception in terms of FLL. In other words, it was revealed that the learning environment did not affect the perceptions of FLL. This might stem from our education system that is more teacher-centred. The participants generally give more importance to the effect of their teachers' methods and personality over their perceptions of FLL.

As a result, because the participants' past experiences were mainly positive, they had generally positive perceptions towards FLL. The findings of the present research agree closely with Mueller (1958, p.167) who stated that past experience affects our perceptions and interpretation of events and processes

Table 7 presents the participants' level of FL anxiety, the factor that research question two concentrated on.

Table 7: *Items and percentages of the participants' level of foreign language anxiety.*

	Percentage % (N=100)				
	1 Strongly Agree	**2 Agree**	**3 Partially Agree**	**4 Disagree**	**5 Strongly Disagree**
B1. I feel anxious when I cannot express myself very well while speaking a foreign language	33	33	20	8	6
B2. I do not hesitate to make mistakes in the foreign language	12	17	21	37	13

B3. I am scared when I see a reading passage in the foreign language in front of me	12	9	21	37	21
B4. I liked volunteering to answer questions in foreign language lessons	23	22	14	27	14
B5. It makes me feel uncomfortable to encounter words that I do not know when I read a text in a foreign language	13	26	26	21	14
B6. I am not afraid of making a presentation in a foreign language in front of a group	8	15	29	23	25
B7. The idea of going abroad without a guide makes me happy	25	27	20	15	13
B8. I feel anxious when I don't understand what I am listening to in a foreign language	14	26	35	16	9
B9. I feel comfortable while writing a composition, short story, etc. in a foreign language	17	17	25	21	20
B10. The idea of making friends from different countries frightens me	5	4	10	33	48

B1-B3-B5-B6-B8-B9 out of the ten items presented in Table 7 were prepared to determine the participants' level of anxiety related to the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

According to the data in B1, it was revealed that 66% (strongly agree-agree) of 100 participants feel anxious when they cannot express themselves in a FL. The results presented in B6 showed that making a presentation in the foreign language in front of a group increased the participants' level of anxiety (48% disagree-strongly disagree). These data presented in B1 and B6 suggest that the level of speaking anxiety of the participants is high. It was clear that the participants feel anxious while making a presentation in the FL in front of a group. Similarly, Suleimenova (2013) stated that FL anxiety could cause problems in speaking in public among students. Moreover, Demir (2015) indicated that fear of public speaking is one of the reasons for FL anxiety and our study showed that feeling anxious while speaking in front of people is more related to the consequences of anxiety rather than the reason for the anxiety.

As stated in B3, being confronted with an FL reading text was not anxiety-provoking for the majority of the participants (58% disagree-strongly disagree). It seems that reading passages does not increase the students' level of anxiety, maybe because most of them felt comfortable based on their experience reading aloud in the past. In other words, it seems that practice related to previous experience does not lead them to feel anxious. However, the results of B5 indicate that encountering unknown words while reading a passage made 39% (strongly agree-agree) of the participants feel uncomfortable. It seems that they feel anxious about reading comprehension.

Again, according to the results observed in B8, 40% of the participants (strongly agree-agree) feel anxious when they do not understand what they are listening to. This indicates that they have a problem with their listening skills. Therefore, it might be appropriate to recommend that first, the receptive language skills such as listening and reading should be improved in order to speak and write. Likewise, when the data in B9 were analysed, it was observed that 41% (disagree-strongly disagree) of the participants feel uncomfortable while writing a composition, short story, etc. in the foreign language. The results indicate that there are shortcomings with the writing skills, maybe because they could not develop their receptive language skills, listening and reading, appropriately.

It was observed that generally, the participants have problems with the four skills, which suggests that these skills were not given proper attention during their previous experience. When these

findings are taken into consideration, we may comment that the participants' level of FL anxiety increases when they face situations related to the language skills, which leads us to think that lack of practice of the language skills is one of the reasons for FL anxiety. If the language skills are competently improved, people will feel more comfortable.

On the other hand, according to the results in B2, 50% (disagree-strongly disagree) of the participants stated that they were afraid of making mistakes in the FL. We propose that this is due to the lack of exercises in their previous experience, whereas Kayaoğlu and Sağlamel (2013) found that being afraid of making mistakes was an anxiety factor.

In B4 it was revealed that 45% (strongly agree and agree) of the participants were willing to voluntarily join the activities in the classes. However, 41% (disagree and strongly disagree) of them were reluctant. Thus, the students who volunteered to answer the questions in the FL classes would feel more positive in terms of the perception and anxiety related to FL. The others, on the other hand, might find themselves inadequate in the FL, as they could not improve their language skills most probably because of insufficient practice, which in the end will result in anxiety. Similarly, Şahin, Seçer and Erişen (2016) found that the students who have positive perceptions of English join in the lessons more and are more motivated compared to other students who perceive English negatively and construct negative metaphors around it. The similarity between the two studies is that, since the participants have a positive perception, they are more willing to join in the FL lessons. When the data in B7 and B10 were analysed, it was revealed that 52% (strongly agree-agree) of the participants felt happy with the idea of going abroad. It was also notable that the idea of making friends from different countries did not scare the majority of them 81% (disagree-strongly disagree). These findings reveal that the participants like the idea of travelling abroad and making friendships with people who speak FLs, suggesting that they do not have any kind of negative feeling towards foreigners and/or FLs.

The results presented in Table 7 created an idea that the factor that increases later FL anxiety is the lack of skill-based practice in the language lessons in the students' past experience. Therefore, the students might need more practising opportunities to improve their FL skills as well as to reduce their anxiety levels. It can be concluded that there should be a balance between knowledge and skills during their whole education. After the students learn something, they should always work practically with it by means of different exercises.

The data presented in Table 7 answered the research question two "*What is the effect of the perceptions related to the language skills on foreign language anxiety?"*

In summary, it was observed that the participants' general perceptions of FLL are positive, but it was revealed that the source of their high level of anxiety might be inadequate practice in the language skills during their past FLL experience. To sum up, language is a tool for communication, and when communication, written or oral, is not practised enough in the FLL sessions, it unwillingly but unavoidably creates anxiety.

The observations of the present research align well with the findings of Tzoannopoulou (2016) in terms of the anxiety factors. Communication apprehension is found to be a factor of anxiety in both studies. However, the factor of anxiety related to teachers is different. Teachers' evaluations and corrections were anxiety factors in Tzoannopoulou's (2016) study, but in the present study, the fact that the language skills were not practised enough reflects the FL teachers' effect on the anxiety of the students. In addition, Landström (2017) revealed that teachers have a dynamic role in lower and upper secondary school in terms of general anxiety and the anxiety factors. Likewise, in the present study, it was deduced that the FL teachers might have not given enough importance to practising the FL, and thus, might be considered as an anxiety factor in FLL.

Table 8 presents data related to the participants' level of learned helplessness in FLL, the factor that research question three concentrated on.

Table 8: *Items and percentages of the participants' level of learned helplessness.*

		Percentage % (N=100)
C1.	**A suitable foreign language learning environment was provided for you, but you did not join this environment.**	**a-75**
	a. I did not join because I do not think I am good at foreign languages.	**b-25**
	b. I did not join because I have no faith in learning a foreign language.	
C2.	**You got a high mark in the foreign language exam.**	
	a. I usually get high marks in the foreign language exams.	**a-53**
	b. I got a high mark because questions were asked that I knew well by chance.	**b-47**
C3.	**A friend of your friend came from abroad, used the language you learned as the first foreign language in educational institutions, but you did not prefer to meet him.**	**a-28** **b-72**
	a. I did not prefer to meet him because I do not know about foreign languages.	
	b. I did not prefer to meet him because I do not think I am able to communicate well in the foreign language.	
C4.	**You have to make a presentation in the foreign language with your group.**	**a-19** **b-81**
	a. I think that we will fail.	
	b. We will choose a simple topic and give it a good try.	
C5.	**A friend of yours asks you for help on a topic that she does not understand about the foreign language.**	**a-75**
	a. I take a look at the topic and try to help her.	**b-25**
	b. I do not accept it because I think that I'm not good at the foreign language.	
C6.	**They did not give you a place in an activity related to the foreign language.**	**a-63**
	a. I think that they did not give me a place because they thought that I am not good at the foreign language.	**b-37**
	b. I think that they did not give me a place because the quota was full.	
C7.	**On your birthday, a friend of yours gave you a book written in the foreign language and you read that book right away.**	**a-25**
	a. I read it because I understand everything that I read in the foreign language.	**b-75**
	b. I just read it because the theme of the book aroused my interest.	
C8.	**When you walk down the road, a foreigner asks you an address.**	
	a. I say that I cannot help him because I have difficulty using the foreign language.	**a-11** **b-89**
	b. I try to help him even if I think that I am not good at the foreign language.	
C9.	**Your friends suggest playing your favourite game *taboo* in the foreign language.**	**a-64**
	a. Even if I think that I am not good at the foreign language, I play.	**b-36**
	b. I do not play because I cannot use the foreign language effectively.	
C10.	**You did not understand a topic in the foreign language.**	
	a. I did not understand because I quit listening, as I thought that I am not good at the foreign language.	**a-43** **b-57**
	b. I did not understand because the topic did not arouse my interest.	

Table 8 provides data related to the participants' level of learned helplessness. As presented in the table, there are two options in each statement. Option "a" in items like C3, C4, C6, C8 and C10 was prepared to determine the level of learned helplessness; on the other hand, option "b" in items C1, C2, C5, C7 and C9 was asked to identify whether the participants' level of learned helplessness is high or not.

According to the data presented in C1, 25% of 100 participants chose the ''b'' option ''*I did not join because I have no faith in learning a foreign language".* It shows that they believe that they can succeed in the FL. On the other hand, when the percentages in C2 were analysed, no significant difference was

observed between the students who chose "a": *"I usually get high marks in foreign language exams."* (53%) and others who chose "b" *"I got a high mark because questions were asked that I knew well by chance."* (47%), but there was a slight tendency towards the "a" option though. This result indicated that they believe they are and can be successful in the FL exams. These results agree with Yaman, Esen and Derkuş (2011) and Aydoğan (2016) who revealed a negative relationship between academic success and learned helplessness, namely, students who have a low level of learned helplessness get better grades. As the participants' perception of FLL is positive and their general level of learned helplessness is low, 53% of them stated that they usually get high marks in FL exams.

As can be observed in C3, 28% of the participants chose "a" which states that *" I did not prefer to meet because I do not know about foreign languages."* The percentage of the students who chose "a" indicating that *" I think that we will fail"* in C4 was 19%. The data in C5 showed that 25% of them chose option "b" *" I do not accept it because I think that I'm not good at the foreign language".* However, 63% of the participants chose "a" which shows that *" I think that they did not give me a place because they thought that I am not good at the foreign language"* in the statement given in C6. Similarly, option "b" *"I just read it because the theme of the book aroused my interest"* was chosen by 75% of 100 participants in C7. The percentage of option "a": *"I say that I cannot help him because I have difficulty using the foreign language"* in the statement presented in C8 was very low, 11%. As seen in C9, option "b": *" I do not play because I cannot use the foreign language effectively"* was chosen by 36% of the students. The result indicates that there was no significant difference between the participants who chose "a" and those who chose "b". 43% of them chose "a": *" I did not understand because I quit listening because I think that I am not good at the foreign language"*; and, 57% of them chose "b": *" I did not understand because the topic did not arouse my interest"*.

These findings revealed that the majority of the students' levels of learned helplessness were low. The reason why they had a low level of learned helplessness despite a high level of FL anxiety might be that their perceptions of FLL were positive. We may conclude that positive perception shaped their behaviour. Although the students thought that they were not good enough at the FL, it was clear that they did not trust their language skills much; this thought did not lead them to acquire learned helplessness. They still believed that they could do it, in other words, learn and speak the FL. These observations do not agree with the findings of Büyükkarcı (2016). In his study, it was revealed that despite their positive attitudes, students did not want to learn English due to learned helplessness and negative previous experiences with English teachers and classmates. However, in the present research it was observed that the students had positive perceptions of FLL; this led to the interpretation that their level of learned helplessness was low because of this.

These findings answered research question three *"What is the level of the learned helplessness of the participants who have a negative perception of foreign language learning and a high level of foreign language anxiety?"*

In summary, the majority of the participants' perceptions of FLL were positive, the anxiety levels were high, and their level of learned helplessness was low. However, as presented in Table 6, 17% of the participants stated that their teachers led them to develop negative thoughts about FL. Therefore, it is also possible that negative perception might have affected learning adversely and it might have increased the level of anxiety. As a result, it was noticed that the level of learned helplessness of these participants was, unlike in other participants, high.

Qualitative Results

Two open-ended questions were asked in the last part of the questionnaire and the responses were subjected to content analyses as presented in the following.

- **Responses given to the first interview question:** *What did you feel in the first foreign language lesson in your education life?* 65% of 100 participants gave positive responses to this question. The common expressions through which the participants reflected their feelings are given below:
- *I loved my English teacher when I saw her for the first time.*
- *I got excited.*
- *My teacher was lovely; she motivated me to learn.*
- *I became very happy.*

- *The first lesson was enjoyable. I was willing to learn a new language.*
- *My teacher helped me to understand English in the lesson.*
- *The first lesson aroused my interest.*
- *My teacher was willing to teach; I got motivated.*
- *Learning a different language made me happy.*
- *I felt as if I had discovered something that I did not know.*
- *I thought that I could do it.*
- *My teacher taught English with games and activities. I loved him.*
- *It was an interesting lesson because there were many pictures in the class.*
- *I was curious about learning a foreign language.*
- *The first lesson aroused my interest because it helped me learn different cultures.*

30 % of 100 students gave negative answers to the same question. A majority of them expressed their feelings with these expressions given below:

- I was scared.
- I felt anxious.
- I did not like my English teacher.
- I was worried because I did not understand anything.
- I thought that I could not learn a new language.
- I felt terrible.
- I felt left out.
- The first lesson was frightening.
- My teacher was not patient enough.
- I was afraid because I had a teacher speaking English.
- It was a boring lesson.
- I developed negative thoughts about this lesson because of my teacher.
- I did not feel good enough for this lesson.
- I felt stressed.

5% of 100 participants stated that they could not remember what they had felt in the first FL lesson.

- **Responses given to the second interview question:** *According to you, is it necessary to know a foreign language for your professional development?* 95% of 100 participants pointed out that knowing an FL is a necessity for their careers. They explained their reasons with these expressions:
- *I can find a job, easily.*
- *I have better job opportunities if I know a foreign language.*
- *It is an advantage.*
- *It is essential for me because of my department.*
- *It is important to communicate with other people in the world.*
- *It is necessary to find reliable sources.*
- *It is significant for post - graduation.*
- *It is a necessity to follow other studies in the world.*
- *It is crucial because of globalisation.*

On the other hand, 5% of 100 students stated that knowing an FL is not necessary for their professional development. They used these expressions while expressing their reasons:

- *A skilled person can find a job easily; he does not need to learn a foreign language.*
- *I do not need to learn a foreign language because I am studying at the Turkish Language Teaching Department.*
- *It is unnecessary for my department.*
- *I do not go abroad, so I do not need it.*
- *The most important thing is to be successful in my job. I do not need to learn it.*

These results answered research question four *"What are the feelings and opinions of the participants related to foreign language learning?"*

A large number of the participants had positive feelings and thoughts related to FLL. 65% of them stated that they were excited, enjoyed the lessons and they loved their first FL teachers. It is clear that generally they developed positive thoughts and had positive perceptions of FLL. Furthermore, 95% of 100 participants emphasized that they need to learn an FL for their career. The face-to-face interviews cultivated qualitative data that provided more depth related to the perceptions, anxiety, and learned helplessness of the participants that supported and in some cases clarified the unclear points of the quantitative data. In some cases the dialogues between the researchers and the participants took up to 15-20 minutes, and provided insightful information that helped to clarify everything related to the research topics. The qualitative results and observations have been summarised in the following:

Summary of the Qualitative Results

During the dialogues with the participants when applying the interview questions the following deductions and conclusions were derived:

1. The majority of the participants had a positive perception of FLL due to their positive experiences in the past. It is important to state that they expressed their feelings about their first FL lesson by recalling their teachers particularly, maybe due to the teacher-centred education system that they had been through.
2. The level of the FL anxiety of the majority of the participants was high, maybe because the FL teachers neglected or did not apply the necessary or most effective practices for language skills, a conclusion derived from the dialogues during the interviews. Lack of practice in the past causes anxiety in the present when the participants encounter situations in which they have to use the FL.
3. Most of the participants' levels of learned helplessness were low as they had a positive perception of FLL. They believed that they could learn and speak a foreign language, although there was a minority that did not want to be involved in any kind of FL environment or activity.
4. It was remarkable to establish that 95% of the participants found learning a foreign language necessary as the majority of the academic sources where scientific information can be found are written in an FL, especially English. The participants believed that they can later find better jobs in their lives, and they can communicate with others in the world if they speak a foreign language.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study investigated why some people cannot learn a foreign language in Turkey and the psychological reasons behind it. In this sense, the effect of perception, FL anxiety, and learned helplessness on individuals' FLL were examined. One hundred students from different faculties and departments at Bursa Uludag University expressed their feelings and opinions about FLL by means of a questionnaire as well as in face-to-face interview sessions. The results indicated that the majority of the participants had positive perceptions of FLL. However, their level of anxiety was high, whereas their level of learned helplessness was low. The reason why the participants had a high level of anxiety might go back to their FL teachers not sufficiently practising language skills in their lessons. That's why the students could not learn successfully and improve their FL competency. The dialogues that emerged during the last part of the interviews provided clear information and hints related to both the research topics and the reasons why we cannot learn FLs in Turkey.

It was observed that when conditions in which people have to use the FL skills emerge, the participants feel incompetent and their level of anxiety increases. According to the findings, the fact that their level of learned helplessness is low is related to their previous positive experiences, which shaped their perceptions, and, indeed, they are willing to learn a FL. Nevertheless, the level of anxiety and the factors that create FL anxiety seem to be the biggest obstacle for the FL learners.

The present study brought a new perspective to the literature in terms of analysing FLL through perception, FL anxiety, and learned helplessness. The present research was guided by the informal observations of the researchers that the reasons behind the difficulties in Turkish FLL environments stemmed from the psychological factors rather than the insufficiency of the physical conditions. In addition, we offer a recommendation that the contents of FL lessons at schools and courses of FL

teaching programs be revised by considering the language skills separately and by giving them equal importance.

Limitations and Suggestion for Further Research

The present study was carried out with one hundred participants from a single university in a limited time. Therefore, it would be better if the same study were applied to a larger number of people throughout Turkey for more reliable results and effective solutions. Further research may analyse the perceptions of FLL, level of FL anxiety and level of learned helplessness of children, teenagers and adults. In other words, the study can be repeated with different participant profiles. Additionally, the results might be compared to each other by taking account of different variables such as age, sex, duration of FL study, place or school of FL study, etc. In the light of the obtained results, we may confidently recommend that while researching the difficulties, collecting qualitative data and extending the duration and depth of the interviews would be greatly useful.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank each of 100 volunteer students from different faculties and departments at Bursa Uludag University for consenting to go through our questionnaire. We would like to thank the two expert linguists, the psychologist Canan Birgül Ağca Tokem, and the sociologist Cansın Gümüş who always supported us and helped us while preparing the questionnaire.

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Appendix 1

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN TURKEY

This questionnaire has been prepared to determine the reasons why we cannot learn foreign language in Turkey.
Your answers will contribute to a scientific research.
Your name will not be asked. The information you share will be confidential.
Please answer the questions by considering your own thoughts and learning experiences.

Instruction: Please read the following phrases carefully and select the appropriate option/ options (✓) for you. There is no correct or wrong answer.

Age: _____ Sex: F ( ) M ( ) Nationality: _____ Faculty/ Department: _____ Grade: _____
When did you start to learn a foreign language? Kindergarden:_____ Primary School:_____ Secondary School:_____ High School:_____ University:_____ What is the type of high school that you graduated from? Science High School:_____ Anatolian High School:_____ General High School:_____ Vocational/Technical High School:_____

Religious High School:_____ College:_____
Other:_____ Foreign language(s) that you speak _____

Part A

A1. ***How was your <u>first</u> language learning environment? Please select the option/ Options (✓) that is/ are appropriate for you.***

a) Colourful and vibrant
b) Dreary and dark
c) There were materials and equipment that met my foreign language learning needs
d) The materials and equipment were inadequate in the classroom

A2. ***Please, list the first three materials that contributed most to your learning while you were learning foreign language*** **<u>for the first time</u>**, ***from among the following*** **<u>in order of 1-2-3.</u>**

a) Course books
b) Presentations prepared by the teacher about the topic
c) Pictures
d) Realia brought into the classroom for vocabulary teaching
e) Video
f) Tape Recorder (Audio)

A3. ***Please, select <u>the option / options (✓)</u> from the following techniques that you think it/they had a positive effect on your learning while you were learning foreign language*** **<u>for the first time.</u>**

a) Topics were taught with enjoyable activities (games, stories, songs, drama, etc.)
b) New words in foreign language were taught with pictures and realia
c) Great importance was given to group work in the lessons
d) Grammar rules were taught explicitly
e) Mostly the foreign language was used in the lessons
f) Individual studies were preliminary
g) Tape / voice recording were used in listening activities
h) Mostly Turkish (L1) was spoken in the lessons
i) Activities were frequently done in lessons to improve communication skills
j) Paragraphs/ essays were written in lessons to improve the writing skill
k) I was allowed to read texts about the topics in accordance with my interest in lessons

A4. ***What were your <u>first</u> foreign language teacher's characteristics? Please select the option / options (✓) that is/ are appropriate for you.***

a) S/he was a motivator

b) S/he was an authoritarian

c) S/he was using the foreign language very well

d) S/he led me to develop negative thoughts about foreign language

e) S/he led me to develop positive thoughts about foreign language

Part B

Please read the following statements carefully and answer the questions by taking into consideration the given scale. Please, select <u>the option (✓)</u> that is appropriate for you.

	1 Strongly agree	**2 Agree**	**3 Partially Agree**	**4 Disagree**	**5 Strongly Disagree**
B1. I feel anxious when I cannot express myself very well while speaking foreign language					
B2. I do not hesitate to make mistakes in foreign language					
B3. I am scared when I see a reading passage in foreign language in front of me					
B4. I liked being a volunteer to answer questions asked in foreign language lessons					
B5. It makes me feel uncomfortable to encounter words that I do not know when I read a text in a foreign language					
B6. I am not afraid of making a presentation in foreign language in front of a community					
B7. The idea of going abroad without a guide makes me happy					
B8. I feel anxious when I don't understand what I am listening to in a foreign language					
B9. I feel comfortable while writing a composition, short story, etc. in a foreign language					
B10. The idea of making friends from different countries frightens me					

Part C

Each questions in this part describes one event and two options are given, indicated by the letters a and b, which can be selected by a person facing this event. When you encounter such an event, which of these options do you choose? Please read the statements carefully and select the option that is <u>more appropriate for you.</u>

C1. **A suitable foreign language learning environment was provided for you, but you did not join this environment.**
a. I did not join because I do not think I am good at foreign languages.
b. I did not join because I have no faith in learning a foreign language.

C2. **You got a high mark in the foreign language exam.**

a. I usually get high marks in the foreign language exams.
b. I got a high mark because questions were asked from the subjects that I knew well by chance in the exam.

C3. **A friend of your friend came from abroad, used the language you learned as the first foreign language in educational institutions, but you did not prefer to meet him.**
a. I did not prefer to meet him because I do not know about foreign languages.
b. I did not prefer to meet him because I do not think I am able to communicate well in the foreign language.

C4. **You have to make a presentation in foreign language with your group.**
a. I think that we will fail.
b. We choose a simple topic and we try to do it.

C5. **A friend of yours asks you for help on a topic that she does not understand about the foreign language.**
a. I take a look at the topic and try to help her.
b. I do not accept it because I think that I'm not good at the foreign language.

C6. **They did not give you a place in an activity related to the foreign language.**
a. I think that they did not give me a place because they thought that I am not good at the foreign language.
b. I think that they did not give me a place because the quota was full.

C7. **On your birthday, a friend of yours presented you a book written in the foreign language and you read that book right away.**
a. I read it because I understand everything that I read in the foreign language.
b. I just read it because the theme of the book aroused my interest.

C8. **When you walk down the road, a foreigner asks you an address.**
a. I say that I cannot help him because I have difficulty using the foreign language
b. I try to help him even if I think that I am not good at the foreign language.

C9. **Your friends suggest playing your favourite game taboo in foreign language.**
a. Even if I think that I am not good at the foreign language, I play.
b. I do not play because I cannot use the foreign language effectively.

C10. **You did not understand a topic in the foreign language.**
a. I did not understand because I quit listening because I think that I am not good at the foreign language.
b. I did not understand because the topic did not arouse my interest.

Part D

Please answer the following questions by specifying your own thoughts.

D1. *What did you feel in the first foreign language lesson in your education life?*

D2. *According to you, is it necessary to speak a foreign language for your professional development?*

Yes, it is. Why?
No, it is not. Why not?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

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