The effect of games on listening and speaking anxiety in learning English

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This action research investigates the effect of game technique on reducing English listening and speaking anxiety among fourth-grade primary school students. The study group involved 46 students at a Science and Art Centre in Türkiye. The quantitative data were collected through the English Listening Anxiety Scale and the English Speaking Anxiety Scale administered before and after the implementation. The qualitative data were gathered through student interviews and teacher's research diary. The dependent samples t-test was used to compare the pre-test and post-test mean scores from the scales. The data from the interviews and the diary were analysed by inductive analysis. Firstly, the findings of the t-test analysis revealed that game technique significantly reduced students' English listening anxiety, but not English speaking anxiety. On the other hand, the qualitative findings showed that this technique has positive contributions to learning-teaching process although it does not have such an effect on both speaking and listening anxiety. Nevertheless, the analysis of the interviews and the diary also indicated that the technique has a positive influence on the factors that can reduce anxiety such as "willingness to make sentences, not getting bored in lessons, feeling relaxed, thinking quickly, eagerness, and effort". Considering all the findings in the study, we concluded that using game technique in English courses is not directly effective in reducing English listening and speaking anxiety, but it has positive contributions to the overall learning-teaching process. Finally, the study provides some practical suggestions for teachers.

Introduction

English language has been taught gradually from the second to twelfth-grade in Turkish public schools. While English language teaching typically prioritizes listening and speaking activities at the primary school level, emphasis is also placed on reading and writing together with listening and speaking activities at the middle and high schools. Despite the importance attached to learning English in Türkiye, being able to understand and speak

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English thoroughly is still such a problem that has become a research topic especially in recent years. In the literature, it is possible to find studies focusing on students' and teachers' views on the reasons for not being able to teach and learn English and suggestions for solutions (Bodur & Arıkan, 2017; Can & Can, 2014; Paker, 2007; Şahin et al., 2018) as well as inadequacy of current foreign language education policies and suggestions for improvement (Suna & Durmuşçelebi, 2013; Yaman, 2018).

One of the factors affecting foreign language learning negatively is anxiety. *Anxiety* "is a state of uneasiness or irrational fear that appears on a human as a reflection of any fear of danger" (Manav, 2011, p. 202). Anxiety, being accepted as a basic feeling of a human, is one of the main factors that affects learning as well (Gürsu, 2011, p. 14).

Foreign language anxiety is defined as "a distinctive complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours related to classroom language learning, arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). There are studies in literature that refer to foreign language anxiety, its types, reasons and suggestions on dealing with it (Aydın & Zengin, 2008; Baş, 2014; Çelebi, 2009; Elaldı, 2016; Horwitz et al., 1986; Sabuncuoğlu & Kurtoğlu, 2021); validity and reliability of the foreign language anxiety scale (Aydın et al., 2017; Baş, 2013; Gürsu, 2011; Horwitz et al., 1986); the correlation between foreign language anxiety and demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, level of grade, type of school, family) (Hismanoğlu, 2013; Öner & Gedikoğlu, 2007); the relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-perception and self-efficacy belief (Eğinli & Solhi, 2020; Orakcı et al., 2019); and the effect of games supported with technological materials on foreign language anxiety (Yang et al., 2020; Yang & Quadir, 2018). The reasons of students' foreign language anxiety are basically related to three factors: communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety (Aydın et al., 2017; Aydın & Zengin, 2008; Horwitz et al., 1986; Ibrahim & Hamid, 2018). Communication anxiety is defined by Aydın and Zengin (2008) as "the situation experienced by the individuals who possess developed views and thoughts, but still lack adequate communication skills in the target language" (p. 84).

Listening anxiety is the main factor hindering English learning and communication. Polat and Erişti (2018) define listening anxiety in a foreign language as "the feeling of uneasiness, worry, tension, or fear that arises from the experiences of individuals learning or using a foreign language both before and during the listening process" (p. 1115). There exist studies in the literature about the reasons of foreign language listening anxiety and suggestions for dealing with it (Astriyanti et al., 2021; Bede, 2011; Bloomfield et al., 2010; Hidayati et al., 2020; Kim, 2002; Nurkhamidah, 2020; Şahin, 2015); validity and reliability of the foreign language listening anxiety scale (Kim, 2002; Orakcı, 2018a; Polat & Erişti, 2018); the correlation between foreign language listening anxiety and demographic characteristics (Chen & Ren, 2021; Kavandi & Davarpanah, 2021; Liu & Yuan, 2021; Sari & Rindawati, 2021); the relationship between foreign language listening and speaking anxiety (Hamid & Idrus, 2021); the relationship between foreign language listening anxiety and self-efficacy (Chen, 2007); using cognitive and metacognitive strategies in foreign language listening anxiety (Berber & Kuru Gönen, 2017; Golchi, 2012; Ölmezer Öztürk, 2021; Yazıcı & Özden, 2017); the effect of using different kinds of materials in lessons on foreign language listening anxiety (Kılıç, 2007; Kılıç & Uçkun, 2013; Kim, 2018; Polat & Erişti, 2019) and the effect of game strategy on foreign language listening anxiety (Putra, 2018).

The common findings in these studies refer to lack of self-development, not being able to feel safe oneself during listening, not being able to understand and interpret the sentence heard,

speed of speaking, lack of prior knowledge on the topic, different accent and pronunciation, limited vocabulary knowledge, and cultural differences (Astriyanti et al., 2021; Bede, 2011; Bloomfield et al., 2010; Hidayati et al., 2020; Kim, 2002; Nurkhamidah, 2020; Şahin, 2015). Bloomfield et al. (2010) state that "when listeners are concerned that the message is too complex or that they will not be able to understand it, their ability to concentrate falters, and comprehension declines" (p. 17). Golchi (2012) also stresses that the listeners with low levels of listening anxiety employ metacognitive strategies more frequently than those with high levels of anxiety, and the learners with low anxiety levels demonstrate better performance in listening and comprehension tasks (p. 124).

Suggestions for dealing with foreign language listening anxiety in the literature generally include developing strategies suitable for students' own learning levels, being able to be tolerant of uncertainty, trying to understand the main theme, gaining a good listening habit, developing guessing skills, being able to use prior knowledge, and teachers' positive behaviours (Astriyanti et al., 2021; Bede, 2011; Berber & Kuru Gönen, 2017; Golchi, 2012; Kim, 2002; Ölmezer Öztürk, 2021; Şahin, 2015).

Speaking anxiety is the second difficult process of learning a foreign language. Speaking anxiety is the fear of "What should I say and how?" and arises from students' prejudiced approach to foreign language by perceiving it as an object to be feared. Alkan et al. (2019) state that speaking anxiety increases when being exposed to demonstrating speaking performance in a lesson or a test; making a mistake; having the fear of being ridiculed and negative evaluation; having problems with grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation; not being allowed to use the native language in foreign language class; and talking to English native speakers. Speaking anxiety is regarded as the reason of various issues such as students' lack of performance, failure, and reluctance to participate in speaking lessons (Orakcı, 2018b).

In the literature, there are studies on the reasons of foreign language speaking anxiety (Abdullah & Rahman, 2010; Baykara & Aksu Ataç, 2021; Bozavli & Gülmez, 2012; Coşkun, 2016; Çağatay, 2015; Demir, 2015; Tokoz Goktepe, 2013; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Subaşı, 2010); suggestions for dealing with foreign language speaking anxiety (Genç et al., 2016; Tekir, 2021); the correlation between foreign language speaking anxiety and demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, level of grade) (Akar, 2021; Debreli & Demirkan, 2015; Gürsoy & Karaca, 2018; Karatas et al., 2016; Tercan & Dikilitaş, 2015); validity and reliability of the foreign language speaking anxiety scale (Alkan et al., 2019; Orakcı, 2018b; Yaman & Suroğlu Sofu, 2013); in and out of class methods and techniques on decreasing foreign language speaking anxiety (Aisyah, 2018; Atas, 2015; Horowitz, 2019; Ibrahim & Hamid, 2018; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014; ZainuddinSabri, 2018). Studies expressing the relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety and psychological processes are also available. These studies are on the relationship between attitude towards foreign language lesson and speaking anxiety (Karagöl & Başbay, 2018; Kozikoğlu & Kanat, 2018); the relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety and eagerness to speak (Çetinkaya, 2005; Özalp & Merç, 2022); foreign language speaking anxiety and motivation (Öztürk, 2012; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013); and the relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety and self-efficacy (Mede & Karaırmak, 2017).

The reasons of foreign language speaking anxiety are generally fear of negative evaluation, strict rules of language, lack of self-confidence, lack of prior knowledge, teacher attitudes and behaviours, peer bullying, lack of experience abroad, not being able to talk to native speakers, pronunciation problems, lack of motivation, not being able to talk in front of public (Baykara

& Aksu Ataç, 2021; Bozavli & Gülmez, 2012; Coşkun, 2016; Çağatay, 2015; Demir, 2015; Gürsoy & Karaca, 2018; Subaşı, 2010; Tokoz Goktepe, 2013). In a study by Abdullah and Rahman (2010), some of the students express that they prefer staying silent in English courses due to the fact that they pay attention to negative evaluations of others around them, and they feel anxious. Karagöl and Başbay (2018) indicate that the students who are eager to speak English become reluctant due to the fear of making mistakes during speaking activities (p. 810).

In the literature, suggestions for reducing foreign language speaking anxiety include lots of practises on fluency and accuracy, group or individual workshops, encouraging students to join project works, using modern English techniques, speaking English in the class and increasing self-confidence activities, creating relaxing or non-threatening learning environments, emphasizing communication rather than grammar, being patient and teachers' modesty about correcting mistakes, reducing negative prejudices towards foreign language, and the necessity to clarify cultural differences among languages (Abdullah & Rahman, 2010; Atas, 2015; Bozavli & Gülmez, 2012; Çağatay, 2015; Genç et al., 2016; Gürsoy & Karaca, 2018; Karagöl & Başbay, 2018; Kozikoğlu & Kanat, 2018; Orakcı, 2018b; Öner & Gedikoğlu 2007; Özalp & Merç, 2022; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013; Subaşı, 2010; Tekir, 2021; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014). Orakcı (2018b) emphasises that English teachers can provide group works for students including unprepared speaking activities because these kinds of activities can put anxious and non-anxious students together and give many chances for using the language in an unthreatened learning setting (p. 13). Öner and Gedikoğlu (2007) also stress that "teachers should encourage their students to speak with English native speakers when they have a chance" (p. 154).

Game is an enjoyable activity governed by rules, plays an important role in learning and cognitive development, and is characterized by voluntary participation. (Tatan, 2021). Game can be defined as a physical and/or mental process played within certain rules with the aim of entertaining or rewarding participants (Demirtaş et al., 2021). Vygotsky (2016) asserts that game has a crucial role in development of a child; it becomes meaningful according to the needs and expectations of children from different age groups rather than just seen as a way of fun; and a child can make a connection between the wishes in her/his dream world and the real world with the help of a game.

Game technique involves using a series of well-organised activities, having goals and rules, providing communication and competition, and motivating students in lessons (Ibrahim & Hamid, 2018, p. 15-16). As a teaching technique consisting of enriched and various learning materials, games make learning effective (Gündoğdu & Kartal, 2021). In this context, it is useful to consider that games can reinforce effective listening and fluent speaking when it is used as a technique for reducing foreign language anxiety. In the literature, there are studies on using games in developing four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) in teaching foreign language (Demirtaş et al., 2021; Gündoğdu & Kartal, 2021; Ibrahim, 2017; Kurbanovna, 2022; Tatan, 2021). However, only a limited number of studies point out the potential impact of games on foreign language anxiety (Çelebi, 2009; Paker 2007). There are also very few studies regarding the effect of games on foreign language anxiety (Ibrahim & Hamid, 2018; Hassan, 2020). In addition, the number of the studies examining the effect of games on listening and speaking anxiety is quite limited (Aisyah, 2018; Horowitz, 2019; Putra, 2018; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014; ZainuddinSabri, 2018). For these reasons above, this study aims to explore the impact of games on listening and speaking anxiety in learning English.

Specifically, the main aim of this study is to investigate the effect of the game technique on English listening and speaking anxiety of the 4th grade primary school students. To achieve this aim, an answer has been sought for the question "What is the effect of using game technique on reducing the students' listening and speaking anxiety in English language?"

Methodology

Research Design

This is an action research study. Action research provides teachers opportunity to develop their teaching practices because "in action research, a teacher can observe his/her own implementations in a systematic and regular way" (Johnson, 2019). In this study, the first author who is also a teacher of English used the game technique to reduce her students' listening and speaking anxiety in English courses, and she observed her implementations systematically and regularly. Some of the quantitative research methods can be utilized in action research to comprehend the occurrences within a particular school or classroom. There are three types of quantitative research methods compatible with the paradigm of action research: Relational, causal-comparative and quasi-experimental research (Johnson, 2019, p. 123-128). In this study, pre-test post-test design of quasi-experimental research were used to identify the effect of using game technique on decreasing students' listening and speaking anxiety in English.

Participants

The study was conducted in the Science and Art Centre where the first author also works as a teacher of English. 46 students (23 girls and 23 boys) studying at fourth grade in primary schools were involved in the study group. Science and Art Centres in Türkiye are the institutions that support gifted students in using their skills, talents and creativity most appropriately and at their best. In these centres, project-based, multidisciplinary and differentiated master schedules coherent to students' abilities are implemented generally to materialize original outputs, projects and productions.

Data Collection and Instruments

The data was collected from diverse sources through different methods in order to identify what happened when the game technique was used to reduce students' listening and speaking anxiety in English. The English Listening Anxiety Scale developed by Orakcı (2018a) and the English Speaking Anxiety Scale developed by Orakcı (2018b) were used to describe students' listening and speaking anxiety in English at the beginning and the end of the implementation. Orakcı reported the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scales as .987 and .897, respectively. Additionally, the qualitative data was collected through semi-structured student interviews and teacher's research diary to achieve triangulation. According to Johnson (2019), triangulation ensures a comprehensive view of all aspects of a situation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the study. The research diary was based on the teacher's observation during the implementation. After the implementation process ended, 10 students were interviewed face to face.

Data Analysis

The dependent samples t-test was used to compare the mean scores of pre-test and post-tests obtained from the English Listening Anxiety Scale and the English Speaking

Anxiety Scale. The skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the scores are shown in Table 1. When the coefficients are analysed, it can be said that the scores do not deviate excessively from normal distribution.

Table 1. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the scores obtained from scales.

Measurement	Skewness	Kurtosis
Listening anxiety pre-test	.623	-.386
Listening anxiety post-test	.014	.549
Speaking anxiety pre-test	.953	1.248
Speaking anxiety post-test	1.101	1.296

The data from research diary and interviews were analysed through inductive analysis. They were initially analysed separately, and recurring items, themes, and patterns were identified. Similar items were then grouped together, and overarching themes and subthemes were identified. To ensure validity and reliability in the coding process, the researchers independently coded the data from the diary and interviews. Subsequently, their codes were compared to reach a consensus and decrease the risk of potential coding errors. This process continued until a final decision was reached on the coding.

Process

The implementation in the study was completed in 10 weeks, including pre-test in the first week and post-test in the last week. Firstly, four modules were chosen from the ones in the master schedule of English/Foreign Language used by Science and Art Centres. Afterwards, an 8-week period was meticulously planned for the appropriate time to implement these modules. Accordingly, 8 different games were designed to develop listening and speaking skills at the same time, and lesson plans were prepared placing more emphasis on one skill in turns each week. When designing the games, the teacher utilized materials available within the school. In addition, she used her own experience to design and implement the games that she believed could improve students' listening and speaking skills. Moreover, she tried to create enjoyable games that could evoke the feeling of listening to and speaking a foreign language naturally in a real life context. Finally, she selected some videos from the English education videos in Youtube channel to be used during the implementation. The subject of the lesson, the content, and the students' age group were paid attention while choosing the videos. To sum up, the implementation started with administration of the pre-test to the students. This is followed by the eight games performed by focusing on listening and speaking skills alternately every week. In the last week, the post-test was carried out. During all the implementation, the teacher kept a research diary based on her observation notes. And finally, 10 students chosen randomly among participants were interviewed.

Findings

The findings are presented under the separate titles as "English Listening and Speaking Anxiety", "Student Interviews", and "Teacher's Research Diary".

English Listening and Speaking Anxiety

The pre-test and post-test mean scores of the English Listening Anxiety Scale and English Speaking Anxiety Scale were analysed through the dependent samples t-test to describe the students' listening and speaking anxiety before and after the implementation. The results of the analyses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The dependent samples t-test results.

	Measurement	n	X̄	ss	sd	t
Listening anxiety	Pre-test	46	39.23	8.66	45	2.836*
	Post-test	46	35.89	9.11		
Speaking anxiety	Pre-test	46	36.84	10.20	45	.618**
	Post-test	46	36.04	13.51		

As presented in Table 2, the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of students' English listening anxiety pre-test scores are 39.23 and 8.66 respectively. The arithmetic mean of post-test scores is 35.89 and standard deviation is 9.11. In comparison with the pre-test, students' English listening anxiety post-test mean scores are lower. This decrease is statistically significant [t(45)=2.836, p=.007]. Accordingly, it can be stated that game technique is effective in reducing students' English listening anxiety. On the other hand, students' English speaking anxiety pre-test mean scores is 36.84, standard deviation is 10.20. The arithmetic mean and standard deviation of their post-test scores are 36.04 and 13.51 respectively. There is a decrease of .80 points in the post-test mean scores compared to the pre-test. This small amount of difference is not statistically significant [t(45)=.618, p=.540]. Therefore, it can be argued that game technique is not effective in reducing students' English speaking anxiety.

Student Interviews

As a result of the inductive analysis of the data from the interviews, two themes emerged, "positive thoughts and feelings" and "negative feelings". The themes and codes are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. The themes and codes emerged from the analysis of interviews.

Themes and codes	f
Positive thoughts and feelings	
Games were enjoyable.	18
Games were nice.	16
I learnt better.	16
I would like games to be used in our future lessons.	13
I was interested in the lesson more.	6
I was happy while playing games.	6
Games were motivating.	6
Games encouraged me to make sentences.	5
I did not get bored in lessons.	5
I reinforced what I learnt.	5
Games were useful.	4
Games developed team spirit.	4
I felt myself relaxed.	4
Games made me think quickly.	4
Games were instructive.	3
Total	**115**
Negative feelings	
I occasionally got worried and doubted that I would not be able to understand the word I heard.	15
I occasionally got worried and doubted that I would not be able to make sentences.	10
Total	**25**

According to Table 3, it can be concluded that students have positive thoughts and feelings about using game technique in English courses. It is noteworthy that there is no code expressing a positive feeling or thought showing the direct effect of the technique on English listening and speaking anxiety. The most frequent positive thoughts expressed by the students about using game technique in English course are "Games were enjoyable", "Games were

nice", "I learnt better", and "I would like games to be used in future lessons". They also stated that games were motivating, encouraged them to make sentences, reinforced what they learnt, were useful, developed team spirit, helped them think quickly, and were instructive. In addition, the students expressed some positive feelings about using game technique in English course. The most frequent ones are "I was interested in the lesson more" and "I was happy while playing games". They also added that they did not get bored in lessons and felt themselves relaxed. Despite all these positive thoughts and feelings, it is a noteworthy finding that students also express some negative feelings about the effect of the technique on English listening and speaking anxiety. They expressed that they occasionally got worried and doubted on understanding the word they heard or making sentences. In fact, some students' opinions such as "games encouraged me to make sentences, I did not get bored in lessons, I felt myself relaxed, games made me think quickly" make us consider the possibility of the positive effects of game technique on English listening and speaking anxiety. For instance, one expects such a result as "games reduce speaking anxiety because they help thinking quickly". Similarly, anxiety would decrease if games helped students to feel themselves relaxed. All in all, it can be argued that using game technique in English courses has positive contributions to learning-teaching process, but it has no direct effect on reducing listening and speaking anxiety. Instead, it positively affects the factors that can reduce anxiety such as "being eager to make sentences, not getting bored in lessons, feeling oneself relaxed and thinking quickly".

Teacher's Research Diary

The inductive analysis of the data from the teacher's research diary revealed two main themes, "positive observations" and "negative observations", along with two subthemes "listening" and "speaking". The themes, subthemes and codes are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Themes, subthemes and codes from the analysis of research diary.

Themes, subthemes and codes	f
Positive observations	
Listening	
Listening games were enjoyable for students.	14
Listening games were useful for students to understand sentences.	4
Students joined listening games eagerly.	3
Students could understand some words they heard once.	2
Total	**23**
Speaking	
Speaking games were enjoyable for students.	8
Students were eager to make sentences.	6
Speaking games were useful for students to be able to make sentences.	3
I was happy to see that my students made an effort to make sentences.	2
Total	**19**
Negative observations	
Listening	
Students had difficulty in understanding what they listened during listening games.	13
Students were so nervous / anxious during listening games.	10
Total	**23**
Speaking	
Students were so nervous / anxious during speaking games.	16
Students had difficulty in making sentences during speaking games.	8
Students did not want to play some of the games because they could not make sentences.	2
Total	**26**

According to Table 4, it can be stated that the teacher has some positive and negative observations about using game technique in English courses. Positive observations are not related to the direct effect of games on English listening and speaking anxiety, like the ones in students' views; but they are related to the contribution of games to the learning-teaching process of the lesson in general. The main positive observation of the teacher about using game technique in English course is "listening and speaking games were enjoyable for students". This is followed by the codes, "listening games were useful for students to understand sentences, students joined listening games eagerly, students could understand some words they heard once, students were eager to make sentences, speaking games were useful for students to make sentences, and students made an effort to make sentences". Despite all these positive observations on using game technique in English courses, it is a noteworthy finding that the teacher also has some negative observations about the effect of the technique on English listening and speaking anxiety. For instance, the teacher observed that the students were anxious in listening and speaking games, had difficulty in understanding what they listened, and did not want to play some speaking games because of the difficulty in making sentences. In fact, the teacher's observations such as "being eager and making effort" make us consider that game technique may affect English listening and speaking anxiety positively. However, if the games helped the students to be eager and make their effort, anxiety would decrease. Based on all these findings, it can be inferred that using game technique has positive contributions to learning-teaching process, but is not effective in reducing listening and speaking anxiety directly. Rather, it has positive effects on some factors like "eagerness and effort" that can reduce anxiety.

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

This action research investigated the effect of game technique on reducing 4th grade primary school students' English listening and speaking anxiety. The data were collected through the English Listening Anxiety Scale, the English Speaking Anxiety Scale, semi-structured student interviews and teacher's research diary. The mean scores of the pre-test and post-test obtained from the scales were compared by using the dependent samples t-test. The data from the interviews and the diary were analysed by inductive analysis.

The findings of the t-test analysis show that game technique significantly reduces students' English listening anxiety, but not English speaking anxiety. In addition, the analysis of the students' views indicates that game technique has no direct effect on listening and speaking anxiety, but positively affects some factors in learning-teaching process such as "willingness to make sentences, not getting bored in lessons, feeling oneself relaxed and thinking quickly". This is also confirmed by the findings of the teacher's observations in the diary, which also focus on "eagerness and effort" as another factor that can help reduce anxiety. Therefore, both students' views and teacher's observations support each other in this respect.

The analysis of the data from the English Listening Anxiety Scale show that game technique has a significant impact on reducing students' English listening anxiety. Different kinds of listening sources were used in the games. Repeated listening activities in a learning setting that made games more enjoyable and fun might have motivated students to understand what they listened. Students might have felt themselves relaxed when they realised that they began to understand the things they listened. According to Kim (2002), foreign language games are relaxing activities for students. The relaxing aspect of foreign language games may play a role on decreasing students' listening anxiety. Putra (2018) also states in a study that game settings enable students to have fun, help them to have self-confidence for expressing themselves, and

minimize the limits between teachers and students. In addition, when students feel comfortable in game environments, their anxiety decreases. As their comprehension performance improves positively, they may feel successful, happy and safe, believing that they have better learned the pronunciations they listen. This may have stimulated students' self-belief on success. These ideas are also supported by the studies proving that success in listening performance increases as listening anxiety decreases in safe environments for foreign language learners (Bede, 2011; Chen, 2007; Golchi, 2012).

According to the analysis of the data from the English Speaking Anxiety Scales, game technique has no significant impact on reducing students' English speaking anxiety. To be able to answer immediately what we hear requires us to set a linguistic output. The students in this study might have had difficulty in doing this. According to Sabuncuoğlu and Kurtoğlu (2021), students have troubles with producing output using the language when they cannot receive enough input during moments of anxiety, so they feel anxious while speaking a foreign language. In this context, the students might also have had performance anxiety because of being incompetent in making sentences. Performance anxiety can be seen as uneasiness or nervousness on students when they have to speak a foreign language without preparation in front of others, and the reason of this uneasiness is the fear of thinking about performing speaking worse than the other students in the class and the fear of negative evaluation (Abdullah & Rahman, 2010; Akar, 2021; Aydın & Zengin 2008; Bozavli & Gülmez, 2012; Demir, 2015; Horwitz et al., 1986; Karagöl & Başbay, 2018; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Subaşı, 2010; Tercan & Dikilitaş, 2015). Moreover, students' performance anxiety may have stimulated the fear of making mistake in the class. Especially, factors such as not being able to find suitable words to form a sentence, difficulty in using speech features appropriately, anxiety about pronunciation, and the effort to create perfect sentences might have contributed to the fear of making mistakes. (Baş, 2014; Çelebi, 2009; Debreli & Demirkan, 2015; Tokoz Goktepe, 2013; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). According to Tokoz Goktepe (2013), when students do not know enough words to tell what they want and have the lack of self-confidence, the fear of making mistake appears. In this study, although the game setting was enjoyable in the class, the efforts to think and speak quickly and accurately might have caused students to feel anxious or stressed in the competitive environment. Demir (2015) states that one of the significant reasons of stimulating students' English speaking anxiety is the competitive environment with better students. Debreli and Demirkan (2015) also suggests that the reason for speaking anxiety among students highly competent in speaking English is the competition to avoid making mistakes and construct excellent sentences. This study examined gifted students. Therefore, they might have had anxiety due to feeling the mood of rivalry to present high speaking performance expected from them.

Aisyah (2018) arrived at a similar conclusion in a study, comparing the effectiveness of Talking Chips, a fun discussion technique, with game-based activities in English speaking lessons, and found that the Talking Chips encouraged students to speak more, whereas game-based activities encouraged them to outperform each other, leading to higher level of anxiety. ZainuddinSabri (2018) also examined the effect of Two Picture Game and Slow Reveal (picture prediction game) on students' speaking anxiety and stated that students using Slow Reveal technique were more successful in speaking activities while Two Picture Game had no priority or effect on reducing students' speaking anxiety. On the other hand, Yalçın and İnceçay (2014), who investigated the effect of spontaneous activities on English language speaking anxiety, concluded that students felt more relaxed and safer in the group activity like Taboo game because group names reduced students' anxiety. Ibrahim and Hamid (2018) also emphasize that game technique affects students' speaking anxiety in a positive way if it is

used correctly. Finally, Hassan (2020) indicates in a study that game technique reduces students' foreign language anxiety.

As regards the students' views and teacher's observations in the study, it can be inferred that the reason why the students continued to experience anxiety despite the relaxing and safe environment during the games could be attributed to the desire of making perfect sentences and achieving perfect listening and comprehension, which they think what is expected from them in such a competition. The students might also have had difficulty in constructing sentences due to the occasional feelings of anxiety and doubt about understanding the word they heard. This probably created "specific anxiety" (Sabuncuoğlu & Kurtoğlu, 2021), and thus decreasing the abilities of understanding what they listened (Berber & Kuru Gönen, 2017; Golchi, 2012) and using metacognitive strategies at that moment of anxiety. According to Hamid and Idrus (2021), the reason for the increase of anxiety in speaking in parallel with listening is that an interruption in listening skill can affect the performance in speaking skill since listening is considered as an input and speaking as an output skill, and this can be explained by the fact that the interruption caused by anxiety during listening activities prevents data process required for the participation in social dialogues, thus reduces the possible responses given in a short and specific time (p. 14). Orakcı (2018b) also asserts that speaking anxiety is perceived as the cause of various phenomena such as students' low performance and success, as well as students' reluctance in participating in speaking lessons. Karagöl and Başbay (2018) found that students who wanted to speak English became reluctant to talk due to the fear of making mistakes during the speaking activity (p. 810). In this respect, it can be argued that the games used in the lessons successfully transformed the students' passive moods into active ones towards listening and speaking English because they enabled students to learn by having fun, but they were insufficient to reduce the feeling of English listening and speaking anxiety.

As a result, considering all the findings obtained from the scales, student interviews, and teacher's research diary as well as the comments made so far, it can be concluded that game technique enabled students to participate in lessons with joy, increased their self-confidence in listening and speaking English, and positively affected the factors that may reduce anxiety such as "willingness to make sentences, not getting bored in lessons, feeling relaxed, thinking quickly, eagerness and effort ", but it was not sufficient by itself to reduce the students' feeling of anxiety about listening and speaking English due to the feeling of failure during the implementation.

Based on the results of this study, the suggestions below can be made for the use of game technique in reducing students' listening and speaking anxiety in English courses:

(1) Game technique should be used in English listening and speaking lessons in order to overcome students' bias about a foreign language and to increase their interest. However, the setting should not be too competitive. Since English listening and speaking skills can cause anxiety during practices, games that encourage cooperation, allow the use of metacognitive strategies and do not create a competitive environment should be prepared for these lessons.

(2) Students tend to answer questions with single words during speaking activities. Inadequate vocabulary leads them to take the easy way out, causes them not to understand what they want to say and leads them to be reluctant and anxious because they believe that they cannot form complete sentences. Therefore, the prepared games should help students learning various new words.

(3) Another issue that makes students worried is "how to begin forming a sentence?". Teachers should show students the unique sentence formation style of a foreign language, even at the most basic level, using enjoyable and modern techniques like games, because sentence structure in a language is like following the steps of a small-scale algorithm, and the algorithm of every language is different from each other.

(4) Gifted students were studied in this study. Since, gifted students were trying to fulfil the high speaking performance expected from them, they may have experienced anxiety due to the competitive atmosphere in the class. For this reason, the effect of the game technique in reducing listening and speaking anxiety of 4th grade primary school students in English can also be examined in future studies with children who are not diagnosed as gifted.

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