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A Turkish Version of Foreign Language Anxiety Scale: Reliability and Validity

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Abstract

It is evident that some factors such as learners' language proficiency levels, cultural elements, differences regarding teaching and learning contexts may affect the results obtained from the English version of Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLAS) (Horwitz, 1986). In addition, the number of factors in the scale administered in different languages does not show a consistency. What is more, the number of those studies on the translated and adopted versions of FLAS is too limited to draw conclusions in terms of English as a foreign language (EFL) context in Turkey. Thus, this study aims to develop a Turkish version of FLAS. Five independent Turkish translations were made and used to develop a single Turkish version. After identifying the discrepancies between English and Turkish versions, the Turkish version was altered accordingly and reached a satisfactory agreement. The FLAS scale in both English and Turkish was administered to 85 EFL learners at advanced level. Results showed that both versions obtained reliability regarding their internal consistency, while the Turkish version seemed to have a higher level of reliability coefficient than the English version. It was also concluded that both versions obtained construct validity. It was recommended that the Turkish version of FLAS is an appropriate instrument to measure the levels of foreign language anxiety among Turkish EFL learners.

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1. Introduction

Foreign language anxiety is one of the significant factors that may affect the language learning process (Aydın, 2008). Thus, it is necessary to measure the level of foreign language anxiety to raise awareness of the sources of foreign language anxiety and how to allay it (Aydın & Zengin, 2008). For this purpose, researchers mainly prefer the FLAS developed by Horwitz (1986) to measure anxiety. However, although English as a global language is taught all over the world, it is not always possible to measure EFL learners' anxiety levels by using a scale in English due to several reasons such as learners' language proficiency levels, cross-cultural issues, cultural elements, differences regarding teaching and learning contexts. Thus, it is necessary to design reliable and valid versions of FLAS in different languages.

The FLAS as a widely-acclaimed anxiety scale was developed as a response to the lack of anxiety scales that could measure foreign language anxiety with precision. Therefore, as a subsequent move to the development of FLAS, Horwitz (1986) aimed to determine whether the anxiety scale is satisfactory in terms of validity and reliability or not. The FLAS, consisting of 33 items, was scored on a 5-point Likert Scale, and was arranged as follows: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *disagree* and *strongly disagree*. The scale was administered to 300 undergraduate foreign language students at the University of Texas. Consequently, the internal consistency, based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient, was measured as .93, and test-retest reliability in 8 weeks was found to be .83 in eight factors.

The FLAS was adapted to be used in different constructs; thus, it was tested by researchers to determine its reliability and validity. For instance, Aida (1994) adapted FLAS for Japanese students to establish both a reliable and valid measuring tool. For this purpose, the FLAS was administered in English and in Japanese. Reliability of the FLAS was measured by internal consistency of .92 using Cronbach's alpha. Then, a factor analysis was run and four factors were found regarding the anxiety of the learners. In another study, Toth (2008) intended to adapt FLAS in the use of Hungarian EFL learners. It was translated and back-translated by multiple translators and was administered to 117 English major and 66 non-English major students. The coefficient of the scale completed by 117 English majors turned out to be .93 and .92 for 66 non-English majors. Furthermore, the study conducted by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012) attempted to develop a Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale to measure EFL public speaking anxiety in Thai students, and some of the items were adopted from FLAS by Horwitz (1986). Minor changes were made in some of the adopted items in the scale and the reliability was measured as .84, using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The factor analysis suggested that there were four factors to be considered. Moreover, Paredes and Muller-Alouf (2000) conducted a study to adapt FLAS developed by Horwitz (1986) for the use of Spanish EFL learners. In the process, 198 students were asked to fill in FLAS in English; then, a Spanish version of the scale that was translated by psychologists and linguists was administered to the same group. According to Cronbach's alpha coefficient, reliability was measured as .89. Subsequently, after several attempts to measure validity, the factor analysis resulted in the four factors as components of foreign language anxiety construct.

The FLAS was also implemented in the Turkish EFL context in a way that the FLAS was administered to Turkish EFL students in both English and Turkish languages. For instance, Bas (2013) administered the FLAS to 374 elementary school students after developing a 30-item anxiety scale in the Turkish language. According to the scale, three factors were determined. Based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the reliability value of the scale was measured as 0.93. In another study, Batumlu and Erden (2007) administered FLAS to 150 Basic English Department Prep Class students attending Yildiz Technical University, Turkey. Following the procedure, the FLAS was adapted into Turkish. The internal consistency for the original scale was measured as 0.93, while it was measured as 0.90 for the Turkish version.

In conclusion, several reasons guided this study. First, it is necessary to obtain data regarding the administrations of the FLAS in various foreign language teaching and learning context, as researchers mainly use the original form of FLAS. However, it is evident that some factors such as learners' language proficiency levels, cross-cultural issues, cultural elements and differences regarding teaching and learning contexts may affect the results obtained from the original scale. Second, while there is a strong consistency regarding the internal consistency of FLAS administered in different languages, the number of factors in the scale greatly varies. Third, in some studies, it is underlined that the original version is adopted. However, it may not be possible to evaluate the validity and reliability of adopted versions. What is more, it may not be possible to compare the adopted and original versions of

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