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TEZ ONAY SAYFASI

Enstitümüzün Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bilim Dalı'nda 201312553008 numaralı Serhat Güzel'in hazırladığı "The Effect of Second Life as a Virtual Language Learning Environment on Speaking Anxiety" konulu YÜKSEK LİSANS tezi ile ilgili TEZ SAVUNMA SINAVI, Lisansüstü Eğitim Öğretim ve Sınav Yönetmeliği uyarınca 01/07/2016 tarihinde yapılmış, sorulan sorulara alınan cevaplar sonunda tezin onayına OY BİRLİĞİ ile karar verilmiştir.

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.07./.08./2016

Enstitü Müdürü

Doç. Dr. Halil İbrahim ŞAHİN

ÖZET

SANAL BİR DİL ÖĞRENME ORTAMI OLARAK SECOND LIFE'IN KONUŞMA KAYGISI ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

GÜZEL, Serhat

Yüksek Lisans, Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bilim Dalı

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Sanal bir dil öğrenme ortamı olarak Second Life'ın İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenenlerin yabancı dil konuşma kaygısı ve konuşma becerileri üzerindeki etkilerini anlatan çalışmaların sayısı oldukça azdır. Ayrıca, ilgili alanyazın, Türkiye'deki yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretimine ışık tutması bağlamında yetersizdir. Bu sebeple, bu deneysel çalışma Second Life'ın yabancı dil konuşma kaygısı ve konuşma başarısı üzerindeki etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada, 40 öğrenciye birer arka plan anketi ve kaygı ölçekleri uygulanmıştır. Katılımcılar deney grubu ve control grubu olarak ikiye ayrılmışlardır. Ek olarak, ön test ve son test şeklinde iki adımdan oluşmak üzere her öğrenci konuşma düzeylerini ölçmek amaçlı olarak mülakatlara çağrılmıştır. Bulgulara göre, konuşma kaygısı ve konuşma becerisi ile ilişkili olarak Second Life üzerinde gerçekleştirilen konuşma dersleri ve geleneksel konuşma aktivitelerinin etkileri arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmadığı tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca, bu sonuçlara dayanarak Second Life'ın konuşma dersinde kullanımının belli bir oranı geçmemesi gerektiği önerilmektedir. Bunun nedeni, Second Life'ın konuşma kaygısı için kusursuz bir çözüm sağlamadığı bulgusuna erişilmiş olmasıdır. Buna ek olarak, öğretmenlerin konuşma derslerinde Second Life'ı geleneksel yöntemlere yardımcı olacak ek kaynak şeklinde kullanmaları önerilmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce; Second Life; konuşma kaygısı; konuşma; başarı

ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF SECOND LIFE AS A VIRTUAL LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ON SPEAKING ANXIETY

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There is a lack of research on the effects of SL as a virtual language learning environment on speaking anxiety and speaking achievement among EFL learners. In addition, related literature is quite insufficient in terms of providing insight about Turkish EFL context. Therefore, this experimental study aims to examine the effects of the use of SL on speaking anxiety and achievement. In the study, a background questionnaire and an anxiety scale were administered to 44 EFL learners. Moreover, participants were called on for interviews to measure their speaking achievement levels in two steps as pre-test and post-test, and participants were divided into two groups as control group and experimental group. As a result, findings suggest that there is no significant correlation between speaking activities that take place in traditional settings and SL environment concerning speaking anxiety levels and speaking achievement. It is recommended that the extent to use SL should be moderated during speaking practice because SL does not offer a flawless solution to speaking anxiety, and teachers should be aware that the use of alternative environments as SL should be adjusted appropriately in a way that it can serve as an additional contribution to traditional speaking activities.

Key words: English as a foreign language; Second Life; speaking anxiety; speaking; achievement

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my dearest B. who has made me a better person with her irreplaceable presence.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASR	:	Automated Speech Recognition
CALL	:	Computer Assisted Language Learning
CLT	:	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	:	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	:	English Language Teaching
ESL	:	English as Second Language
FL	:	Foreign Language
FLA	:	Foreign Language Anxiety
FLCAS	:	Foreign Language Anxiety Scale
FNE	:	Fear of Negative Evaluation
L1	:	First Language
LCRTS	:	Language Class Risk-Taking Scale
LCSS	:	Language Class Sociability Scale
MUVE	:	Multi-User Virtual Environment
SA	:	Speaking Anxiety
SGS	:	Speaking Grading Scale
SL	:	Second Life
SLLS	:	Survey on Language Learning Scale
SPSS	:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SR-CDS	:	Self-Rating Can-Do Scale
SR-CL	:	Self-Rating for the Current Level of Study
SR-EPE	:	Self-Rating Perception by the English
TOEFL	:	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UCS	:	Unwillingness to Communicate Scale
ZPD	:	Zone of Proximal Development

1.

INTRODUCTION

This section aims to provide the rationale behind the study in an orderly way. First, background of the study is presented in a way that problems related to the study are listed from a general to specific perspective. Second, purpose and significance of the study are discussed. Third, research questions and experimental procedures of the study such as participants, tools, data collections, and data analysis are introduced. Last, organization of the study, limitations, and some definitions are presented.

1.1. Background of the Study

This section presents the background for the study. The study is motivated by three main problems as follows: Problems in Turkish EFL context, problems in relation to speaking in Turkish EFL context and problems related to anxiety. Sections below discuss these problems in details, and provide information on how these problems form a background for the study.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Speaking as a productive language skill is regarded as an important element in learning a foreign language. However, in spite of the respect paid to speaking, it is mostly neglected during language learning process due to its challenging nature (Nazara, 2011). In addition, speaking skill is generally not preferred as the other skills since it is hard for teachers to assess learners while they are speaking (Egan, 1999). Instead of dealing with challenging features of speaking skill, teachers simply prefer to focus more on structural aspects of language while teaching English (Bahrani & Solatani, 2012).

As for the problems concerning speaking, Baleghizadeh and Shahri (2014) sugget that speaking is a sustenance for other language skills, and it must be equally scattered in language learning process. In addition, language learning is

regarded as the ability to communicate in target language; therefore, communicative objectives should be signified more effectively (Richard, 1983). Furthermore, Hu (2010) suggests that communicative competence is the main element in language learning, and grammatical and / or lexical competence that teachers focus more on can be achieved through speaking practice. However, both teachers and learners seem to be avoiding speaking during language learning by using only brief spoken patterns (Nazari, 2007). The reason for the avoidance to speak English can stem from some factors as follows: inability to appreciate the importance of communicative language learning / teaching, challenging nature of speaking, hardships faced during assessing speaking performance, lack of exact definitions concerning CLT, and foreign language speaking anxiety (Aydin, 2013a; Aydin & Guzel, 2014; Egan, 1999; Hu, 2010; Lochland, 2013; Nazari, 2007).

1.2.1. Problems in Turkish EFL Context

Context of Turkish EFL shows many similarities to global context in terms of problems faced by EFL teachers and learners. These problems can basically be listed as motivational problems, pedagogical problems, negative attitudes towards language learning processes and anxiety-related problems. These problems are merely reflections of crowded classrooms, insufficient materials in EFL classrooms, lack of appropriate counselling concerning the role of English language in students' lives and the excessive use of native language in EFL classrooms. On the other hand, in the Turkish EFL settings, learners' performances are mostly impaired by the lack of confidence and motivation in language learning; that is, lack of confidence and motivation basically triggers anxiety-related issues. According to Aydin (2013b), anxiety is a very common problem among Turkish EFL learners when it comes to language performance such as writing and speaking. For this reason, instead of pushing the boundaries, both teachers and learners avoid using productive skills during language learning.

1.2.2. Problems in Relation to Speaking in the Turkish EFL Learning Context

In Turkish EFL context, the most common problems encountered during language learning are the issues that stem from the use of productive skills such as writing and speaking. Since speaking as a productive skill is mostly regarded as a challenging skill, EFL learners face many challenges when they are expected to perform orally in EFL classrooms (Subası, 2010). For teachers, speaking is

considered as a skill which is hard to assess and control, and it is quite time-consuming in terms of preparing content for lessons. For learners, on the other hand, speaking is not desirable because it is challenging to express oneself in spoken form, and it is hard to grasp structural components during speaking. Aydin and Guzel (2014) suggest that on the verge of oral performance, learners hesitate and feel anxious about speaking. Accordingly, as Subasi (2010) suggested, anxiety problem faced during oral performance is triggered by factors such as fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and anxiety towards grading, namely test anxiety. Therefore, it can be claimed that speaking is one of the most problematic areas in language learning, and it causes anxiety-related problems for learners, which negatively affects the flow of language learning process.

1.2.3. Problems Caused by Anxiety

As mentioned above, both international and Turkish EFL learners suffer from problems caused by speaking as a productive skill. One of the most common problem triggered by speaking skill is regarded as anxiety (Aydin, 2008; Aydin & Guzel, 2014; Dalkilic, 2001; Subasi, 2010). As Subasi (2010) suggests, learners endure many hardships during oral performance such as sweatiness, shaking-knees, nervousness and loss of memory. Due to anxiety-related reasons, learners' speaking performances decrease and negatively affected. In other words, language anxiety is a significant variable in language learning, and language achievement is correlated with anxiety (Batumlu & Erden, 2007; Dalkilic, 2001). Anxiety-related problems such as nervousness, sweating, shaking-knees, and cognitive failures during oral performance can be related to factors such as lack of preparation, communication apprehension, test anxiety, teacher corrections, fear of negative evaluation, and teacher questions (Aydin, 2008). Therefore, in the light of aforementioned insight, it can be deduced that anxiety is a quite serious problem that needs to be eliminated form language learning context in a moderate way.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study has two purposes to achieve in accordance with the issues given above. First, it aims to investigate the level of speaking achievement in Turkish EFL learning context, and it attempts to determine if SL has an effect on EFL learners' speaking achievements. Second, the study aims at measuring the anxiety levels of Turkish EFL learners in speaking and have an insight on the circumstance by

attempting to determine the correlation between traditional speaking activities and SL speaking activities in relation to speaking anxiety.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This sections provides reasons to support the significance of the study. The study can be considered as significant due to several reasons. First, the study makes a considerable contribution to related literature since it provides data on the effects of the use of SL as a virtual language learning environment on speaking anxiety. Second, the study provides additional data to related literature concerning Turkish EFL context, since there is a lack of research on the effect of SL on speaking anxiety in related area. Third, in addition to speaking anxiety, the study contributes to the literature in terms of the effect of SL on speaking achievement. Finally, the study can be regarded as significant due to its contributions to literature in terms of practical recommendations for teachers, learners, curriculum developers, material writers, and policy makers.

1.5. Research Questions

In the light of issues discussed above, language learning context has many problems concerning learners, teachers, methodologies, and learning environments. In addition to these problems, speaking skill is regarded as a significant problematic area in language learning due to its challenging nature. In other words, speaking causes many problems for both learners and teachers in language learning process in relation to anxiety, which negatively affects the quality of language learning process and learners' speaking achievements. Therefore, it is evident that impact of anxiety as a problematic factor in language learning needs to be eliminated as much as possible. Considering these problems, this study is based on two research questions:

  a. Does SL as a virtual language learning environment affect speaking achievement?
  b. Does SL as a virtual language learning environment have any effect on speaking anxiety?

1.6. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to 44 EFL learners in the ELT Department of Education Faculty of Balikesir University. Second, the study is limited to an experimental

research design which consists of pre-tests, post-tests, an experimental group and a control group. Additionally, assignments to both groups are strictly in random. Third, the focus of the research is confined to the dependent variables, EFL speaking achievement and speaking anxiety. Furthermore, the interviews used for measuring speaking achievement are limited to the speaking topics designed for TOEFL, and for the measurement tool is limited to the Speaking Grading Scale (SGS) developed by Kanatlar (2005). Moreover, the data collection procedure concerning EFL speaking anxiety is limited to Survey on Language Learning Scale (SLLS) developed by Liu and Jackson (2013).

1.7. Definitions

Academic Achievement: The overall level of a student's scores based on examination or assessment of sorts.

Autonomous learning: Type of learning process in which learners take charge of their own learning.

Collaborative learning: A type of learning process in which two or more individuals work in harmony in a way that they benefit from one another in terms of knowledge and experience.

Comprehensible input: A hypothesis claiming that learners acquire language best when they are given sufficient amount of language items providing that they are appropriate.

Communicative Language Teaching: An approach which claims that communication and interaction are main priorities in language teaching.

Constructivism: Theory in which learners establish the meaning based on the relationship between their prior knowledge and new information.

English as a Foreign Language: The use or study of English in countries where English is not among one of the official languages.

English Language Teaching: The practice and theory of teaching English.

Foreign language anxiety: A state of anxiety when facing performance assessment in language learning process.

Multi-user virtual environment: A computer-based simulated environment with a population of online users who use avatars that can interact with each other.

Productive skills: Skills that require learners to produce language items such as speaking and writing.

Receptive skills: Skills that do not require learners to produce language items but successfully receive and process them, such as listening and reading.

Self-efficacy: A person's belief about his / her own capacity to learn.

Speaking Anxiety: The combination of feelings such as uneasiness, nervousness, and shakiness one experiences when they are required to speak in front of other people.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences: Computer software used for statistical analysis.

Student Selection and Placement Center: The official institution responsible for administering examinations for attending universities in Turkey.

Task-based learning: An approach which highlights the importance of meaningful tasks given by using the target language.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): Examination for measuring proficiency levels of non-native English learners who aim to attend to the U.S. universities.

Virtual world: A computerized and digitally designed environment in which online users can interact and exist virtually.

2.

RELATED LITERATURE

In this section, related literature is presented to form a basis for the study at hand. First, a theoretical framework is set to base the study on by providing pedagogical theories used in learning context. Then, related literature is presented from a broad perspective to subject-specific view to provide insight to the study.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Introduction

This section briefly presents the theoretical background of the study. For this purpose, it basically attempts to put what is presented into ground in educational and EFL context, carefully categorizing issues related to the effect of Second Life as a virtual language learning environment on speaking anxiety. First, the role of speaking in EFL context is discussed in connection with learning theories. Second, various types speaking manifests itself is presented in the light of some studies. Third, communication and the role of speaking as a language skill in communication are basically examined, the importance of comprehensible input, the place of The Need Hypothesis, Affective Filter Hypothesis are mentioned. Fourth, anxiety as an entity is analyzed in various segments as foreign language anxiety, speaking anxiety, foreign language anxiety. Fifth, speaking anxiety is redefined in connection with learning environment, thus Second Life as a new language learning environment in EFL context is introduced by grounding it with current learning theories.

2.1.2. The Role of Speaking in EFL Learning

Speaking skill is directly related to the language learners' language competence and performance. Thus, in order to emphasize the place of speaking in an EFL context, it is necessary to bring light onto the terms of *competence* and *performance*, relating to with input and output. To begin with, Chomsky (1965) focuses on the concept of an ideal *speaker-listener* which is associated with the

individual in a completely homogeneous speech-community. The *speaker-listener* mentioned by Chomsky (1965) is completely well-aware of the language, and has a deep knowledge about it. In addition, the individual referred to as speaker-listener is completely independent from any external influence in terms of putting the knowledge of the language in performance. Therefore, it is possible to differentiate between the two terms competence and performance. Briefly, competence is referred to as the speaker-listener's capacity of the language, and performance, on the other hand, is the extent to which the speaker-listener puts the linguistic performance into practice. According to Chomsky (1965) and Nazari (2007), competence of the individual is shaped by language input which is, in this case, what the speaker-listener hears. Input is simply the spoken or written language items received by the individual, which is an indispensable source of language structures (Yule, 2006). Output is, on the other hand, the language items produced by the individual verbally or non-verbally (Ellis, 2012). Since input and output are both basically vital components for the understanding of the dynamics of language performance of the individual, it is also necessary to comprehend their roles in target language speaking.

In order to discuss the terms *input* and *output* in regard to speaking in the target language, it is necessary to understand what they stand for in the language learning context. Initially, it is acknowledged that the use of spoken language has been validated as the source of language input in language classrooms (Cook, 2001; Swain, 2000). Yule (2006) suggests that language production of the language learner develops through the use of *negotiated input* which is simply the input-output flow that takes place between at least two speakers. In other words, language learners are more likely to elevate their language skills by being the part of both producing output and receiving input. Therefore, speaking as an interactional aspect plays an important role in forming the language competence level. Speaking in the target language formed with the combination of input-output takes on different characteristics depending on whether the language is acquired or learned.

The nature of language development in EFL speaking, ESL speaking and speaking in L1 have undoubtedly different characteristics. These different characteristics stem mainly from the linguistic background of the EFL, ESL, and L1 speakers. Since ESL and L1 speaking are based on an acquired language, it is acknowledged that EFL speakers are very unlikely to reach the language competence of a language acquirer. In other words, speaking performances of those who are L1 and / or ESL speakers and those who speak English as a foreign language are not equal in quality (Ellis, 2012; Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2014;

Lightbrown & Spada, 2011; Yule, 2006). According to Yule (2006), one of the main reasons for this performance gap is that EFL speakers share an institutionalized language learning background. However, speakers who acquired the target language in an appropriate environment starting from a convenient age tend to approach speaking the language more intuitively. Therefore, it can be inferred that for those who acquired the language, the gap between competence and performance is not as great as for those who are EFL speakers. Thus, it is possible to reveal that EFL learners are required to put more effort on language production in order to overcome the gap between their language competence and performance since their language production is not based on intuitive responses as in language acquisition. That is why, based on the aforementioned reasons, speaking practice necessitates one to pay more attention.

Based on the information noted above, it is possible to list several reasons for why speaking is important in EFL learning. First, as Kurudayioglu (2011) suggests, speaking has an essential place in language learners' performance both individually and socially since it is an indispensable tool for human communication on a daily basis. Second, it is claimed that language competence challenges the learners in productive skills. Thus, language mastery requires a communicative competence rather than sole language literacy (Diyyab et al., 2013). Third, as Ellis (2012) asserts, interaction is the key element in a language classroom, and learning takes place when the meanings and unclear points are discussed by using a collective interaction in the classroom. Fourth, speaking the language is much more valuable in terms of communication since it is pointed out that gaining grammatical and structural competence can be achieved by mastering the speaking skill (Ellis, 2012). In this context, Wardhaugh (2006) claims that speakers of one language tend to possess grammatical structure of the language automatically. Therefore, it can be concluded that communication established with oral interaction skills in the target language greatly contributes to the development of other language skills.

2.1.2.1. Types of Oral Interactions

Oral interactions take place in various ways in a language speaker's life. One of the most well-coordinated classifications about the types of oral interactions is demonstrated in Bygate's (1987) model of oral interactions. Bygate (1987) divides oral interactions into two categories according to their functions as information routines and interaction routines, which suggests that oral production is centered around acquiring and sharing information, and interacting with people around on a daily basis. Bygate's model is presented as follows:

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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │  Oral Interactions  │
                        └─────────────────────┘
     ┌──────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
     │ Information Routines  │              │  Interaction Routines │
     └──────────────────────┘              └──────────────────────┘
```

Expository	Evaluative	Service	Social
-Description -Comparison -Decision	-Explanation -Justification -Prediction -Decision	-Job interview -Making reservations -Enrolling in school	-Dinner party -Coffee break -Standing in line -Chatting over the internet
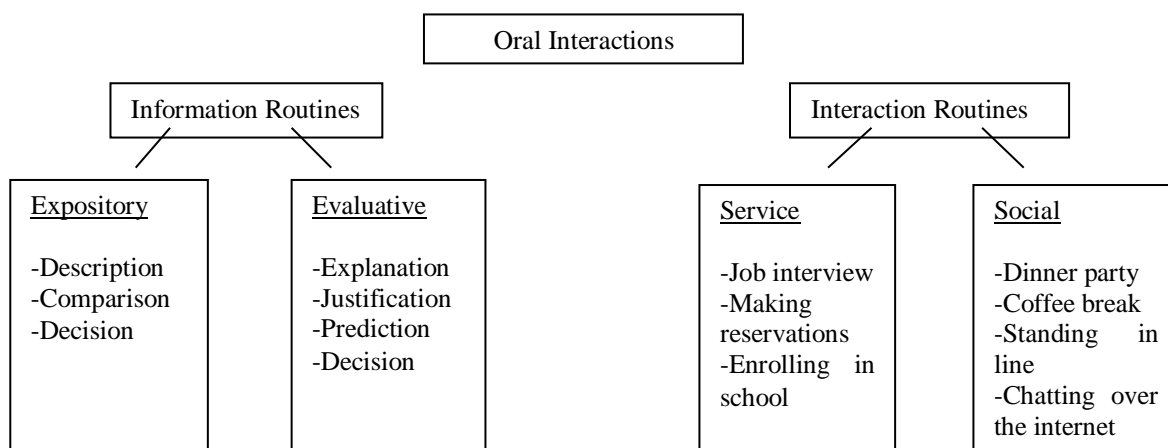
Figure 1. Bygate's Oral Interaction Strategies

Learner interaction is an issue which has been argued by many researchers for many years since it is referred to as a beneficial action to take for learning (Chavez, 2009). In the EFL context, learning a foreign language with the help of interaction is emphasized as a response for some problematic areas in foreign language learning. As Diyyab et al. (2013) suggest that one of the most noteworthy defects of traditional language teaching is instructors' tendency to put an emphasis on grammatical aspects of the target language, eliminating interactive skills as speaking and listening. Therefore, in time, the nature of language teaching has started to evolve into a character which takes language as an interactional tool, which suggests that speaking skill constitutes a tremendous part in communicating in the target language.

2.1.2.2. The Role of Speaking in Communication

Communication is possible in many ways for the individuals for there are various actions that can lead to a mutual understanding and exchange of messages between two or more parties. Given that a wide range of actions conveyed by the individuals in a social context can be interpreted as messages, it is reasonable to deduce that speaking is the most common means to communicate. Cook (2001) suggests that speaking a language, other than forming the center of human life, is a way to express feelings, and to achieve many goals in life. As Wardhaugh (2006) asserts, the communication process that takes place between two individuals create the existence of the code which is referred to as the language. The use of verbal messages in the exchange of information is the most common way in an individual's

daily routine. Hence, the process of informational exchange takes place in association with listening and perceiving the message, and consequently giving the contextual, anticipated response which is frequently verbal. Inseparable in nature, verbal and non-verbal acts form the very dynamics of a communication, and it is evident that neither one is expected to function solely on its own (Wigham & Chanier, 2013). Nevertheless, it is suggested that speaking as a verbal activity differs from non-verbal activities due to its being conscious, voluntary and purposeful (Melser, 2009). Unlike speaking, non-verbal actions for communicating, in many cases, are parts of mechanical behaviors that go along with the individual's speaking sequences subconsciously. It can be concluded that speaking is a vital component of communication, therefore, a necessity for learning a language. However, in order to achieve mastery in the target language, spoken form of the language is introduced as a language input for the language learners to grasp the linguistic structure of the language, which signifies the role of comprehensible input.

2.1.2.3. The Importance of Comprehensible Input

It is acknowledged that learning a language whether or not it is the first language is more than imitating the sample language, and it is pointed that acquiring or learning a language requires several complex phases to go through. For this reason, scholars have been constantly attempting to schematize these complex-in-nature processes in an intelligible way. As aforementioned above, language contact starting with first language acquisition emerges as somewhat predictable language acquisition or language learning patterns to take into consideration. Chomsky (1965), as aforementioned above, regards the individual who is subjected to a language as speaker-listener. Therefore, it can be induced that language input plays an important role in forming a competence in language, and competence and performance are deeply interrelated with input and output. In addition, it can be pointed out that a period of receiving language input is necessary in order to commence language production stage. According to Krashen (1985) and Long (1983), experiencing the language production is not possible to rush unless the individual goes through certain stages of language input reception.

It is also widely acknowledged that a certain time period for listening which is often referred as silent period is inevitable for the language production to take place. As Krashen (1985) suggests a silent period during which the learners are only present in order to accumulate authentic items from the target language is experienced. During this unproductive and highly passive phase, the language learner does not show any sign for the instructors to assume whether there is a

progress of any type at all. Krashen (as cited in Ellis, 2012) suggests in his Input Hypothesis that learners are ready for language production only when they receive a sufficient amount of input from the speaker of the target language. That is, the natural use of a language provides an unlimited source of grammatical knowledge for the listener. In the critical phase referred as silent period, language learner who is claimed to be passive and undesirable at the moment is in fact busy with decoding language presented to her. This decoding process gives the learners an indispensable chance for internalizing grammar rules of the target language. In addition, Long (1983) states that it is necessary to create a flow of exposure-induced language input in order for the language learner to internalize target language rules. However, providing input does not necessarily prove helpful unless it is comprehensible and serves a purpose. The reason for this is that it is crucial to determine in what ways the learner language is to be shaped so that learners can maximize their understanding of the target language. Considering that comprehensible input serves as a model for the language learners to benefit from in their future use of target language performance. This modeling behavior towards target language bears resemblances with Vygotskian approach to learning since Vygotsky (1978) suggested that learning takes place thanks to social help. Thus, it is suggested that language production is inevitable on condition that a sufficient amount of comprehensible input presented thanks to social help is provided, which proves the importance and dominance of comprehensible input.

2.1.2.4. The Need Hypothesis

The Need Hypothesis claims that the production stage only starts when the need to communicate in the target language arises. However, Krashen (1998) suggests that it is not always necessarily required that the acquirers start language production solely based on the need to communicate. The need for communication only serves as an aid in the process of language production, and the main element required is comprehensible input. Notwithstanding Krashen's (1985) solid language acquisition hypotheses, it is claimed that, in most cases, it is challenging to transfer these hypotheses from language acquisition context into a language learning environment. Payne (2011) complains that *i+1* in Krashen's input hypothesis creates confusion in terms of its application in language teaching. Thus, according to Payne (2011), it is hard to differentiate learners' received input quality and their contribution to their input reception processes. Moreover, in the light of learners' relationship with comprehensible input, it can be implied that it is quite difficult to determine a stable course of action for language teaching/learning process. Knowing that Krashen

(1985) and Long (1983) only emphasize the language acquisition process rather than language learning underlines that the acquisition hypotheses are only partially compatible with the needs of a language teaching/learning environment; that is, instructors and language learners cannot be taken into consideration by taking acquisition process as reference.

2.1.2.5.   Affective Filter Hypothesis

Emotional and mental elements play a key role in language acquisition process, and these elements stemming from feelings are referred to as *affective states*. Krashen (1982) claims that certain types of affective variables are connected with the success rate in second language acquisition. They are grouped in three categories as *motivation*, *self-confidence*, and *anxiety*. Krashen (1982) suggests that an optimal environment where negative affective elements are eliminated must be provided since those who attempt to acquire a second language will not be able to receive sufficient amounts of language input no matter how comprehensible it is. Thus, when motivation, self-confidence and anxiety are not at a desired level, language acquisition is not expected to take place ideally. Although it seems that Krashen (1982) presents Affective Filter Hypothesis as interrelated with second language acquisition process, Lin (2008) posits that affective states play a similar role in a language learning classroom, and suggests that affective barriers set by language learners, just as Krashen (1982) underlines, can be avoided by omitting the anxiety-mongering elements in the foreign language learning classroom. In brief, Affective Filter Hypothesis explains the role of the psychological aspects of language acquisition environment, and the steps to be taken in the way of increasing the quality of language acquisition. As a final note, it is crucial to state that Affective Filter Hypothesis is associated with the process of second language acquisition rather that foreign language learning process. Thus, affective filter does not necessarily function similarly in foreign language learning context, and foreign language anxiety which will be explained in the next section has rather different characteristics.

2.1.3. Foreign Language Anxiety

Scovel (1978) defines anxiety as an affective state that is associated with a feeling of distress, uneasiness, loss of control, and negative anticipations caused by an incoming tense situation. Basically, it emerges as a performance-hindering mental and emotional state for the individuals that attempt to achieve a certain task. While Scovel (1978) mentions the distinction of two types of anxiety as trait and

state anxiety, Horwitz (2010) presents that anxiety as an affective state is classified into three types as follows: *trait anxiety*, *state anxiety*, and *situation-specific anxiety*. Scovel (1978) explains trait anxiety as the personal tendency to feel anxious in various stress-evoking situations. Spielberger (1983, as cited in Aydin, 2009) state anxiety is the type of tension felt towards certain situation in a certain time period. In addition, Ellis (cited in Aydin, 2009) defines situation-specific anxiety as the feeling of uneasiness, distress and anxiety emerging only in specific circumstances.

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is a type of anxiety specifically generated in the environment of language learning classrooms due to language learning environments' unique anxiety-provoking nature. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) suggest that FLA is associated with unique and specific elements that take place in foreign language classrooms as poor performance, negative peer responses, and anxiety related to evaluation. Therefore, FLA, as Horwitz (2010) deduces, is classified as a situation-specific anxiety, and has the same characteristics of the anxiety that stems from test anxiety or anxiety of public speech.

2.1.3.1.   Types of Foreign Language Anxiety

Horwitz et al. (1986) simplify learners' complex anxious states based on their behaviors, and present them in a way that they categorize the anxious experiences faced by learners. The categorization brings forth three types of anxiety emerging in foreign language classrooms as follows: *communication apprehension*, *test anxiety*, and *fear of negative evaluation*.

2.1.3.1.1.   Communication Apprehension

Horwitz et al. (1986) explain communication apprehension as the anxious mental state caused by the concern that communication in the target language will abruptly cease due to anxiety reasons. Similarly, Aydin (2008) pinpoints that communication apprehension occurs in foreign language learning environments frequently, since it is observed that learners as individuals have a wide range of topics and plenty of thoughts to reflect. However, the incapacity in communicating in the target language limits the learners, which unavoidably causes communication apprehension. In this sense, Mak (2011) proposes that inappropriateness of *wait time* in speaking practices in a language learning classroom is a potential reason for communication apprehension. In short, communication apprehension is generally triggered by the fear that communication in the target language will not be in desired

quality or the thought that the true potential cannot be reflected through the conversation.

2.1.3.1.2. Fear of Negative Evaluation

Among the ways foreign language anxiety manifests itself, foreign language learners' fear of negative evaluation is one of the most significant issues in EFL learning context (Aydin, 2008). According to Horwitz et al. (1986), fear of negative evaluation is basically the feeling of uneasiness that stems from other people's comments on language learners' language performance. As Matsuda and Gobel (2004) claim, the fear that is caused by the possibility of negative criticism from others is one of the most common types of anxiety. Moreover, Gkonou (2011) claims that one of the reasons why language learners develop a fear of negative evaluation is that they compare their own performances to their peers' performances in the competitive nature of the classroom. Thus, this evokes the feeling of insufficiency in language performance. In addition, learners' desire to leave a good social impression on their peers is yet another reason for developing a fear of negative evaluation. In brief, it can be acknowledged that fear of negative evaluation is quite a common occurrence in language learning classrooms, mainly caused by the feeling of insufficiency in performance, concern for others' opinion, and grading.

2.1.3.1.3. Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is referred to as the anxious state of mind in fear of poor foreign language performance when language skills are scored by an authority figure (Horwitz et al., 1986). In the broadest perspective, as Zeidner (1998) states, tests are valuable tools for gathering reliable and objective data in order to detect any kind of progress or regression in performance, which consequently provides opportunity to counsel, organize and classify the components of learning progress. However, as Zeidner (1998) pinpoints, the importance given to tests by instructors inevitably leads to anxious state of mind for the individuals whose performances are measured. In the EFL context, tests are commonly used as a means of measuring language skills of the learners such as grammar, reading comprehension and listening. Therefore, language learners develop tendency to overrate the impact of the tests on their lives. As Subasi (2010) highlights, test anxiety mainly stems from

learners' fear of failure in academic settings. In other words, scoring the target language performance of learners forms an environment in which individual actions are compared, and the images of success and failure emerge. Inevitably, for the foreign language learners, getting relatively lower scores and failing is meaningfully equal to failing in learning the foreign language. Conclusively, tests are regarded as an indispensable tool for measuring success levels of language learners and for the evaluation of the learning process; however, it is acknowledged that tests also put considerable amounts of pressure on learners in a way that they fail to reflect their potential language performance.

2.1.3.2. Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety (SA) can be described as the situation driven by worry, uneasiness, and panic when it comes to expressing oneself orally. However, Horwitz et al. (1986) rename speaking anxiety as communication apprehension since the origin of anxiety stems from the situation in which the individuals fear they might not be fully understood, or might not be able to reflect their true potential. Therefore, it can be assumed that SA stems from the feeling of uncertainty in the face of oral communication. In the foreign language learning context, however, SA is defined as a series of worry developed toward communicating in target language, generally in the presence of an audience. In the light of these concerns, Mak (2011) reveals that oral performance is regarded as the main reason behind anxiety in language classrooms. Liu and Jackson (2008) state that SA is caused by problems in one's self-esteem, communicative competence and social involvement. In short, SA is referred to as one of the main obstacles in the way of communicating in target language since it drastically deteriorates the quality of oral performance of language learners.

2.1.3.3. Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

Although it is underlined that foreign language learning is an anxiety-mongering process which mostly results with unwanted outcomes for both teachers and learners, speaking has its own specific characteristics that make foreign language learners feel uneasy, stressed-out and anxious (Gkonou, 2013; Horwitz et al., 1986; Subasi, 2010). Since speaking requires a physical involvement, unlike other skills, it can cause negative physical outcomes such as nausea, sweating, weak knees, and dry mouth (Boyce et al., 2007). As Gkonou (2013) claims, both communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are the outcomes of

difficulties faced by language learners when speaking in foreign language classrooms. Horwitz et al. (1986) deduct that speaking, along with listening, is a stressful skill for language learners since it is completely dependent on one's individual cognitive process. That is why, speaking in a foreign language is different than other skills on the basis that the individual cannot, in any way, resort to anything other than her cognitive organization in mind. Therefore, prepared or not, there is always the risk of drifting apart from the focus, which would lead the individual to fear and anxiety, as Subasi (2010) infers that learners' control on cognitive performance declines in the process of speaking in a foreign language. In conclusion, speaking as an anxiety-provoking language skill is considered to cause a critical decrease in language performance of learners, consuming the concentration level, cognitive vigilance during the speech.

2.1.3.4. Speaking Anxiety and Learning Environment

As mentioned before, it is acknowledged that SA is deeply associated with learning environment since anxiety for oral communication is driven by specific elements in foreign language classrooms such as poor performance, fear of negative evaluation, peers' opinions, communication apprehension and learners' concern for social impression (Liu & Jackson, 2008; Mak, 2011). That is why, certain improvements are to be made regarding the quality of language learning environment, and teachers are expected to tread carefully when it comes to initiating language learning process. Mercer (2011) suggests that language learners push teachers to discover different language learning environments. In other words, as Bell (2009) mentions, new learning environments are quite necessary for the learning process since they bring forth new and more desirable behaviors to the learners. Moreover, Mercer (2011) points out that these behaviors help learners to adjust themselves to new experiences that come along with learning experiences outside the traditional context. Therefore, as a conclusion, it can be stated that new language learning environments can be introduced to language learning practices since it is essential to draw the learners out of the conventional surroundings and to rid the problem caused by foreign language speaking anxiety.

Virtual environments stand out as valuable tools as they provide new horizons for language learning. For instance, Bell (2009) asserts that the notion that the use of three dimensional virtual spaces is quite common in modern world inevitably merges educational activities with the computerized systems. Therefore, it can be

assumed that the use of computers and virtual realities that come with them have gradually been integrated with educational activities. Moreover, Couto (2010) signifies that using virtual environments that are the extensions of computer supported language learning increases learners' features such as self-regulation, autonomy, collaboration and self-efficacy. Among the most significant virtual language learning environments, virtual realities such as Second Life and Ragnarok, Everquest II where learners can get free of physical existence are considered as quite noteworthy (Aydin, 2013b; Balcikanli, 2012; Bell, 2009; Couto, 2010; Johnson, 2006). In addition, it can be noted that introduction of virtual worlds as new learning environments is a promising means of decreasing SA among language learners (Aydin, 2013b; Balcikanli, 2012; Couto, 2010; Guzel & Aydin, 2014), because learners are offered an experience beyond physical boundaries of the real world (Johnson, 2006). In conclusion, it can be stated that although SA poses a great threat to language learning process, it is possible to diminish the level of anxiety faced by learners with the introduction of new language learning environments, and the idea of using virtual worlds as learning environments is considered as one of the most intriguing attempts to improve language learning.

2.1.4. Second Life

SL is a 3D virtual world which was developed by Linden Labs in 2003. SL offers users to exist in a virtual world by creating avatars to represent them, and it is possible to perform many actions that are common in real life. It basically functions as social network software which enables sharing multimedia items in addition to its MUVE characteristics. Users are able to experience life-like situations such as travelling, chatting, playing games, learning and attending academic activities in a three dimensional, well-designed virtual environment. Moreover, it is possible to hide identities, alter appearances and voices in order to stay anonymous. Last but not least, SL is an environment which allows users to be completely free to do almost anything on its virtual terrain. Thus, it is widely recognized as a place where worries of real life are left behind, and it is designed for the comfort of its users enabling them to own possessions, and personal spaces. That is the reason why SL has been gradually becoming popular as an alternative platform for real-life situations such as training, education and orienteering due to its relaxing and risk-free features. In brief, SL is an appealing virtual environment that enables its residents to achieve many endeavors that are present in real life, which makes SL quite open to integration with various fields as education, foreign language learning.

2.1.4.1.   The Use of Second Life in the FL Context

SL is regarded as an intriguing platform for EFL learning for the reason that it is quite promising considering its availability for educational contexts and that it offers a great potential for EFL learners' language practice (Aydin, 2013b; Balcikanli, 2012; Bradshaw, 2006; Couto, 2010; Inman, Wright & Hartman, 2010; Johnson, 2006; Macedo & Morgado, 2009). In a narrower scope, SL stands out as the most popular virtual world that is integrated with language learning events as a language learning tool and environment. It is also claimed that SL is useful language learning tool for it has a great educational potential lowering the stressful nature of language performance (Aydin, 2013b; Balcikanli 2012; Couto, 2010). Moreover, it is evident that SL addresses all the basic language skills; that is, learners can engage with listening and reading activities, whereas it is possible to exploit SL in terms of productive skills, namely writing and speaking. In an additional note, it is possible to assert that SL can be effective, both overtly and covertly, in flourishing grammar and vocabulary limits of the learners. To exemplify the effect of SL on aforementioned language skills, it can be highlighted that SL provides learners with real-time conversation on its voice chat feature, which enables them to hear the language and produce voiced reactions to other users. Moreover, written chat and surroundings on SL urges users to read and write, which at the same time requires them to involve their grammar and vocabulary competence in the process. Considering SL's thought-provoking nature and great potential in EFL learning context, it is quite befitting to claim that it needs clarification on what functions SL has as a language learning and speaking practice tool in EFL speaking classes.

2.1.4.2.   Second Life and EFL Speaking

SL makes numerous contributions to EFL speaking, offering a valuable source of information for the sake of promoting EFL speaking skills of the language learners. Most importantly, it serves as a brand new language learning environment where language learners are offered a chance to avoid the psychological challenges faced in conventional language learning classrooms. As Couto (2010) and Aydin (2013) suggest, SL is a promising language practice tool that obliterates negative affective states such as fear of negative evaluation and anxiety of the learners while performing in English. Furthermore, Balcikanli (2012) maintains that, in addition to its anxiety-lowering nature, SL actually promotes interaction among language learners. Johnson (2006) rationalizes that SL's positive contributions to learner interactions are possible thanks to its nature that does not require any type of

dominant authority figure whatsoever. In other words, learners are autonomous and self-regulated in SL. Speaking more specifically, anonymity provided in SL serves as an important agent that diminishes the fear of being judged by the others and offers learners a feeling of freedom in expressing themselves (Aydin, 2013; Balcikanli, 2012; Couto, 2010; Guzel & Aydin, 2014; Johnson, 2006). In connection, SL is a language learning environment that promotes a self-regulated learning process during which learners are urged to employ their academic expectations. In short, SL manifests itself as a practical tool for foreign language learning in various dimensions; however, before its usage in the FL context, it is necessary to present the theoretical background of the use of SL in the foreign language context.

2.1.5. Theoretical Background of the Use of Second Life

SL as a language learning environment is regarded as an alternative language practice environment which is potentially associated with some learning theories. In this sense, it is necessary to discuss the applicability of learning theories in SL in the way they are implemented in traditional classrooms in order to determine learners' behavioral changes during language practice. Therefore, language instructors are encouraged to implement various learning theories such as self-regulation in learning, autonomous learning, collaborative learning, constructivism and scaffolded learning into language learning process that takes place in SL. In order to clarify the possible interrelation with SL, learning theories *self-regulation*, *learner-centeredness*, *collaborative learning*, *autonomous learning*, *constructivism* and *scaffolded learning* is detailed below. Subsequently, the learning theories and their functions are discussed in connection with SL as a language learning platform.

2.1.5.1. Self-regulation

Self-regulation is defined as a process of mental organization which requires the learners to transform their cognitive abilities into academic skills. It is basically the ability to adjust mental conditions with the ongoing learning process which is comprised of tasks and activities. Whereas Zimmerman (2002) regards learning as an action that learners do for themselves, learning is stimulated by the individuals' determination to achieve intellectual goals to improve mental capacity. Therefore, it is not plausible to consider learning as ability or as a special skill which simply depends upon a dormant source of knowledge; rather, it requires the mental involvement of the learners. In this sense, Xiao (2014) claims that contemporary language learning environments require language learners to take responsibility of

their own learning process instead of anticipating passively to be instructed with language materials. According to Johnson (2006), when the individuals take part in their own learning processes and make necessary adjustments realizing what item is indispensable to the expected leaning outcomes, chances for a better result inevitably increase. In this context, SL is regarded as a language learning tool which promotes a self-regulated learning environment for language learners by enabling them to take charge in organizing and shaping their own learning environments (Guzel & Aydin, 2014; Johnson, 2006). Therefore, as Zimmerman (2002) suggests, SL enables learners to follow their own intellectual goals as well as the path set for them by the instructors. In conclusion, as Johnson (2006) claims, with the help of SL, a self-regulated learning takes place for the learning which omits the traditional ways of learning and diminishes the impact of affective states of the learners.

2.1.5.2.   Learner-centeredness

Learner-centered teaching is the process in which the learners are more aware of the learning situations in a way that they get more involved in learning activities that take place in the classroom. Dang (2006) interprets that learners of any sort are able to internalize what the tasks offer to them only when the actions taken in the leaning process are meaningful and personal to them. In connection, it is indicated that the more the learners are involved, the more they can interpret meaning from the content (Dang, 2006; Kanavoz, 2006; Magno & Sembrano, 2009; Xiao, 2014). Warburton (2009) highlights that language learning classrooms are special and delicate environments in which learning must certainly provide engaging activities which promote learner involvement. It is also acknowledged that learner involvement in the learning process is desirable for certain outcomes mentioned above; however, depending solely on learner's actions might prove problematic unless the steps to be taken are calculated beforehand. In addition, Dang (2006) asserts that on the condition that methodology, strategies and outcomes of the lesson are planned meticulously enough, performance and confidence of the learners increase dramatically enabling them to actively participate in classroom activities and to make a great deal of contributions to learning process. Therefore, SL is regarded as a useful language learning tool which offers more free space for the language learners unlike the traditional language learning environments (Couto, 2010). In addition, it can be inferred that language learning activities that take place on SL encourages instructors to distribute equal amounts of responsibility among language learners, because one of the major characteristics of a learner-centered

learning environment is that instructors are expected to adjust the learning atmosphere accordingly so that learners with poor performances are taken into account (Brown, 2003). Thus, it is ensured in SL that learners will improve each other's performances as well as their own success rates. Moreover, language learners are not able to isolate themselves from learning activities organized by the instructor since SL tasks require a collective effort which urges learners to take incentive in their own learning.

2.1.5.3.   Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is the type of learning which is performed with the help of peers that share the same learning environment and requires a series of actions that incessantly changes hands throughout the process. One of the earliest theories claiming that learning is greatly dependent on social interactions is Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory. Vygotsky (1978) indicates that an effective learning takes place with the help of social environment of the individual. Therefore, individuals complete missing parts of their learning process by observing the behaviors of the others, and the way certain tasks are achieved. Peterson (2012) depicts the collaborative learning environment as a platform on which learners form a shared-knowledge among them with the help of negotiation of meaning. In this scope, SL is considered as a good representative of real life since many actions that are performed in real life can be performed in SL (Johnson, 2006). In addition, SL requires the individuals to form behaviors for situations that take place in the virtual reality (Bell, 2009). Johnson (2006) also claims that SL, as an interaction-based social environment, is comprised of tasks and communicative activities that encourage learners to act in collaboration. Thus, it can be concluded that SL is a useful learning tool for integrating learners into an environment that promotes collaboration.

2.1.5.4.   Autonomous Learning

Autonomous learning is based on the notion that learners are able to achieve learning task better when they take control of their learning process in a way that they are aware of the dynamic relationship between learning incomes and learning outcomes. It is suggested that the focus on the concept of autonomous learner in educational context has led to the existence of the expert language learner as a term (Mercer, 2011). Mercer (2011) defines expert learners as the learners who are able to adjust their learning strategies with a complete realization of their beliefs and

personal needs on the way of reaching the academic goals. According to Xiao (2014), these autonomous learning attitudes are the product of learner agency which enables the learners to intentionally personalize what they encounter within the process learning. To add, Xiao (2014) claims that self-awareness is one of the most important factors that directly affect achievement in language learning. It is suggested that when learners take control of their own learning in a language learning process, as in SL as a virtual learning environment, they are observed to perform more as active individuals taking responsibilities than passive listeners who are simply submissive (Couto, 2010; Johnson, 2006). In this perspective, SL as an autonomous learning environment urges learners to take initiative and act more as individuals rather than a small part of a large functioning group. In conclusion, it is crucial to realize that when SL is introduced to the learning process, it is indeed the individual productivity that runs the mechanism, not the will of the authority figure.

2.1.5.5. Constructivism

Constructivist approach to learning was first introduced by Piaget (1959) who pinpoints that learning is a process which takes certain steps in order to be moved into further directions. In other words, an item that has been learned serves as a basis for future items to be learned. Wood et al (1976) integrate the constructivist theory with contemporary learning contexts by furthering what it represents and propose that learning starts with establishing basic components in order to merge them together, resulting with various combinations of learning outcomes. In a constructivist perspective, as Jonassen et al. (1995) define learning not as taking in what is present in the environment and reflecting on the item that has been learned as it is, but rather as participating in the learning and processing the items as products of personal point of view. Therefore, it is suggested that learning follows a simplistic order where learners expand basic items into much more complex clusters by merging them together so long as they actually participate in the process, interpreting the surrounding environment. Johnson (2006), in this sense, argues that SL offers learners a chance for characteristic transformation, since it urges the individuals to be responsible for their own actions during learning activities, and it promotes learners' perspectives to be altered on their own account. What is more, learners simply face an environment which enables them to alter the surrounding according to their own personal needs; that is, they expand the world they reside in depending on their experiences, towards the direction they desire. In conclusion, constructivist approach to learning requires involvement of learners to produce their

own realities based on the items introduced to them, and SL is an appropriate tool for learners to create their own realities while learning.

2.1.5.6. Scaffolded Learning

Scaffolded learning is the learning process in which learning activities are presented as tasks with the consideration of learners' intellectual readiness. Vygotsky (1978) presents the theory that learning is a social and dependent process that starts at very early ages. The child internalizes correct form of behaviors observing the actions presented by the parents and peers at later stages. In connection with Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, scaffolded way of learning has been implemented in many educational contexts. Hammond and Gibbons (2001) define scaffolding applied in contemporary learning and teaching framework as the necessary help and support provided by the instructors for the learners according to their needs and capabilities. However, the amount of support is required to be fluctuant since the learners do not need the guidance when they advance in the learning progress. In other words, the point of scaffolding is that help is only compulsory at the points where the learners are desperate to determine what direction to take during the learning process (Hammond & Gibbons, 2001). To clarify what scaffolding in learning stands for, Wood et al. (1976) offer some necessary steps for an efficient instruction to take place. They suggest that learners' interest for the task must be retained and the simplicity of the tasks must be adjusted in accordance with the objectives and the learning content. In addition, vital points of the learning content must be highlighted with the help of visual aids and demonstrations, and the frustration caused by the challenging nature of the task must be eliminated. That is why, SL is considered as a suitable platform for implementing a scaffolded learning due to its task-driven characteristic (Couto, 2010; Johnson, 2006). SL functions as a learning tool with the help of a careful design of the learning incomes and outcomes by the instructors; otherwise, learning discipline among learners cannot be maintained. Therefore, it is suggested that learning process is only efficient when the process is divided into several pieces, preferably tasks on SL.

2.1.6. Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from the information presented in this section. First, it can be concluded that speaking skills are directly associated with learners' language competence and performance. It is also acknowledged that

learning a language requires complex phases to experience and language acquisition is immensely dependent on the sufficient amount of comprehensible input. Second, although receiving language input helps language development to some extent, there are some types of affective variables that jeopardize language acquisition process as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. In this sense, anxiety is described as a feeling of distress, uneasiness, loss of control and negative anticipations caused by an incoming tense situation. It has three types in foreign language learning: *Communication apprehension*, *test anxiety* and *fear of negative evaluation*. In connection, speaking is widely accepted as the most anxiety-provoking skill for EFL learners, as the acknowledgement of foreign language anxiety and speaking anxiety in foreign language learning drives the teachers to discover new language learning environments, bringing virtual worlds into the forefront. Third, SL is regarded as an intriguing platform for EFL learning since it is quite promising due to its availability for educational and EFL contexts. In addition to its role as a social network that connects users in an alternate reality, SL is regarded as a foreign language learning tool which offers lucrative language practice opportunities for language learners. Moreover, SL as a learning tool is related to some learning theories which are actively in correlation with traditional learning environments. For instance, self-regulation is a mental organization process to turn learner needs into academic success. In addition, learner-centeredness can be defined as a learning process in which learners are share responsibility in their learning. Autonomous learning is type of learning process in which learners take control of their own learning. Furthermore, constructivism and scaffolded learning as social learning models are entwined with SL in principle, since SL bears resemblances to real life situations in various ways. In brief, SL can be claimed to provide language learners with an environment where the learning theories described above are profoundly applicable. As a final note, it is necessary to present the literature on the aforementioned sections to make connections with preceding research and to build upon studies that are related to the key issues.

2.2. Literature Review

2.2.1. Introduction

This section presents a review of research on a spectrum of studies starting from the place of speaking in communication to be concluded with the effect of SL on speaking anxiety of EFL learners. First, the collection of research on the role of speaking in communication is presented. Second, comprehensible input is reflected

through the lenses of related studies. Third, the studies describing SA and examining the ways SA manifests itself are reviewed. Fourth, the compilation of related research on SL in EFL context is summarized in brief. Last, narrowing down the scope, the effects of SL as a virtual world on SA are demonstrated by reviewing the related studies.

2.2.2. The Role of Speaking in Communication

There is a wide range of studies focusing on the unique role of speaking skills in the EFL context which suggest that speaking is a very unique skill when compared to other language skills since it constitutes an enormous part of communicating in the target language. The research results reviewed on speaking skills can be classified into two groups considering the focus of the studies. First group of the studies mainly focuses on speaking as a physical entity in daily life communication, while the second group includes studies that deal with the place of speaking in the context of EFL teaching.

Research showed that speaking is a physical process as well as being a mental production. In this context, Kurudayioglu (2011) stated that speaking was an action to be used in order to deliver an intended message to the addressees, and that is a product of very complicated mental and physical labor. According to Kurudayioglu (2011) speaking was to be thoroughly analyzed so as to comprehend what it stands for in communication. That is why, the study attempted at revealing both physical and abstract components of speaking by presenting its structural features such as phonations and sounds. It was revealed that speaking comprises of quite complicated phases, and it affected success and failure of the individual directly. Furthermore, Egan (1999) claimed that despite being regarded as the center of second language learning, speaking was surprisingly ignored by many of the instructors due to the hardships in the assessment. Therefore, the study aimed to provide data that the use of speech-recognition supported CALL tools could regain the central role of speaking skills. For this purpose Egan (1999) presented that ASR feature can be used as a way to transform speaking into easily assessable skill, thus encouraging instructors to value speaking in practice. Consequently, the study revealed that speaking was regarded as the most vital part of language proficiency, and it was possible to involve speaking as frequent as the other language skills with the help of CALL tools. From another point of view, Nazara (2011) discovered that although speaking was regarded as an important skill, it was somehow ignored in language learning process. The study aimed at unveiling what

language learners feel about speaking and its use in EFL learning. In order to gather data on the perceptions of the learners, Nazara (2011) administered a 16-item questionnaire to 40 students from fifth to seventh semester students. Findings indicated that learners valued speaking for its central role in language learning, and they were willing to put considerable effort to reach mastery in it. Moreover, Bahrani and Soltani (2012) stated that speaking was regarded the most important skill in the way of reaching language proficiency; however, language classes mainly focused on structural aspects of language. Thus, the aim of the study was to underline the ways to integrate speaking skill with structural language teaching activities such as grammar and vocabulary teaching. Bahrani and Soltani (2012) presented types of activities to enhance the central role of speaking in language learning. The study concluded that language proficiency was possible with intensive use of communicative activities that were based on speaking skill, and the reason why speaking was ignored in language teaching was the low interest shown to speaking activities due to its necessity of active engagement.

Research demonstrates a consensus that speaking should be considered as the central skill in language teaching, since language proficiency requires a fluent communication skill in the target language and the research contributes by suggesting that language teaching is more likely to enable learners to achieve language proficiency on condition that it is based on communicative language teaching activities (Baleghizadeh & Shahri, 2014; Cane, 1998; Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrell, 1995; Hu, 2010; Lochland, 2013; McCarthy & O'Keeffe, 2004; Nazari, 2007). For instance, Baleghizadeh and Shahri (2014) claimed that speaking was a skill that was regarded as quite important in the eyes of both teachers and learners; however, it was dominated by other skills in practice. Therefore, the study attempted to discover the reason why speaking must be dominant in language teaching by taking teacher perceptions into account. The method of the study was based on the data collected by interviewing two expert teachers and one novice teacher. The results indicated that primary skill that could be nourished during language teaching was speaking and speaking activities should be conducted alongside the structural features of language.

Richards (1983), in addition, discussed that communicative objectives were the main constituents of the language. Thus, the research attempted to signify that communicative competence was much more valuable than structural knowledge in terms of communicating in a foreign language. In this sense, Richards (1983) presented how language learners adapted what they already knew in interactional

contexts and how they gradually made the target language conventional by providing explanation on speech acts. The study concluded that language learning should focus on communicative aspects of the language since lexical and grammatical competence could be fixed during the conventionalization of the language. Furthermore, Hu (2010) asserted that Chinese EFL teaching adopted communicative competence as the primary goal in language classrooms since speaking skill was regarded as the ultimate motive for language learning. Thus, Hu (2010) aimed at exploring effective methods to flourish Chinese EFL learners' communicative competence. In order to develop methods to be employed in language teaching, the study examined the positive contributions of communicative language teaching. It was concluded that language teaching was more than theoretical knowledge of the rules; instead, it was greatly dependent on practice. Celce-Murcia et al (1995) also argued that communicative competence described by Canale and Swain (1980) did not provide elaborate and pedagogical insight to language teaching. Therefore, they attempted to develop more pedagogically-driven constituents for communicative language teaching. The study classified communicative competence in five groups as follows: discourse, linguistic, actional, sociocultural and strategic competence. The study concluded that understanding communicative competence in terms of language teaching context with the help of elaborate classification would improve the quality of language teaching activities. In addition, Nazari (2007) suggested that how teachers comprehended communicative competence affected how they taught the language. Thus, the study tried to discover how high school teachers conceived communicative competence as a term. For collecting data, teachers were interviewed and observed. The data indicated that speaking was not used as an active communication tool in language teaching process; rather, teachers and learners preferred speaking briefly in order to give examples and produce simple utterances.

Cane (1998) claimed that course books were not sufficient for improving language learners' communicative competence. The study, thereby, aimed to determine the efficiency of course books and the alternative methods for teaching communicative skills. Cane (1998) concluded that more direct teaching activities would take place instead of indirect ones triggered by excessive use of course books. Furthermore, Lochland (2013) asserted that CLT did not have a universally accepted definition, thus the paper aimed to determine whether CLT was an appropriate approach for Japanese EFL teaching. In order to discover CLT's role, Lochland (2013) discussed it within situated pedagogy context. In conclusion, it was

asserted that a standard teaching method could not be designed, and teachers should be flexible and responsive to the learner needs.

2.2.3. Research on Comprehensible Input

There is an abundance of research concerning the role and place of comprehensible input in language learning led by the studies that regard it as an indispensable element in language acquisition. Although comprehensible input as a term is mostly associated with language acquisition process, the research on EFL teaching attempted to integrate it with language learning itself. To analyze comprehensible input within the practice of language teaching and learning, the research can be divided into two categories. The studies in the first group are reviewed in terms of what comprehensible input is and why it is considered important, whereas the second group presents the research on the interpretation of comprehensible input in EFL teaching under various circumstances.

Research shows that the supply of comprehensible input is considered as a vital step for teaching EFL and determining what items are to be regarded as authentic materials is often problematic. In this sense, Guariento and Morley (2001) stated that the use of authentic teaching tools is valued in language classrooms due to their positive contributions to language learning. Nevertheless, it was quite complicated when it came to the frequency of the use of authentic materials in language classrooms since instructors mostly preferred text-based authentic materials rather than communicative tools. Thus, they aimed to determine how communicative tasks could be used as an authentic language learning materials by using systematic explanations. The study argued that the communicative tasks that were used in language classrooms did not necessarily need to be derived from authentic/real-life materials for low proficiency learners; on the contrary, simplified texts that were regarded as artificial input could be exploited as valuable teaching materials as long as the learners were aware that simplified text at hand was only a preparatory stage for the authentic tasks to come in later stages of language learning. In addition, Payne (2011) claimed that comprehensible input was quite attractive for language teachers considering its practical use in language acquisition. Except, in language learning which has unique characteristics compared to language acquisition the role of comprehensible input was confusing. For this reason, Payne (2011) attempted to discover how comprehensible input functioned in

language learning, and in what ways the same type of comprehensible input provided the equal amount of benefit for language learners. The study concluded that even though comprehensible input proved useful in many circumstances of language learning, it did not function in language learning classrooms as stable as it did in language acquisition process. Furthermore, Shintani (2011) reported that the effectiveness of input-based and output-based language teaching was a matter of discussion in terms of EFL teaching. Therefore, the study aimed at comparing input-based and output-based methods in language teaching. To gather data, students were divided into three groups; input-based group, production-based group, and control-group. Results indicated that the group which employed an input-based learning was provided better interactional opportunities during language tasks, and they performed better in terms of language production.

In addition to the studies that question what comprehensible input as a term that is mostly used in language acquisition stands for in language learning, some studies regarding EFL learning and teaching have attempted to integrate comprehensible input into language teaching procedures in practice. For instance, Rodrigo et al (2004) stated that providing comprehensible input during language learning was a promising way to improve language performance of the learners. In this sense, the study set a goal to determine whether language teaching activities based on the use of comprehensible input made a difference. So as to gather data, learners receiving a language instruction under the influence of comprehensible input were compared to the ones who participated in traditional language learning. Findings suggested that the group which was exposed to a language learning heavily dependent on comprehensible input performed better than the traditional group in grammar and vocabulary tests. In another study, Crossley et al (2012) discussed that it was very common to detect that texts that were used as comprehensible input were simplified for better comprehension in language classrooms. Claiming that it might bring about some problematic outcomes, the study focused on exploring the potential effects of text simplification in language teaching. The data were gathered by using the computational tool Coh-Metrix in a way that 300 news articles were simplified for three proficiency levels as beginner, intermediate and advanced to explain linguistic differences of the texts. Results showed that texts that were simplified for beginner level provided a richer linguistic input for the learners than the texts simplified for advanced level.

In addition, Oh (2001) stated that input plays the major role in second and foreign language learning; the simplicity and complexity of the materials provided for learners affect reaching language mastery effectively. Thus, Oh (2001) attempted to

discover which of the methods led to the desirable outcome in terms of language learning. The data were collected by presenting learners six reading passages that were simplified and elaborated and their comprehension levels were measured by administering an 18-item multiple choice test. The findings were in a direction that elaborated input served more useful for reaching language mastery, and the study suggested that elaborated inputs accelerated learning process by enabling learners to comprehend baseline texts more easily. Furthermore, Carlo (1994) stated that conventional language classrooms mainly focused on written texts as comprehensible input; however, they did not provide opportunities for communicative competence. Therefore, the study aimed to explore the use of video-texts as a means of comprehensible input. In the study, learners were provided with video enhanced learning opportunities for their language learning. In conclusion, Carlo (1994) suggested that language learning environments must be supported with comprehensible input which was based on both linguistic and communicative competence, since it was indicated that learners easily engage with learning procedure when communicative tools were involved. Finally, Neuman and Koskinen (1994) suggested that acquisition was a subconscious process; therefore, just as it took place in language acquisition, it was possible to deduct that learners grasp the structure of target language by focusing on the meaning rather than focusing on the form and the structure of the language. That is why, their study aimed to determine the effect of captioned television as a comprehensible input for the language learning of minority students. Consequently, it was found out that input hypothesis was in correlation with incidental learning of the language, and it was deduced that captioned television as a comprehensible input provided better incidental language learning.

2.2.4. Types of Oral Interactions

Oral interaction is acknowledged as a stepping stone for language mastery due to the importance given to communicative teaching methods in EFL teaching. The research, in general, suggests that learning the target language requires communicative competence; therefore, it urges language learners to develop interactional strategies for the communication in target language. In connection, some studies focus on the notion that communicative competence can be reached through following a pattern of interactional strategies in the target language. On the other hand, the research also examines oral interactions as integrated with language learning tools and other language skills.

Research that focuses on oral interactions as a strategy development process deals with determining what types of interactional patterns are to be used during language instruction and in what circumstances the learners decide the type of oral interaction strategies. As an example, Bygate (1988) claimed that small groups that learned a language developed certain strategies to commence oral interactions. Thus, the study aimed at examining the strategies for oral interaction employed by small groups, and determining in what ways small working groups approached oral interactions in target language. To gather data, a comparison between previous studies on L2 learning and the perception of language knowledge were made. Subsequently, satellite units that played role in oral language production in language learning were described. Data showed that oral tasks were indispensable sources for language learning procedures.

Moreover, Naughton (2006) noted that oral interaction patterns in small groups that learned a second language was regarded as practical for language learning process. The paper focused on discovering the effect of collaborative tasks that unified small groups around a discussion topic. Data were collected through administrations of pretest and posttest based on the initiation of a strategy training program. Data indicated that small groups were more active in oral interaction when tasks that required interactional strategies and discussion were introduced in the learning process. According to Nakatani (2006), communicative competence could be achieved with the use of appropriate communication strategies. Thus, Nakatani (2006) attempted to determine a way to reveal EFL learners' communication strategies towards oral interaction in the second language, thus to develop a questionnaire for analysis. To finalize the questionnaire the procedure proceeded as follows: administration of an open ended questionnaire to learn perceptions of oral interaction, a pilot factor analysis, and a final factor analysis. The result indicated that learners with high oral interaction proficiency were the ones that had followed interaction strategies for their communication in target language. In a subsequent study, Nakatani (2010) pinpointed that developing learning strategies to achieve communicative competence was widely recognized as a beneficial factor for oral interaction proficiency. Therefore, the study aimed to determine certain types of communication strategies developed by language learners to validate their practicality in gaining communicative competence. To collect data, a 12-week long learning program during which communicative tasks were introduced took place, and learners' proficiency levels were tested in terms of being able to use presented inventory of oral interaction strategies such as negotiation of meaning and tactics for maintaining discourse. The study concluded that the introduction of the inventory of

interactional strategies could prove useful for flourishing learners' communicative skills.

In addition to the studies that analyze oral interaction within the context of learning strategies, some studies take oral interaction as a part of language learning process which is an entwined system of various types of language learning tools and language skills. For instance, Murphy (1991) stated that oral communication had roots not only in speaking skill but also listening and pronunciation. Thus, the study attempted to reveal how ESL teachers treated language teaching in regards to speaking, listening and pronunciation skills. To explore the necessity of all skills, Murphy (1991) systematically defined each skill by basing them on a theoretical basis emphasizing how they were incomplete solely. The paper suggested that communicative competence and language mastery could not be completely achieved if the skills were used separately. To add, Tuan and Nhu (2010) asserted that learning a language required the ability to commence interaction in both spoken and written channels and gaining communicative competence depended on oral interaction that took place in language classrooms. The study aimed to compare two methods used in language instruction to develop learners' oral interaction; teacher-learner interaction and learner-learner interaction, and reviewed the research on two methods in association with input hypothesis, interaction hypothesis and output hypothesis. Moreover, Jeon-Ellis et al (2005) discussed that language learning environment must include authentic communication. The paper attempted to validate computer mediated oral interaction represented the physical attributions of oral interaction that takes place in real life. To collect data, Jeon-Ellis et al. (2005) language learners were presented with web-based projects, collaboration and autonomous learning opportunities with the help of computers. The results showed that computerized oral interactions could help learners to improve their communicative competence by taking part in collaborative and autonomous tasks.

Furthermore, Homano-Bunce (2011) conducted a study on computers as language learning mediums which were known to facilitate collaborative language learning. The study attempted to compare interaction led in chat rooms and face-to-face to in terms of their potential for facilitating language learning. Data were collected through computer use during oral interaction, and an analysis of the process was made through observation, interviews, and a questionnaire. Findings showed that computers were not necessarily equivalent of a face-to-face oral interaction and could actually hinder the flow of communication.

2.2.5. Research on Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety is considered as one of the most problematic issues faced in language learning classrooms in EFL context. The research on speaking anxiety indicates that there are various reasons for EFL learners to develop anxiety towards oral production in English. Furthermore, the research presents insight for how to minimize the negative effect of speaking anxiety in language learning.

The research basically focuses on how speaking anxiety is a crucial factor to consider in language learning and in what ways it is triggered during oral production in English. Initially, Kocak (2010) claimed that language anxiety constituted a serious obstacle for EFL learners' oral performances. Based on this notion, the study aimed to reveal the reasons for EFL learners' speaking anxiety and determined how speaking anxiety could be eliminated. In the way of obtaining data, Kocak (2010) presented an open ended questionnaire to the learners; consequently, eight language learners were interviewed depending on the information they provided in the questionnaire. As a result, the interviewees stated that their speaking anxiety mostly stemmed from the fear of failure. In addition, Liu and Jackson (2008) stated that unwillingness to communicate was caused by situations such as communication apprehension, self-esteem problems, communicative incompetence and social involvement problems. Therefore, the study attempted to provide insight for the reasons behind Chinese EFL learners' unwillingness to communicate in English. To gather data, a survey consisting of 70 items was administered to 547 freshmen who did not major in English. The result indicated that majority of the learners did not prefer putting their language skills into practice, and they were concerned about negative evaluation on their performances. Furthermore, Mak (2011) asserted that speaking anxiety was the most common concern among EFL learners regarding foreign language anxiety. The article aimed at presenting the elements that played a role in speaking anxiety of a group of Chinese ESL students consisting of 313 students. To determine what factors were in motion, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was used as reference for factor analysis. The results demonstrated that five factors causing speaking-in-class anxiety were detected: speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation; uneasiness when speaking with native speakers; negative attitudes toward English classrooms; negative self-evaluation; and academic concerns. Moreover, Matsuda and Gobel (2003) stated that anxiety is the main source for poor performance in target language among EFL learners. Thus, the study aimed to determine whether there was a relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety, foreign language

reading anxiety, gender, extended overseas experience, and classroom performance. To obtain data, Matsuda and Gobel (2003) administered FLCAS and FLRAS to three groups of Japanese EFL learners consisting of 252 students. The data showed that confidence, gender and proficiency levels of the learners were the key elements in speaking performance of the students. In addition, Liu (2006) suggested in a study that anxiety was the key element in EFL learners' speaking performances since anxiety was a very unique obstacle in the way of speaking in target language. The study attempted to report anxiety situations of Chinese non-English majors. In the study, Liu (2006) administered observation procedures, reflective journals and interviews to the learners. The study concluded that almost every student suffered from anxiety when practicing English, students with high proficiency levels proved less anxious, the most anxiety-provoking situation in language learning was when a response was expected by the instructor, and the more the exposure to language production increased, the less the learners were anxious. Additionally, Yalcin and Incecay (2014) proposed that the number of studies dealing with how to overcome speaking anxiety was quite limited. Therefore, the study attempted to determine if integrated spontaneous speaking activities could help EFL learners overcome their speaking anxiety. For this, twelve freshmen learners were administered FLCAS developed by Horwitz et al. and Unwillingness to Communicate Scale (UCS) before and after a 14-week long period during which various speaking activities were introduced. The result pointed out that intensifying speaking practice consequently helped learners to overcome their speaking anxiety. Last but not least, Subasi (2010) stated that speaking anxiety is a very common problem for EFL learners. Although there were a number of reasons for speaking anxiety, the study aimed at exploring two potential sources of the anxiety faced by EFL learners: fear of negative evaluation, and self-perceived speaking ability. To gather data, a 55-item survey consisting of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), Self-Rating Can-Do Scale (SR-CDS), Self-Rating for the Current Level of Study (SR-CL), Self-Rating Perception by the English (SR-EPE) was administered to 55 students. The research concluded that there was a positive correlation between speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Moreover, the results showed that issues such as personal reasons, teacher's manners, teaching procedures and previous experiences emerged as alternative reasons behind speaking anxiety of EFL learners.

2.2.6. Research on Second Life in EFL Context

The research on SL's role and place in EFL context is mainly related to how SL is integrated in the EFL learning process and what type of activities can be developed in SL-based language learning. However, the number of the studies carried out on SL's place in EFL is quite limited. To begin with, Wang et al. (2009) suggested that MUVEs such as SL gained considerable attraction among educators due to their appealing nature as constructivist educational tools. Nevertheless, it was also noted that the understanding of how MUVEs, especially SL, functioned in the way of promoting EFL learners' language skills. Thus, the study aimed to create an SL-based EFL learning program among Chinese and American students. The participants took place in speaking activities in a way that Chinese learners were paired with American participants to interact. The study concluded that MUVEs and SL in particular provided possibilities for learners from different countries in terms of collaboration, cultural sharing and peer-learning. Furthermore, Couto (2010) stated that there has been an inclination among educators towards using virtual worlds in language learning. She attempted to find out whether there was a correlation between anxiety and the use of virtual worlds. For this purpose, she designed an experiment for future use, including learners who studied Spanish and English as foreign languages. Students were asked for their opinions after the speaking practice sessions on SL. In the study, learners aimed to practice English and Spanish language both face-to-face and in virtual environments. The results indicated that virtual worlds might have a promising potential for reducing anxiety in their language performance. In another study, Mayrath et al. (2011) suggested that the interest in the functionality of virtual worlds in instructional purposes grew dramatically. Nonetheless, research on the quality of virtual world activities that might be used in instruction did not provide sufficient empirical data. Therefore, Mayrath et al. (2011) carried out a case study to determine what type of activities could be designed in language instruction by using SL. To gather data, they designed courses to last for two semesters, highlighting social interaction and clearly connected activities. In the study, three surveys were administered to understand students' experiences in SL learning. Students were asked to write comments about their experiences. The results indicated that student focused on technical features rather than the course content frustrating and distracting. Nonetheless, they enjoyed the limitless world of SL, when they did activities directly related to the course content. Peterson (2012) stated that the introduction of computer technologies to language education led to the use of text-based two-

dimensional virtual worlds; subsequently progressing to the direction of employing three-dimensional MUVEs as SL. Based on the evolution in CALL, he attempted to discover the role of MUVEs in the context of SL based text chat among Japanese EFL learners. The data suggested that SL provided learners with a supportive collaborative learning opportunity with which they could control their own learning process with the support of their peers in a rich and authentic environment. The study resulted that SL was a useful environment where learners could practice their language skills, develop autonomy and interact with other users on their own wills. Moreover, Wang and Shao (2012) acknowledged in their study that SL as a virtual language learning environment acquired a popularity among language teachers owing to its appealing nature. However, as they noted, the limited number of research on SL's functionality in language learning processes failed to provide a clear basis. Thus, they conducted an experimental research in which SL was placed in EFL curricula for Chinese and American university students. In the process, students from both countries were paired to interact with each other. The study concluded that SL was considered as an effective way of improving their EFL learning process by Chinese learners. Similarly, Balcikanli (2012) pinpointed that the processes of knowledge sharing and language instruction changed in many ways with the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies. Balcikanli (2012), therefore, focused on the use of SL in speaking. Data were collected by surveying Turkish EFL learners' and American TFL learners' opinions after the interaction of pairs from the two groups practicing language with each other. The study concluded that the use of SL SL dramatically reduced the risk of being threatened. It also provided a learner-centered and autonomous learning environment in which they were able to improve their language skills. In addition, Aydin (2013b) reviewed the literature on SL as a language learning tool, stating that according to the research, SL possesses a great potential to be introduced to language learning. He also noted that, based on the findings in the studies, SL positively influenced learners' affective states and promoted interaction and communication among learners. Furthermore, the issues such as pricing, technical difficulties and age posed as notable limitations of using SL in its full potential in language learning.

2.2.7. Research on the Effect of Second Life on Speaking Anxiety

Studies that focus on SL's effect on speaking anxiety basically prevail that SL is a language learning environment that directly has an impact on learners' affective states. However, the number of studies on the feasibility of SL as a virtual language learning environment in EFL teaching context is quite low; what is more,

there are merely a few studies concerning the effect of SL on speaking anxiety in EFL learning process. Even though prior research brings forth the potential of SL as a virtual language learning environment that positively affects speaking anxiety in EFL learning; incidentally, it is challenging to gather a wide range of empirical data on the issue. In one study, Balcikanli (2012) regarded SL as a practical tool for language practice and aimed to use it to determine how it would affect EFL learners' oral interactions. The result was quite promising in a way that the learners found the experience less anxiety-provoking than regular, face-to-face interactions. Similarly, Aydin (2013b) sought to understand how recent research reflected SL as a virtual language learning platform, and reviewed the studies related to SL in the context of EFL learning. The study concluded that SL was regarded as a relaxing language practice environment which decreased speaking anxiety stemming from oral interaction. Lastly, Guzel and Aydin (2014) stated that SL which received as an alternative language learning environment took place in several studies; however, the number of the studies on the effect of SL on speaking anxiety levels of EFL learners was quite limited. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to reveal how related studies approached SL as an anxiety-lowering tool in oral interaction of EFL learners. The study concluded that SL was frequently highlighted as a promising language learning environment which reduces anxiety levels.

2.2.8. Conclusion

From this literature review, several conclusions can be reached. Initially, there is a wide range of research focusing on the role of speaking skills in EFL context, and the findings of related studies suggest that speaking is a very unique skill when compared to other language skills since it constitutes a vast part of communication in target language. In connection, there is an abundance of studies concerning comprehensible input. Even though the studies suggest that comprehensible input is mainly associated with language acquisition, it is also concluded that comprehensible input should be considered as a key factor in EFL learning process. Furthermore, the research deduce that the practice of oral interaction is a stepping stone for language mastery based on the findings of the studies that focus on communicative teaching methods in EFL learning. In addition, speaking anxiety as an outcome of oral interactions in target language is a common issue on which many researchers direct their focus. According to the related research, speaking anxiety is triggered by factors such as fear of negative evaluation, interaction with native speakers, negative attitudes toward English classrooms, attitudes toward teachers, negative self-evaluation, and academic

concerns. Moreover, the research on SL's role in EFL context primarily focus on the ways SL is integrated in EFL learning / teaching processes and the types of teaching activities used to teach English with the help of SL. However, the findings indicate that the integration of SL as a language learning tool into syllabuses lacks an organized touch in terms of using language teaching methodologies properly. Finally, studies which focus on the effect of SL on speaking anxiety suggest that SL has direct impacts on EFL learners' affective states. Finding of the studies, though limited, indicate that SL positively affects learners' anxiety levels in language practice. Nevertheless, the studies fails to meet the need to provide specific data for the effect of SL on EFL learners' speaking anxiety levels.

To sum, studies were reviewed to shed light onto the possible effects of SL on EFL learners' speaking anxiety levels by starting with a broader perspective to the issue at hand into the direction of providing more specific studies. The studies reviewed above offers a great insight about the nature of speaking anxiety and SL's potential role in reducing speaking anxiety in EFL teaching. However, the literature brought about some important points to consider, as they suggested that the research on the effect of SL on EFL speaking anxiety was not supported by sufficient empirical data. In addition, research did not specifically focus on SL's effect on speaking anxiety of EFL learners; rather, the related literature emphasized SL's role in decreasing the speaking anxiety levels as mere details in the studies. Therefore, it can be concluded that studies that specifically focus on the effect of SL on EFL speaking anxiety are required to provide solid data on the issue. In this sense, this study will serve as a beneficial tool to discover in what ways the use of SL can affect anxiety levels of EFL learners when speaking in target language.

3.

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodological procedure followed on the way of obtaining data on the effect of SL as a virtual language learning environment on speaking anxiety. First, the design process of the research is described. Next, participants of the research and how they are assigned to groups are discussed. Then, the tools that were used to gather data are introduced. Last, after the research procedure is introduced, the statistical procedure is given.

3.1. Research Design

The study that aimed to gather data on the effect of SL as a virtual language learning environment on speak anxiety was designed to be an experimental research. The study comprised of three steps: (1) the administration of a background questionnaire, speaking achievement pre-test and a 65-item SLLS pre-test, (2) practice based on speaking activities, (3) speaking achievement post-test and administration of SLLS. The first phase of the research took place in second week of the fall semester in 2015. The second phase which was practice took a 4-week-long time period. Prior to practice based on speaking activities, third grade EFL learners were randomly divided into two groups as *control* and *experimental groups*. Last, speaking achievement post-test and scales were administered to the participants in the groups to compare their performance and anxiety levels.

3.2. Participants

The study included 44 second and third year students who actively took place in the activities. They were English Language Teaching (ELT) Department students at Balikesir University and were advanced-level EFL learners. Eight (18.2 %) of the participants were male students, while 36 (81.8 %) of them were females. The gap between the gender numbers was not deliberate, and it was a mere indicator of the demographics in ELT departments in general. Participants' mean age was 20.91, ranging from 19 to 35. All of the participants took classes on basic language skills and knowledge areas such as Contextual Grammar, Oral Communication Skills, Advanced Reading and Writing, Listening and Pronunciation in their first two semesters. Academic achievement of the participants were based on their 4.0 scale GPA scores. The mean score for the academic achievement of the participants was

2.78, ranging from 1.36 to 3.73. Their language levels were considered as advanced due to their intensive language learning experiences in high school and two years of skill-based and theoretically-enriched education in the ELT Department. Table 1 shows the distribution of means, numbers and percentages shaped by age, gender and academic achievement score variables of the participants in the study.

Table 1. Age, Gender, Academic Achievement Score

Variables		Control Group		Experimental Group		Both	
Age	Mean	20.41		21.50		20.90	
	Minimum	20.00		19.00		19	
	Maximum	21.00		35.00		35	
Gender	Number	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
		21	3	15	5	36	8
	Percent	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
		87.5%	12.5%	75.0%	25.0%	81.8%	18.2%
Academic Achievement Score	Mean	2.91		2.63		2.78	
	St. Dev.	.47		.56		.53	
	Minimum	1.36		1.52		1.36	
	Maximum	3.73		3.64		3.73	

3.3. Tools

In the research process, three tools were used to collect data from the groups: (1) A background questionnaire, (2) grading scale for speaking proficiency developed by Kanatlar (2005) and (3) Survey on Language Learning adapted by Liu and Jackson (2013). First, the background questionnaire interrogated basic information such as age, gender, grade and academic achievement scores. Second, as the tool for scoring speaking proficiency levels, Grading Scale developed by Kanatlar (2005) included five different sections to score such as grammar, vocabulary, fluency, intelligibility and task achievement (See Appendix 1). Participants can get 100 points maximum in Speaking Grading Scale. Flawless performance on grammar and vocabulary sections is worth 30 points each, fluency section provides 20 points, and finally, intelligibility and task achievement sections are worth 10 points each, as shown in Table 2. Third, Survey on Language Learning included 36-item Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), a reduced form of Unwillingness to Communicate Scale developed by

Burgoon (1976), 6-item Language Class Risk-Taking Scale developed by Ely (1986), and 5-item Language Class Sociability Scale developed by Ely (1986). Survey on Language Learning consisted of 70 items and 5-point Likert Scale ranging from one to five (1-Never, 2- Rarely, 3- Sometimes, 4- Often, 5- Always).

Table 2. Speaking Grading Scale Points

Sections	Max Score
Grammar	30
Vocabulary	30
Intelligibility	20
Fluency	10
Task Achievement	10
Total score	**100**

3.4. Procedure

Prior to research procedure, participants were fully informed about the mechanics of the study, the expectations, steps to take and their roles in the process. For ethical concerns, subjects were ensured that their personal information would be protected and all personal details would be kept confidential. Then, subjects were asked to sign a consent form stating that their participation in the study was voluntary and under no circumstances would it cause them to be involved in any political, social and ethical conflicts. Following the reassurance that each subjects' personal information would be kept confidential and signing the forms stating that participation is voluntary, the research process was initiated.

3.4.1. Pre-test Administration

At the beginning of the research, the background questionnaire were administered to the participants, interrogating them about their ages, grades (GPA), and genders. Then, subjects were called for an oral interview to talk about a topic chosen from a collection of TOEFL questions. Each participant randomly picked a speaking topic from an envelope and spoke for three or four minutes. Two scorers who are research assistants in the department and advanced-level speakers graded subjects' oral performances based on SGS developed by Kanatlar (2005). Then, participants were administered Survey on Language Learning developed by Liu and Jackson (2013) to determine participants' levels of speaking anxiety, willingness to communicate in target language. Following the completion of pre-tests, the practice stage in which subjects experienced four sessions of 45-minute-long speaking activities.

3.4.2. Practice Stage

During the practice stage, subjects were randomly divided into two groups as *control* and *experimental groups*. With both groups, same lesson plans were devised and lesson topics were chosen from Q-Skills Advance Your Listening and Speaking by Oxford Press (Caplan & Douglas, 2011) which is an advanced-level speaking course book. While control group subjects participated in traditional speaking lesson environment, subjects in the experimental group joined the same speaking lessons on the virtual world of SL, as shown in Table 2. The practice process took a four-week-long time period, each session taking place once a week for a 45-minute-long lessons.

Table 3. Weekly Activities

Weeks	Tasks	Topic	Vocabulary	Process
Week 1	a. Group discussion b. Pair Work	a. How do people get the news today? b. Which means of journalism are outdated? c. If you were to give presentation, how would you prepare?	Vocabulary on journalism, devices we get news from	
Week 2	a. Group discussion b. Pair work	a. What difficulties might an English speaker visiting your home country have while trying to communicate? b. What can cause communication difficulties? c. How do you overcome frustration and violence caused by failure in communication?	Vocabulary on communication, communication problems, linguistic issues	Warm-up activities Opening discussion Paired discussion and brainstorming on a problem Reflection and solution Group discussion Listing the outcomes and vocabulary Closing regards and conclusion
Week 3	a. Group discussion b. Pair work	a. What are the factors that you consider when planning a vacation? b. Can you describe a time when work or school was fun? c. Is it possible to have fun while working?	Vocabulary on uncommon professions such as "tech nomads". Vocabulary on travelling and business planning	
Week 4	a. Group discussion b. Pair work	a. Do you have any places that you consider "completely yours"? How do you personalize a space or a place? b. What are some differences in the way different groups (males/females/children/ adults) personalize their spaces? c. What do you think your organizational style say about your personality?	Vocabulary on accommodation and space styling, psychological issues	

3.4.2.1. Week 1

As the first week's activity, the means of getting the news and the effects of news were chosen. In the warm-up activity, participants divided to pairs and discussed what kind of tools they used and did not use to learn what was going on around them. After discussion, they made lists of devices to get news and information about the world. The lists that were formed by participants were discussed as a whole, and in the light of the outcomes, how people get the news in recent years was analyzed. As a common response, social media and web-based tools were selected as the most popular ways of learning the news and following the events in the world. In the second phase, outdated ways of getting the news and the reason behind their being out-of-date were discussed. As the next step, the ways of determining what type of indicators one could take into consideration when deciding the news they received would be regarded as reliable. As the final activity, participants were asked to state what steps they would take to make something they presented more reliable.

3.4.2.2. Week 2

In the second week, the themes were the impact of languages in our daily lives, the advantages and disadvantages of speaking more than one language. For the warm-up activity, participants were given a chance to pick one superpower out of two options: *time-travelling* or *mind reading*. Then they were asked which power could prove more useful in changing or preventing making mistakes. After the warm-up, as the first step of the activity, participants were asked some general questions about the possible contributions of knowing a foreign language and in what ways foreign languages increase one's intellectual quality. After discussing the effects of languages in one's life, participants were asked to determine what can cause difficulties in communication in groups of four or five. As a result, with combined effort, it was concluded that communication difficulties or communication apprehension can be caused by physical problems, emotional issues, environmental interferences, and educational and parental background. Following the problem deduction process, participants were asked to imagine what mistakes could mean for something if they could be changed. As the final discussion topic, they were asked to devise ways to improve communication skills and to overcome frustration and violence stemming from failure in communication.

3.4.2.3.   Week 3

In the third week, the themes were the possibility of having fun while working and the thinking process before choosing a career. As the warm-up activity, participants were presented an imaginary situation in which they were given a chance to travel anywhere to experience their dream holidays for a year without any obligations. The common idea after imagination and fantasizing was that it was impossible to have this type of easy-going life with the obligations and responsibilities life forced on them. Based on this, a discussion was initiated on the question: "Would it be possible to have fun and work at the same time?" Then, participants were asked to share their opinions with their peers and list the type of professions that would be fun for average person. The general idea was that for a career to be enjoyable it would have to involve travelling, meeting with different cultures, flexible working hours, nice colleagues, and lastly, a high income. Then, participants were asked what their dream jobs had been when they had been kids. With this discussion topic, the obstacles and reasons that could get one to change their choice of profession were listed. Related to this, they were asked to discuss how they, as future teachers, would encourage their own students to follow their dreams and choose professions they would enjoy in the future.

3.4.2.4.   Week 4

In the last week of the activities, the theme was the importance of personal spaces and its effect on personality. As the warm-up activity, participants were asked to describe their dream houses to their assigned pairs and make a note of their most characteristic features. Most pictured their dream houses as isolated places that were far away from humanity and possible in the middle of unspoiled nature. After warm-up activity, participants were asked to pair up and discuss what would it take to make some place one's own space, and how they preferred to organize the place they lived in. Following the pair discussion, participants were individually asked to describe the places they felt the most comfortable. The next related discussion point was the indications of personality that could be seen in one's own special spaces or places they lived in. Based on this, participants were asked to describe their best friends' personality taking their homes / rooms / dressing into consideration and make connections between personality and organizational behaviors.

3.4.3. Post-test Administration

Once the practice sessions were completed, the final step was to commence administration of post-tests. Participants, in both control and experimental groups, were scheduled for a final interview for scoring their speaking achievement levels. The same two scorers that had administered the first interview took place for the final interview. Participants were asked to pick TOEFL discussion questions from inside an envelope and speak for three or four minutes. Their oral performances were scored based on Speaking Grading Scale (SGS) developed by Kanatlar (2005). After the completion of interviews, each participant was asked to fill out Survey on Language Learning Scale developed by Liu and Jackson (2013) once again. This way, participants' speaking achievement scores and speaking anxiety levels before and after the speaking lessons could be measured and compared with one another.

3.5. Data Analysis

In data analysis process of the study, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data. First step of the data processing was the calculation of the mean scores, minimum and maximum values for the ages of participants. In the second step, number and percentage values of the participants' gender were processed. As the final step, mean scores, minimum and maximum values and standard deviation for GPA of the participants were calculated.

To gather data on participants' speaking achievement levels, their speaking performances in interviews were graded by two ELT Department research assistants experienced in EFL teaching. In this regard, mean scores, standard deviations, minimum and maximum scores and standard error of means related to their scores in grammar, vocabulary, intelligibility, fluency, task achievement sections and total scores for both pre-tests and post-tests were processed. As the following step, inter-rater and intra-rater reliability coefficients, pre-test and post-test reliability and overall reliability coefficients were calculated in accordance with Cronbach's Alpha. In Table 2, reliability values of the tests in terms of scorers, total values and overall values are presented. Data on Table 3 suggests that reliability levels of both pre-tests and post-tests were acceptable. For instance, reliability coefficient   presented for Scorer 1 indicated that reliability level of the pre-test was calculated as 0.86, and post-test reliability level was 0.80. As for Scorer 2, pre-test reliability level was 0.83, while post-test reliability was 0.85. Following the data analysis for the reliability levels of pre-tests and post-test for both Scorer 1 and

Scorer 2, a paired-sample t-tests were used as a means of processing whether there was any significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of each group. Moreover, independent sample t-tests were used to make a comparison between the value differences of two groups.

Table 4. Inter-rater and intra-rater reliability of the pre- and post-tests

Scorers	Pre-test		Post-test		Overall
Scorer 1	0.86		0.80		
		0.88		0.86	0.88
Scorer 2	0.83		0.85		

As the final step, as shown in Table 5, reliability coefficients for SLLS in accordance with Cronbach's Alpha and variance percentages were calculated for pre-tests and post-tests. Pre-test coefficients value for the pre-test was 0.86, and the percentage of the variance was 87.37. In addition, for post-tests, reliability coefficient value was 0.85, and the variance percentage was 85.15. The values showed that validity and reliability of the data were obtained.

Table 5. Survey on Language Learning Scale (SLLS) Reliability of the Pre- and Post-tests

Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha)		% of the Variance
Pre-test	0.86	87.37
Post-test	0.85	85.15

4.

FINDINGS

This section presents the data collected from participants who took place in instruction process of the study in the light of research questions devised during research. First question deals with the effect of the use of SL as a virtual language learning environment on speaking achievement. Second question is based on the effect of SL as a virtual language learning environment on speaking anxiety.

4.1. Research Question 1: Does SL as a Virtual Language Learning Environment Affect Speaking Achievement?

In this section, participants' speaking achievement scores will be statistically analyzed in terms of significance and difference in performance taking pre-test and post-test scores into account. In the analysis, statistics for control group and experimental group will be presented separately; subsequently, they will be compared regarding statistical values.

4.1.1. The Effect of Practice on Speaking Achievement in Control Group

Data on Table 6 presented below gives information about the differences in participants' speaking achievement scores, and it can be suggested that there was an increase in speaking achievement levels of participants. . According to values in the table, total mean score for pre-test was 58.91 while post-test mean score was 72.83. When it comes to specific values, in grammar section pre-test mean score was 17.12, and post-test mean was 21.00; vocabulary pre-test mean score was calculated as 17.12, and post-test mean was 19.50; intelligibility pre-test mean score was 13.08, and post test score was 16.83; fluency pre-test mean score was computed as 5.50 while post-test mean score was 6.75. Lastly, task achievement mean scores also showed an increase from pre-test to post-test. Task achievement pre-test mean score was calculated as 6.08 while post-test mean score was found to be 8.75. In short, it is obvious that speaking performance of the participants in control group changed for better after speaking practice sessions, considering the increase in speaking achievement mean scores.

Table 6. Speaking Achievement for the Control Group (Paired Samples t-test Statistics)

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Grammar	Pre-test	17.12	5.55	1.13
	Post-test	21.00	5.00	1.02
Vocabulary	Pre-test	17.12	5.48	1.12
	Post-test	19.50	5.15	1.05
Intelligibility	Pre-test	13.08	2.88	.59
	Post-test	16.83	2.94	.60
Fluency	Pre-test	5.50	1.84	.37
	Post-test	6.75	1.70	.35
Task Achievement	Pre-test	6.08	1.69	.34
	Post-test	8.75	1.19	.24
Total score	Pre-test	58.91	16.36	3.34
	Post-test	72.83	14.70	3.00

Based on data presented in Table 7 shown below, it can be suggested that there was a considerable increase in participants' speaking achievement scores. In addition it must be noted that all areas except for vocabulary section, the significance values were calculated as .00. Significance values for grammar, intelligibility, fluency, and task achievement were computed as .00 in value. However, significance value for vocabulary was found .05. In addition, significance value for total scores in pre-test and post-test was calculated as .00. Therefore, it can be concluded that comparison of pre-test and post-test scores provided a statistically significant correlation except for vocabulary section.

Table 7. Paired Samples t-test for the Control Group

	Paired Differences					Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
				Lower	Upper	
Grammar	3.87	5.96	1.21	1.35	6.39	.00
Vocabulary	2.37	5.86	1.19	-0.10	4.85	.05
Intelligibility	3.75	3.50	0.71	2.27	5.22	.00
Fluency	1.25	1.77	0.36	0.50	1.99	.00
Task Achievement	2.66	1.57	0.32	1.99	3.33	.00
Total score	13.91	16.75	3.41	6.84	20.99	.00

4.1.2. The Effect of Practice on Speaking Achievement in Experimental Group

As evidenced in Table 8 shown below, there was a considerable difference between speaking achievement scores of participants gained in pre-test and post-test. Statistical data in Table 6 indicates that total score means increased to 81.65 from the score of 63.65. When each section separately examined, it can be seen that mean scores in grammar section changed from 19.65 to 24.00; in vocabulary section, pre-test mean score was 18.15 while post-test mean score was 22.50; in intelligibility section, pre-test score was calculated as 13.20, but it was found to be 18.70 in post-test; in fluency section, mean score shifted from 6.10 to 7.50; and finally in task achievement section, pre-test mean score was 6.55 while post-test mean score was computed as 8.95.

Table 8. Speaking Achievement for the Experimental Group

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Grammar	Pre-test Post-test	19.65	5.28	1.18
		24.00	4.46	.99
Vocabulary	Pre-test Post-test	18.15	5.88	1.31
		22.50	5.20	1.16
Intelligibility	Pre-test Post-test	13.20	3.58	.80
		18.70	1.75	.39
Fluency	Pre-test Post-test	6.10	1.77	.40
		7.50	1.76	.39
Task Achievement	Pre-test Post-test	6.55	1.67	.37
		8.95	1.47	.33
Total score	Pre-test Post-test	63.65	16.55	3.70
		81.65	12.97	2.90

Table 9 below presents statistical data on significance values of pre-test and post-test administered to participants in experimental group. According to data presented in the table, it was suggested that all sections indicated significant correlation. Regarding the total score means and its significance value of .00, it can be stated that there was a significant correlation between pre-test and post-test scores of participants in experimental group. Generating .00 significance value, sections of grammar, intelligibility, fluency, and task achievement scores can be thought to have a significant correlation between pre-test and post-test scores. Lastly, vocabulary section had significance value of .01, which also suggested that there was a significance correlation.

Table 9. Paired Samples Test for the Experimental Group

	Paired Differences					Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
				Lower	Upper	
Grammar	4.35	5.01	1.12	2.01	6.69	.00
Vocabulary	4.35	6.19	1.38	1.45	7.25	.01
Intelligibility	5.50	2.89	.65	4.15	6.85	.00
Fluency	1.40	1.85	.41	.53	2.26	.00
Task Achievement	2.40	1.35	.30	1.77	3.03	.00
Total score	18.00	14.49	3.24	11.22	24.78	.00

4.1.3. Comparison of Traditional Speaking Activities and SL Speaking Activities

According to data presented in Table 10, no significant correlation between pre-test scores of control and experimental groups was found when scores of both groups were compared. However, mean scores of total pre-test scores compared, and total mean score for the control group was found to be 58.92, while mean score for the experimental score was calculated as 63.65. In spite of difference in total mean scores, no significant correlation was detected between two groups considering the .95 significance value. For grammar, mean score for control group was 17.12, while it was 19.65 for the experimental group, which showed no significant correlation with significance value of .99. Regarding vocabulary, control group mean score was 17.12, and experimental group mean score was 18.15. However, no significant difference was computed in the analysis which generated significance value of .82. In addition, considering intelligibility, mean score for the control group was 13.08, and 13.20 for the experimental group, showing no significant difference with the score of .39. When it comes to fluency, no significant difference was detected considering the significance value of .59. However, control group's mean score was 5.50, whereas experimental group's mean score was 6.10. Finally, as for task achievement, mean score for control group was 6.08, while it was 6.55 for experimental group. Yet, there was no significant difference between pre-test scores regarding fluency since significance value was found to be .95.

Table 10. Pre-test Scores for Control & Experimental Groups

	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F	Sig.
Grammar	Control Group	17.12	5.56	1.13	.00	.99
	Experimental Group	19.65	5.28	1.18		
Vocabulary	Control Group	17.12	5.49	1.12	.05	.82
	Experimental Group	18.15	5.88	1.31		
Intelligibility	Control Group	13.08	2.89	.59	.74	.39
	Experimental Group	13.20	3.58	.80		
Fluency	Control Group	5.50	1.84	.37	.29	.59
	Experimental Group	6.10	1.77	.40		
Task Achievement	Control Group	6.08	1.69	.34	.00	.97
	Experimental Group	6.55	1.67	.37		
Pretest total score	Control Group	58.92	16.36	3.34	.00	.95
	Experimental Group	63.65	16.55	3.70		

In a similar way, post-test scores for both groups are presented in Table 11, and it showed that there was no meaningful correlation between post-test scores of control and experimental groups. However, it can be deduced that participants in experimental group scored higher compared to control group scores. Considering total mean scores, significance value was found to be .93, suggesting there was no significant difference between two groups. Total mean score for control group was 72.83, while it was 81.65 for experimental group. Mean scores for grammar was calculated as follows: 21.00 for control group, and 24.00 for experimental group. Considering the significance value of .96, it was suggested that there was no significant difference between two groups. Moreover, regarding vocabulary, mean score for control group was 19.50, and 22.50 for experimental group. However, there was no meaningful correlation between two groups, taking value of .65 into consideration. For intelligibility, control group mean score was 16.83, and experimental group mean score was 18.70. According to the analysis, significance value was .18, and there was no significant difference between post-test scores. Furthermore, considering fluency, control group's mean score was 6.75, while experimental group's mean score was 7.50, and there was no significant difference

between two groups, because significance value was calculated as .96. Lastly, task achievement mean score for control group was 8.75, and 8.95 for experimental group. Significance value for task achievement scores for two groups was .93, which suggested that there was no significant difference between post-test scores of two groups.

Table 11. Post-test Scores for Control & Experimental Groups

	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F	Sig.
Grammar	Control Group	21.00	5.00	1.02	.00	.96
	Experimental Group	24.00	4.46	.99		
Vocabulary	Control Group	19.50	5.16	1.05	.21	.65
	Experimental Group	22.50	5.20	1.16		
Intelligibility	Control Group	16.83	2.94	.60	1.83	.18
	Experimental Group	18.70	1.75	.39		
Fluency	Control Group	6.75	1.70	.35	.00	.96
	Experimental Group	7.50	1.76	.39		
Task Achievement	Control Group	8.75	1.19	.24	.47	.49
	Experimental Group	8.95	1.47	.33		
Posttest total score	Control Group	72.83	14.70	3.00	.00	.93
	Experimental Group	81.65	12.97	2.90		

4.2. Research Question 2: Does SL as a Virtual Language Learning Environment Have any Effect on Speaking Anxiety?

This section presents data analysis on the effect of instructional process on speaking anxiety levels of control group, and the effect of SL on SA in experimental group. Subsequently, speaking anxiety levels of control and experimental groups are compared in the light of data gathered based on pre-test and post-test correlations.

4.2.1. Instruction Effect on Speaking Anxiety in Control Group

In this section, results gathered from SLLS concerning scores of participants in control group are presented. Since the scale employed 5-point Likert Scale

Model, scores on 2.5 or above were considered as high in the sense of response, whereas scores below 2.5 were regarded as low. To shed light on control group participants' foreign language and speaking anxiety levels, pre-test scores were given below for each item in the scale. In addition, the scale was divided into four categories in terms of specific areas as follows: FLA, language class sociability, language class risk-taking, and unwillingness to communicate.

As for pre-test results for FLA, participants felt that they were almost sure of themselves when they were speaking in English classes (x=2.79). In addition, they were quite worried about making mistakes (x=3.50), and they found themselves trembling when they were about to be called on (x=2.96). They also felt frightened when they did not understand what the teacher said in English (x=3.08). Moreover, participants did not feel bothered in English classes (x=2.29), while sometimes they found themselves thinking about other things that had nothing to do with the class (x=2.78). Furthermore, they strongly thought that other students were better in speaking English (x=3.00). When it comes to language tests, they felt moderately at ease (x=3.58), and they strongly felt panicked if they were required to speak without preparation (x=3.92). Additionally, failing English classes was a significant concern for the participants (x=3.25), and they understood why someone might get upset over English classes (x=3.25). In addition, they greatly got nervous which caused them to forget thing they knew (x=3.54). They also felt embarrassed to volunteer answers (x=2.50), and the idea of speaking with a native speaker would stress them out (x=2.67). Participants got upset when they could not understand what the teacher was correcting (x=2.67), and even if they got prepared, they slightly felt anxious in English classes (x=2.75). Moreover, they felt partially reluctant to go to English classes (x=2.63), and they felt moderately confident when speaking in class (x=2.92). Furthermore, they mostly did not think that teacher was always ready to correct their mistakes (x=2.42). Participants of control group also felt quite stressed when they were about to be called on to participate (x=3.04). Moreover, they felt no confusion while studying for English exams (x=1.78), while they felt pressure preparing for classes (x=3.21). Participants thought that other students spoke better than they did in English (x=3.04), felt self-conscious when speaking in front of others (x=2.74), and they kept track of the flow of classes (x=2.25). Furthermore, participants felt more tense in English classes (x=2.92), got nervous while speaking (x=3.17), and they moderately felt sure about themselves on their way to the classes (x=2.75). They also got a little nervous when they could not understand what teacher said (x=2.54), and they felt a bit overwhelmed about the rules they had to

learn to speak English (x=2.62). What is more, participants were slightly afraid that their friends would laugh at them while speaking (x=2.75), and they would feel comfortable speaking with a native speaker (x=3.13). They significantly felt tension when they were expected to answer questions unprepared (x=3.54), and they did not care about the gender of people they speak to (x=2.04). Finally, they greatly felt stressed when they had to discuss thing they were unfamiliar with (x=3.50), and they did not care about the number of words they had to learn to speak English (x=2.25).

When it comes to language class sociability, participants decided to wait and learn the rule properly before they used it (x=3.00), and did not want to try difficult sentences in class (x=2.88). In addition, they mostly did not want to express complicated ideas in class (x=3.29), and they did not concern themselves about small details in grammar while speaking (x=3.17).

As for language class risk-taking, participants showed inclination to try a sentence to themselves before saying it in class (x=3.70), to prefer to follow basic structures rather than using complicated expressions (x=3.83). They also thought that learning English is more fun with a group effort (x=3.66), and they enjoyed talking to teacher and other students in class (3.00). Moreover, they mostly enjoyed interaction (x=3.29), and agreed on the importance of group spirit in English classes (x=3.88).

Concerning unwillingness to communicate, participants were slightly afraid to speak up in conversations (x=2.92), they talked less because they felt shy (x=3.13), they did not prefer speaking a lot due to their shyness (x=2.08), and they slightly wanted to get involved in group conversations (x=2.75). They felt moderately nervous about speaking in groups (x=2.96), and they similarly felt anxious about expressing themselves to others (x=2.88) and in a group (2.88). In addition, they seldom preferred talking in group (x=2.66), and they found it easy to establish communication with stranger (x=3.08). They did not think that their friends might be dishonest in their communications (x=2.21), and believed that their families and friends cared about their ideas and suggestions (x=1.29). They also trusted the truthfulness of their friends (x=3.83), and they did not agree that they did not ask their families and friends for help (x=2.25). They strongly believed that their families and friends understood their feelings (x=4.00), and they declined the possibility that their families would not enjoy listening to their interests (x=1.96). Similarly, they strongly believed that their families and friends listened to their ideas (x=4.35) and

advice (x=3.75). Finally, they partially agreed that their friends were kind to them because they wanted something in return (x=2.83), and they did not agree that talking to other people was a waste of time (x=1.46).

As for post-test results for FLA, participants thought that they were sure of themselves when they were speaking in English (x=3.17). What is more, they were less worried about making mistakes (x=3.25), they felt less nervous when they were about to be called on (x=2.65). They felt less frightened when they did not understand what the teacher said in English (x=2.54). Furthermore, participants started to feel bothered taking English classes (x=2.50), and they found themselves thinking about irrelevant things in class (x=2.57). In addition, they thought that other students were better in speaking English (x=2.88), they felt moderately at ease for language tests (x=3.37), and they strongly felt panicked if they were required to speak without preparation (x=3.37). Additionally, failing English classes was a significant concern for the participants (x=3.13), and they understood why someone might get upset over English classes (x=3.50). In addition, they greatly got nervous which caused them to forget things they knew (x=3.00). They also felt embarrassed to volunteer answers (x=2.58), and the idea of speaking with a native speaker would stress them out (x=2.54). Participants got upset when they could not understand what the teacher was correcting (x=3.00), and even if they got prepared, they slightly felt anxious in English classes (x=2.71). Moreover, they felt partially reluctant to go to English classes (x=2.75), and they felt moderately confident when speaking in class (x=3.08). Furthermore, they mostly did not think that teacher was always ready to correct their mistakes (x=2.58). Participants of control group also felt quite stressed when they were about to be called on to participate (x=3.13). Moreover, they felt no confusion while studying for English exams (x=2.26), while they felt pressure preparing for classes (x=3.17). They barely believed that other students spoke better than they did in English (x=2.54), and they felt self-conscious when speaking in front of others (x=2.96), and they felt that class moved so quickly they could not follow it (x=2.50). In addition, participants felt more tense in English classes (x=2.63), got nervous while speaking (x=3.04), and they mostly felt sure about themselves before going to the classes (x=2.92). Furthermore, they got quite nervous when they could not understand what the teacher said (x=2.83), and they felt more overwhelmed about the rules they had to learn to speak English (x=2.75). Moreover, participants in control group were not afraid that their friends would laugh at them while speaking (x=2.21), and they believed they would strongly feel comfortable speaking with a native speaker (x=3.42). They were mostly nervous

when they were expected to answer questions unprepared (x=3.13), and they did not concern themselves about the gender of people they speak to (x=2.25). Finally, they moderately felt tensed when they had to discuss unfamiliar things (x=3.29), and they were overwhelmed by the number of words they had to learn to speak English (x=2.92).

For the post-test responses for language class sociability, participants preferred to wait before trying an English word (x=3.25), did not like trying out a difficult sentence in class (x=2.83). They were a little bothered for expressing complicated ideas in English (x=2.54), and they strongly felt that they did not worry about small details of grammar (x=2.46).

Concerning language class risk-taking, participants in control group preferred to say a sentence to themselves before using it (x=3.63), and they believed using basic sentence models and avoiding misusing language were more logical (x=3.54). In addition, they thought that learning English in group was more fun (x=3.42), talking with the teacher and others was enjoyable (x=3.04), interaction with other students was likeable (x=3.38), and having a strong group spirit was important for English classroom (x=3.75).

As for unwillingness to communicate, participants were afraid to speak up in conversations (x=2.75), they talked less because they were shy (x=3.25), and they did not considered themselves as talkative (x=2.25). Moreover, they liked to get involved in group discussions (x=3.04), and they felt nervous when speaking to others (x=2.88). They did not have devastating fears about group interactions (x=2.83), however they were afraid to express themselves in a group (x=3.41), they sometimes avoided group discussions (x=2.58), and they did not prefer to talk instead of listening in group discussions (x=2.42). Furthermore, they found it easy to make conversation with strangers (x=3.21), did not think their friends were dishonest with them (x=2.21), and disagreed that their families and friends did not listen to their ideas (x=1.67). They strongly believed their friends truthfulness (x=3.88), and they disagreed that they do not ask their friends for help (x=2.00). What is more, they believed that their families and friends understood their feelings (x=3.67), and they did not think their families did not enjoy discussing their interests (x=2.17). In addition, they thought that their families (x=3.96) and friends (x=3.63) listened to their ideas and advice. They also considered the possibility that their friends were nice because they might want something in return (x=2.71), and they did not believe that talking to other people was a waste of time (x=1.92).

According to Table 12, the paired sample test comparing control group's pre-test and post-test results in terms of correlation suggested that thirteen items were significantly correlated. First, mean score difference indicated that confidence level of participants when speaking in foreign language class increased (p=.02). Second, fear levels of participants when they did not understand what teacher said showed a decrease (p=.02). This suggested that they did not feel as frightened when they were lost listening to their teacher as they used to do. Third, they felt less panicked when they had to speak without any preparation in language class (p=.01). Fourth, fear of being nervous when things were forgotten slightly decreased (p=.05). Fifth, the confusion caused by test preparation seemed to have increased (p=.03); that is, participants felt confused when they prepared for foreign language examinations. Sixth, participants felt more secure about their speaking performances when comparing themselves to their friends (p=.03). Seventh, after the sessions, participants felt safer around their friends when they attempted to speak in English (p=.03). Eighth, participants' fear of being called out by the teacher when they were unprepared relatively decreased (p=.02). Ninth, it appeared that participants felt stressed out when they found out that they needed to expand their vocabulary constantly to be able to speak English (p=.00). Tenth, participants' unwillingness to explain complicated ideas in English started to diminish after the sessions (p=.02). Eleventh, participants' worry that their families and friends weren't interested in their ideas increased (p=.03). Twelfth, participants consistently claimed in the item that their families and friends weren't interested in their suggestions and ideas (p=.05). Last, participants were worried that talking to other people about anything might be a waste of time (p=.04).

Table 12. The paired sample test results for control group

	Paired Differences							
			Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation		Lower	Upper	T	Df	
I feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	-.38	.71	.15	-.07	-.68	-2.58	23	.02
It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	.54	1.02	.21	.97	.11	2.6	23	.02
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class	.54	.98	.20	.95	.13	2.72	23	.01
In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know	.54	1.28	.26	1.08	.00	2.07	23	.05
The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get	-.48	.99	.21	-.05	-.91	-2.30	22	.03
I always feel that the others students speak the foreign language better than I do	.50	1.02	.21	.93	.07	2.40	23	.03
I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language	.54	1.10	.23	1.00	.08	2.40	23	.03
I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance	.42	.78	.16	.74	.09	2.63	23	.02
I feel overwhelmed by the number of words I have to learn to speak in English	-.67	.96	.20	-.26	-1.07	-3.39	23	.00
At this point, I don't like trying to express complicated ideas in English class	.75	1.39	.28	1.34	.16	2.64	23	.02
My friends and family don't listen to my ideas and suggestions	-.38	.77	.16	-.05	-.70	-2.39	23	.03
My friends and family listen to my ideas and suggestions	.39	.89	.19	.78	.00	2.10	22	.05
Talking to other people is just a waste of time	-.46	1.02	.21	-.03	-.89	-2.20	23	.04

4.2.2. The Effect of SL Speaking Activities on Speaking Anxiety in Experimental Group

Similarly, responses for experimental group were analyzed in terms of pre-test and post-test scores, and the same categorization was applied in this section to divide SLSS into meaningful groups.

Concerning pre-test scores of experimental group participants, their responses for FLA section were reported. Participants were sure of themselves when speaking in English (x=3.05), they worried about making mistakes (x=3.10), they moderately trembled when they were about to be called on (x=2.55), they were afraid when they did not understand the teacher (x=2.60), they did not feel bothered to take English classes (x=2.05), they did not feel distracted in English classes (x=2.45), and they slightly thought that other students were better speakers in English (x=2.65). In addition, they felt at ease during tests (x=3.25), they were panicky when they spoke without preparation (x=3.15), they moderately worried about failing English classes (x=2.85), and they understood why people might feel upset over English classes (x=2.90). Moreover, participants got a little nervous, they forgot things they knew (x=2.80), they felt slightly embarrassed to volunteer answers (x=2.55), they thought they would be nervous to speak with a native speaker (x=2.60), and they did not get upset when they did not understand what the teacher was correcting (x=2.30). Furthermore, they did not feel anxious when they were prepared for English classes (x=2.45), they felt reluctant to go to English classes (x=3.15), they felt confident in speaking in English classes (x=3.25), they were a little afraid that the teacher was ready to correct every mistake (x=2.55), they felt their hearts pounding when they were about to be called on in English class (x=3.05), and they did not feel confused preparing for exams (x=2.15). In addition, they felt partially pressured to prepare very well for English classes (x=2.60), they did not think that other students spoke better than them in English (x=2.45), and they felt a little self-conscious about speaking in front of other students (x=2.53). What is more, they did not think the flow of the class was so quick for them (x=2.20), they did not feel more nervous in English classes (x=2.45), they felt a little nervous when speaking in English classes (x=2.80), they also felt relaxed on their way to English classes (x=3.30). In addition, they got a bit nervous when they did not understand every word teacher said (x=2.50), they felt moderately overwhelmed by the number of rules they had to learn to speak English (x=2.50), they were not afraid that their friends would laugh at them when they were speaking in English (x=1.95), they also believed that they would be comfortable around native speakers of English

(x=3.70). Moreover, participants got nervous when they were asked questions they were unprepared for (x=3.15), they did not get tense and nervous when speaking with opposite sex (x=1.90), they got tense and nervous when discussing unfamiliar subjects (x=2.95), and they were overwhelmed by the number of words they had to learn to speak English (x=2.75).

When it comes to language class sociability, participants wanted to wait before trying a new word (x=3.05), and they did not prefer to use difficult sentences in class (x=2.75). In addition, they did not like to express complicated ideas in English class (x=2.75), and they preferred to say what they wanted without worrying about small details in grammar (x=3.45).

Considering language class risk-taking, participants decided to say a sentence to themselves before using it in class (x=3.05), they mostly preferred to use basic models rather than complicated ones in language (x=3.10), and they strongly believed that learning English was more fun in group (x=3.60). Furthermore, they enjoyed talking with teacher and friends in English class (x=3.55), they also enjoyed interaction with other students in English class (x=3.35), and they thought that having a strong group spirit in English class was important (x=3.90).

As for unwillingness to communicate, participants in experimental group were a little afraid to speak up in conversations (x=2.50), they thought that they talked less because they were shy (x=2.65), and they did not think they talked a lot due to shyness (x=2.40). In addition, they liked to get involved in group discussions (x=3.10), they felt a little nervous when they had to speak with others (x=2.75), they had no fears about expressing their ideas in groups (x=3.05), and they were not afraid to express themselves in group (x=2.30). Moreover, they did not avoid group conversations (x=2.35), they talked rather than listen in groups (x=2.55), they strongly found it easy to communicate with strangers (x=3.35), and they did not think their friends were dishonest (x=2.20). Furthermore, they disagreed that their families and friends listened to their ideas (x=1.65), and they believed that their friends were truthful (x=3.65). In addition, they did not agree that they did not ask help from their friends and families (x=2.15), they strongly believed that their families and friends understood them (x=3.70). They did not believe that their families and friends did not enjoy discussing their interests (x=1.80), and they strongly favored the statement that their families and friends listened to their ideas (x=4.05). What is more, they stated that their friends and families sought their advice (x=3.85), they did not think that other people were friendly because they wanted something in return (x=2.47),

and they mostly did not think that talking to other people was a waste of time (x=1.60).

Concerning post-test responses of experimental group on FLA, participants felt sure of themselves when speaking in English (x=3.40), felt worried about making mistakes (x=2.80), trembled when they were about to be called on (x=2.60). However, they were not frightened when they did not understand what the teacher was saying (x=2.45), and it would not bother them to take English classes (x=2.15), they also did not feel distracted during English classes (x=2.25), and they did not keep thinking the other students were better than them (x=2.20). In addition, they were generally at ease during English tests (x=3.45), and yet they started to panic when they spoke without preparation (x=2.75). They also partially worried about the consequences of failing English classes (x=2.85), and they mostly understood why some people would be upset over English (x=3.05). Moreover, they sometimes got so nervous they forgot what they knew (x=2.70), they felt embarrassed to volunteer answers (x=2.75), they stated they would not be nervous speaking with native speakers (x=2.10), and that they did not get upset when they could not understand the teacher (x=2.45). Furthermore, they did not feel worried when they were prepared for English class (x=2.35), and they were not reluctant to go to English classes (x=2.35). On the other hand, they felt confident speaking in English (x=3.30), and they were not afraid that teacher was ready to correct every mistake they made (x=2.30). What is more, they could feel their hearts pounding when they were going to be called on (x=2.75), they did not get confused while preparing for tests (x=2.10), they did not feel pressure to prepare well for tests (x=2.20), and they did not think that other students could speak better in English (x=2.20). In addition, participants felt self-conscious about speaking English in front of others (x=3.21), and they did not think that class moves so quickly they could not keep up (x=2.10). Although they did not feel more tense in English classes than in any other class (x=2.35), they were nervous and confused when speaking in English classes (x=2.50). However, they felt sure and relaxed on their way to English class (x=3.30), and they did not get nervous when they did not understand the teacher (x=2.25). They also felt a little overwhelmed by the number of rules they had to learn to speak English (x=2.75), yet they were not afraid that other students would laugh when they spoke in English (x=1.80). Furthermore, they strongly believed that they would be comfortable around native speakers of English (x=4.00), and they got nervous about questions when they were unprepared (x=2.85). Finally, they did not care about gender of the person they spoke to (x=1.75), they got tense when they discussed

subjects that were unfamiliar (x=2.85), and they were slightly overwhelmed by the number of words they had to learn to speak English (x=2.55).

As for language class sociability, participants in experimental group preferred to wait before they knew how to use words properly (x=3.10), they did not like to try difficult sentences (x=2.70), they did not like expressing complicated ideas in English (x=2.60), and they generally did not worry about small details of grammar when they were speaking (x=3.40).

When it comes to language class risk-taking, participants preferred to say a sentence to themselves before trying it out (x=3.25), they preferred to follow basic sentence models in conversations in English (x=3.50), and they thought that learning English in a group was more fun (x=3.50). In addition, they enjoyed talking to the teacher and other students in English class (x=3.60), they found it fun to interact with other students (x=3.65), and they strongly believed that having a strong group spirit was important in English classrooms (x=4.00).

Regarding unwillingness to communicate, participants were not afraid to speak up in conversations (x=2.35), they talked less because they were shy (x=2.50), and they believed they might talk a lot because they were not shy (x=2.55). They also wanted to get involved in group discussions (x=3.45), and they did not feel nervous when they had to speak with others (x=2.45). They mostly did not have problems expressing themselves in group (x=3.25), and they stated that they were not afraid to express their ideas in groups (x=2.35). In other statement, they responded that they did not avoid group discussions (x=2.15), and they did not agree that they talked rather than listened during conversations (x=2.35). In addition, they found it easy to make conversation with strangers (x=3.55), and they did not think that their friends were dishonest in their communication (x=2.10). They also did not think that their friends and families did not listen to their ideas (x=1.60). Furthermore, they strongly believed that their friends were truthful with them (x=3.65), and they somewhat agreed that they did not ask for advice from family and friends (x=2.60). Moreover, they argued that their families and friends understood their feelings (x=3.90), and they did not think that their families would not enjoy discussing their interests (x=1.85). They also strongly stated that their friends and families listened to their ideas (x=4.15) and sought their advice (x=4.05). Finally, they validated the possibility that their friends were only friendly because they wanted something in return (x=2.53), and they disagreed that talking to other people was a waste of time (x=1.75).

In Table 13, comparison of mean scores and significance values for experimental group's pre-test and post-tests were presented, and only five items appeared to have significant correlation. First, participants of experimental group believed that their speaking proficiencies increased at the end of SL activities (p=.05). Because in the pre-test they agreed that their peers' speaking levels were higher than their level, whereas, in the post-test they showed an inclination towards being self-confident about their own performances. Second, participants felt more relaxed about speaking in language classroom without preparation at the end of the sessions (p=.04). Third, participants in experimental group seemed to have lost their reluctance to attend to language classes after SL speaking sessions based on the slight decrease in mean score (p=.02). Fourth, the increase in the mean score indicated that participants felt more self-conscious about speaking English in front of others; however, values in table evidenced that SL speaking sessions improved their self-confidence when speaking in front of their classmates (p=.04). Last, anxiety and nervousness levels of participants diminished according to the scores they reflected on the post-test (p=.03). In other words, participants in experimental group felt less nervous about speaking English in class after SL speaking sessions.

Table 13. The paired sample test results for experimental group

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	T	Df	
I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am	.45	.94	.21	.89	.01	2.13	19	.05
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class	.40	.82	.18	.78	.016	2.17	19	.04
I am reluctant to go to my language class	.80	1.40	.31	1.45	.14	2.56	19	.02
I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students	-.68	1.34	.31	-.04	-1.33	-2.23	18	.04
I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class	.30	.57	.13	.57	.03	2.34	19	.03

4.2.3. Comparison of Experimental and Control Groups in terms of Speaking Anxiety

To detect the difference between control and experimental groups, a comparison between pre-test and post-test scores of both groups were made. As presented in Table 14 below, four items in SLLS for pre-test scores were significantly correlated. The first item "I understand why some people get so upset over foreign language class", the second item "I like to get involved in group discussions", and the third item "My friends and family don't listen to my ideas and suggestions" generated significance value of .02, which suggested a strong correlation. In addition, the last item which was "I believe my friends and family understand my feelings" generated significance value of .05.

Table 14. Pre-test Scores (Control & Experimental Groups, Independent Samples Test)

	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F	Sig.
I understand why some people get so upset over foreign language class	Control Group	3.25	.99	.20	6.13	.02
	Experimental Group	2.90	1.33	.30		
I like to get involved in group discussions	Control Group	2.75	.94	.19	6.01	.02
	Experimental Group	3.10	1.25	.28		
My friends and family don't listen to my ideas and suggestions	Control Group	1.29	.62	.13	5.56	.02
	Experimental Group	1.65	1.09	.24		
I believe my friends and family understand my feelings	Control Group	4.00	.88	.18	4.24	.05
	Experimental Group	3.70	1.08	.24		

As for the comparison between post-test scores of both groups, Table 15 shown below presented information on the correlation of items. It was evidenced from the data that seven items were significantly correlated in the sense of comparing two groups. The item questioning if they worry about the consequences of failing English class gave .03 as the significance value. The second item which was "It embarrasses me when I volunteer answers in my English class" generated

.03 as significance value, which was quite significant in correlation. The third item "I feel confident when I speak English in class" also had correlation, which generated significance value of .04. Furthermore, the fourth item was "I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes", and it had the significance value of .03. The fifth item which interrogated the willingness to express complicated ideas in English generated .04 as the significance value, and the sixth item which was "I like to get involved in group discussions" was strongly significant with the value of .02. Finally, the last item "I don't ask for advice from family or friends when I have to make decisions" was quite significant considering that it generated significance value of .01.

Table 15. Post-test Scores (Control & Experimental Groups, Independent Samples Test)

	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F	Sig.
I worry about the consequences of failing my English class	Control Group	3.13	.99	.20	4.91	.03
	Experimental Group	2.85	1.34	.30		
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class	Control Group	2.58	.83	.17	4.94	.03
	Experimental Group	2.75	1.25	.28		
I feel confident when I speak English in class	Control Group	3.08	.83	.17	4.40	.04
	Experimental Group	3.30	1.13	.25		
I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes	Control Group	2.63	.97	.20	5.07	.03
	Experimental Group	2.35	1.35	.30		
At this point, I don't like to express complicated ideas in English class	Control Group	2.54	.93	.19	4.74	.04
	Experimental Group	2.60	1.31	.29		
I like to get involved in group discussions	Control Group	3.04	.86	.18	5.85	.02
	Experimental Group	3.45	1.15	.26		
I don't ask for advice from family or friends when I have to make decisions	Control Group	2.00	.72	.15	6.76	.01
	Experimental Group	2.60	1.14	.26		

5.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Conclusions

Six conclusions can be reached in the study:

1. It can be concluded that the use of traditional speaking activities in speaking classes increase speaking achievement. Speaking proficiency levels are positively affected by the traditional speaking sessions in a way that grammar and vocabulary capabilities are elevated, intelligibility and fluency of oral responses are developed, and finally learners' ability to find appropriate responses to situations indicates improvement.

2. Similarly, it is be concluded that the use SL in speaking classes considerable contributions to speaking achievement regarding the performance-related increase in grammar, vocabulary, intelligibility, fluency, and task achievement. In other words, grammar and vocabulary capabilities are positively affected by SL speaking sessions. Furthermore, the use of SL in speaking activities regarding sentences produced indicates a considerable development in fluency, intelligibility, and ability to give appropriate responses.

3. When a comparison between traditional and SL-oriented speaking sessions is made, it can be concluded that both environments shows a positive influence on speaking achievement levels. However, it can be stated that SL's contribution to speaking performance surpasses that which traditional speaking sessions have accomplished. In other words, SL greatly improves grammar and vocabulary capacities of learners. Additionally, SL speaking sessions are useful for developing intelligibility, fluency and task achievement levels.

4. Related to speaking anxiety, it can be concluded that the use of traditional speaking activities has positive effects on FLA, unwillingness to communicate, language class sociability and language class risk-taking levels. Learners who are exposed to traditional speaking sessions turn out to be less-anxious in speaking, more sociable, more willing to participate in conversations. In addition, risk-taking in language class is greatly elevated. It can be concluded that traditional speaking sessions has a positive impact on foreign language speaking anxiety.

5. Concerning SL-oriented environment, it can be concluded that the use of SL in speaking classes does not bring a considerable change in terms of anxiety levels among EFL learners. Yet, it can be seen that SL is also a useful tool to establish sociability and risk-taking among language learners. In addition, with the help of SL speaking sessions, FLA levels and unwillingness to communicate slightly decrease. In other words, learners feel relaxed and sociable when they are introduced to SL environment.

6. As the final conclusion, comparing traditional and SL-based speaking sessions, it can be stated that there is not a significant difference between the change rations for anxiety levels. Although it is possible to claim that both speaking sessions cause the same change patterns after the speaking sessions that take place in different learning environments, it can be concluded that traditional speaking sessions are more successful to decrease foreign language speaking anxiety among EFL learners. Finally, it can be concluded that even though SL speaking sessions has positive effects on speaking anxiety, they are not superior to the effects of traditional speaking sessions. In addition, traditional speaking sessions is a better way to eliminate unwillingness to communicate and more useful for raising language class sociability and language class risk-taking levels.

5.2. Implications

In this sub-section, a comparison is made between the findings and conclusions of the current study and the ones found in previous studies. First, language learning practices made on SL as a virtual language learning environment are useful and promising in parallel to the findings of similar studies (Aydin, 2013b; Aydin & Guzel, 2014). For instance, as Aydin (2013) and Aydin and Guzel (2014) reviews that SL has a great potential to be an alternative language practice environment as opposed to traditional language classrooms, it can be inferred that findings obtained from this study reaches a consensus on SL's potential as an alternative language learning environment. In addition, in a social interaction perspective, the study concludes that SL serves as a collaboration-based, socializing language learning environment as suggested by similar research (Aydin, 2013b; Aydin & Guzel, 2014; Balcikanli, 2012; Couto; 2010). Second, studies which focus on SL as a language learning environment also conclude that SL can push the boundaries of traditional language learning classrooms by making it more vivid, and collaboration-based in terms of

interaction, thus making SL as an interesting alternative environment for language learning (Peterson, 2012; Wang et al., 2009; Wang & Shao, 2012). Therefore, it is possible to claim that findings in this study matches the conclusions made in similar research. Third, as Aydin (2013b), Balcikanli (2012), and Couto (2010) state, SL improves speaking performance of EFL learners in a way that they feel more relaxed and care-free when they are expected to interact with each other. Similarly, findings of this study conclude that SL diminishes anxiety levels of EFL learners when they speak English in language classrooms. Fifth, Mayrath et al. (2011) pinpoint that EFL learners struggled to focus on language tasks during language practice since it is distracting for them to spend time in a technological environment of SL. In the same way, findings of this study conclude that speaking sessions on SL do not considerably improve speaking proficiency of EFL learners as the traditional practices do.

In conclusion, as SL can be used as an alternative environment for language practice, it can be noted that EFL learners consider it as a useful and enjoyable environment. However, it is also necessary to state that SL is not a superior language practice tool when it is compared to traditional speaking activities. Although previous research supports the notion that SL has a remarkable potential to replace conventional methods in language practice, findings in the current study claim it can be regarded as the opposite. In other words, despite its usefulness and promising features, SL as an unconventional language practice tool is not necessarily a learning environment that should replace language learning methods. Yet, it is possible to assert that SL might be quite useful language practice tool as an alternative tool that can be used as an aid in language activities. The contradiction between the results of other studies and findings of this research can be interpreted in connection with some factors such as learners' unfamiliarity with SL environment, lack of pedagogically-appropriate tasks specifically designed for SL, and distractive nature of unconventional methods (Mayrath et al., 2011). Similarly, findings indicate that these factors are also in motion in the experimental settings of this study.

5.3. Practical Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of the study, some practical recommendations can be made to shed light on the issue of speaking anxiety among EFL learners. First of all, it can be asserted that speaking activities that take place in traditional settings should be treated as a key element in language classrooms. In this sense, learners should be given opportunities to practice their oral interaction skills in target

language, because it is possible to claim that the amount of practice and frequency of speaking sessions that enable them to polish their speaking directly affect their speaking proficiency levels. Therefore, policy makers, curriculum developers should be aware that the existence of speaking practice in traditional language classrooms should be strengthened. Second, using SL as an alternative language practice environment should be recognized as an additional source to language classrooms. That is because, SL can be used as quite useful tool, when it comes to oral interaction in target language, and it is an opportunity to change traditional classroom environment. Therefore, teachers should use SL as a language practice environment since it reduces anxiety levels of EFL learners, increases language class sociability and encourages learners to take more risks in conversations. In addition, policy makers, curriculum developers and teachers should focus on designing suitable learning environments and tasks on SL to make language practice more effective. Third, the time spent on using SL as a language learning environment should not exceed the time spent for conventional speaking activities in traditional classrooms. The reason is that SL might cause learners to get distracted from actual tasks and classroom spirit. In addition, although SL is an alternative language practice environment that reduces speaking anxiety to some extent, it is not a better way to overcome anxiety-related issues faced in language classrooms when compared to traditional classes. Therefore, it can be claimed that SL should be used as an additional environment for traditional language classrooms, and should not exceed conventional activities. Last but not least, SL's positive effect on willingness to communicate, language class sociability, and language class risk-taking should be exploited in speaking practice by using SL in speaking activities.

5.4. Recommendations for Further Research

In the light of the findings of the study, some recommendations for further research should be made. First, future research should focus on the effect of SL on foreign language speaking anxiety in different contexts such as different age groups, achievement levels and cultural settings. In other words, it is necessary to obtain a wide range of data providing information for various contexts and circumstances. Additionally, research should focus on designing suitable speaking activities and speaking tasks specifically for SL environment, because it is explicit that SL is an alternative language practice environment which has its own unique dynamics. Furthermore, there is a need for more studies that seek alternative virtual language

learning environments and the effects of those virtual environments similar to SL on speaking anxiety among EFL learners should be investigated meticulously. Finally, future studies should focus on variables such as age, gender, academic achievement in the context of foreign language speaking anxiety. In addition to speaking achievement and speaking anxiety; other cognitive, affective, and social factors should be examined in relation with SL's effect in further research.

5.5. Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations that should be noted. First, in the study, 42 participants take place, and 24 of them are in traditional group, while 20 students participate in control group. In terms of demographics, gender dominance appears to be on favor of female participants. Dominance of females is not deliberate, on the contrary it is the demographic nature of ELT departments in Turkey. Second, for the study, SL and traditional language practice environments are used as speaking practice tools. In other words, the activities are limited to two different environments as traditional language learning setting and SL as a virtual language learning environment. Third, as for the activities, speaking sessions lasting for four weeks are used in both traditional and SL environments. Each speaking session is designed to take 45-minute-long time period. Fourth, speaking sessions are designed to stimulate group interaction among EFL learners by using pair-work and group work. Fifth, as data collection tools, interviews that consist of TOEFL speaking topics, and SLLS which involves 65 items are used. Finally, the study is designed as an experimental research, consisting of a control and an experimental group with speaking achievement and speaking anxiety levels as variables.

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7.
APPENDIX

Appendix 1

SPEAKING GRADING SCALE (Kanatlar, 2005)

GRAMMAR 30	
5. accurate and appropriate use of grammar with few noticeable errors which do not affect communication	30
4. occasional use of grammar errors which do not, however, affect communication	24
3. frequent use of grammar errors which occasionally may affect communication	18
2. use of grammar errors which affect communication	12
1. use of grammar errors (even in basic structures) result in disrupted communication	6
VOCABULARY 30	
5. accurate and appropriate use of vocabulary with few noticeable wrong words which do not affect communication	30
4. occasional use of wrong words which do not, however affect communication	24
3. frequent use of wrong words which occasionally may affect communication	18
2. use of wrong words and limited vocabulary which affect communication	12
1. use of wrong words and vocabulary limitations (even in basic structures) result in disrupted communication	6
INTELLIGIBILITY 20	
5. easily understandable	20
4. little difficulty in being understood	16
3. occasional difficulty in being understood	12
2. frequent difficulty in being understood	8
1. difficulty to understand	4

FLUENCY 10		
5. natural flow of speech with minimal hesitation	10	
4. occasional hesitation, which do not interfere with communication	8	
3. frequent hesitations, which occasionally may affect communication	6	
2. usually hesitant that affects communication	4	
1. no connected speech result in disrupted communication	2	
TASK ACHIEVEMENT 10		
5. tasks completed fully	10	
4. tasks completed adequately	8	
3. tasks completed almost adequately	6	
2. tasks completed inadequately	4	
1. tasks not completed	2	
TOTAL	100	

Appendix 2

Section 1. Background Questionnaire

Name _____	Gender Female (1) Male (2)
Age _____	GPA _____

Section 2. Survey on Language Learning (Liu & Jackson, 2008)

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. I feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2. I worry about making mistakes in language class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
5. It would bother me to take more foreign language classes.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
7. I keep thinking that the other students are	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

better at languages than I am.					
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
11. I understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
14. I would be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
15. I get upset when I have problems understanding what the teacher is correcting.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
17. I am reluctant go to my language class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
21. The more I study for a language test, the	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

more confused I get.

22. I feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
34. I get tense and nervous when talking to a	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

person whose sex is opposite to mine.

35. I get tense and nervous when I have to discuss things unfamiliar to me in English.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
36. I feel overwhelmed by the number of words I have to learn to speak in English.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
37. I like to wait until I know exactly how to use and English word before using it.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
38. I don't like trying out a difficult sentence in class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
39. At this point, I don't like trying to express complicated ideas in English in class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
40. I prefer to say what I want in English without worrying about the small details of grammar.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
41. In class, I prefer to say a sentence to myself before I speak it.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
42. I prefer to follow basic sentence models rather than risk misusing the language.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
43. I think learning English in a group is more fun than learning on my own.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
44. I enjoy talking with the teacher and other students in English.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
45. I enjoy interacting with the other students in the English class.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
46. I think it's important to have a strong group spirit in the English classroom.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
47. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
48. I talk less because I'm shy.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

49. I talk a lot because I am not shy.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
50. I like to get involved in group discussions.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
51. I feel nervous when I have to speak to others.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
52. I have no fears about expressing myself in a group.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
53. I am afraid to express myself in a group.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
54. I avoid group discussions.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
55. During a conversation, I prefer to talk rather than listen.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
56. I find it easy to make conversation with strangers.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
57. I don't think my friends are honest in their communication with me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
58. My friends and family don't listen to my ideas and suggestions.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
59. I think my friends are truthful with me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
60. I don't ask for advice from family or friends when I have to make decisions.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
61. I believe my friends and family understand my feelings.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
62. My family doesn't enjoy discussing my interests and activities with me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
63. My friends and family listen to my ideas and suggestions.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

64.	My friends seek my opinions and advice.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
65.	Other people are friendly only because they want something out of me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
66.	Talking to other people is just a waste of time.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

67.　　I started to learn English at the age of

_____

68.　I started to learn spoken English at the age of

_____

Appendix 3 Research Consent Form

Name of Researcher(s) *Serhat Güzel*
Title of study *The Effect of Second Life as a Virtual Language Learning Environment on Speaking Anxiety*

Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study, ring the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If you do not understand anything and would like more information, please ask.

- **I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in verbal and / or written form by the researcher.**   **YES / NO**

- **I understand that the research will involve:** *4 weeks and 20 hours total*   **YES / NO**

- **I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without having to give an explanation. This will not affect my future care or treatment.**   **YES / NO**

- **I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study.**   **YES / NO**

- **I understand that any material of me will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of your research.**   **YES / NO**

I freely give my consent to participate in this research study and have been given a copy of this form for my own information.

Signature:……………………………………………………..

Date: …………………………………………………………