

Foreign Language Anxiety: A Review on Definition, Causes, Effects and Implication to Foreign Language Teaching

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Abstract. Foreign language proficiency is now required for international collaboration and communication in the age of globalization. To interact with others in communication, commerce, scholarly discourse, and education, people must overcome linguistic and cultural boundaries. Foreign languages are still relevant in the age of globalization. However, when people study and utilize foreign languages, they frequently experience foreign language anxiety. In the fields of psychology and education, discussion of foreign language anxiety is essential. The paper studies the concept of foreign language anxiety, its causes, its effects, and its implications for teaching and learning foreign languages through a review of the literature. As a result of the particularities of the language learning process, foreign language anxiety is characterized as a distinct and complicated structure of self-perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors associated with classroom language acquisition. Three variables connected to academic performance—concern over assessments, communication anxiety, and worry linked to an unknown foreign language test—are the root causes of foreign language anxiety. Academic, cognitive, and social effects are the three basic categories into which the effects of foreign language anxiety may be divided. Teachers need to place more emphasis on formative assessment and feedback than summative evaluation at the end of the term in order to lessen students' anxiety about making errors. As a result, it is advised that foreign language teachers encourage student engagement in class activities and create an environment that promotes and supports students' foreign language learning in order to lessen language anxiety.

Keywords: Foreign language anxiety, foreign language teaching, foreign language learning.

1. Introduction

English is a widely utilized international language of communication used between people whose main languages are different in the modern world, a crucial communication tool for cross-border collaboration and exchange, and a crucial carrier of ideas and culture. Anxiety has been a topic of academic research in foreign language learning since the early 1970s, which has generated considerable controversy [1]. An important psychological element that influences how well students learn languages is known as foreign language anxiety (FLA) [2]. The purpose of this paper is to provide guidance to foreign language instructors on how to handle and reduce students' anxiety when teaching and studying a foreign language. It does this by summarizing, using research from the literature, the definition, causes, and effects of linguistic anxiety.

2. Foreign Language Anxiety

2.1. The Definition of Foreign Language Anxiety

The complex construct of opinions about oneself, convictions, views, and behaviors known as "foreign language anxiety" is described as arising from the particularities of the language learning process and being linked to classroom language acquisition [3]. The first scholars to label anxiety associated with learning a foreign language as foreign language anxiety were Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope [3]. They are some of the top researchers in the field of learning foreign languages since their theories on language anxiety have a big influence on language research. It's important to take note of the causes of language learning anxiety in addition to the symptoms.

2.2. Reasons for Foreign Language Anxiety

2.2.1 Fear of negative assessment

This study provides a summary of the causes of foreign language anxiety based on an analysis of relevant research. Based on the students' opinions, the primary factors contributing to FLA were concerns over the potential lack of comprehension of their utterances, personal anxieties around their accent and pronunciation, and the feeling that others possessed more fluency in the language. The students perceived that the teachers' exceptional classroom surroundings significantly influenced their level of enjoyment in Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) courses [4]. Horwitz emphasized that foreign language anxiety arises from three performance-related factors: the anticipation of unfavorable assessment, communication apprehension, and test anxiety [3]. The concept of fear of adverse evaluation may be described as the apprehension over the evaluations made by others, the tendency to avoid circumstances involving evaluation, and the anticipation of receiving unfavorable evaluations from others [3]. Of all the language talents, speaking is frequently regarded as the most anxiety-provoking ability. There exist several factors contributing to this phenomenon, including the classroom milieu as well as people who exhibit a reluctance to participate in interpersonal discourse [5]. In addition, the lack of sufficient linguistic resources in the target language, particularly in tasks that need verbal expression, might contribute to the experience of anxiety when speaking. For second language learners, engaging in spoken communication within the school setting presents a notable emotional obstacle. This problem has received support from several research [6].

2.2.2 Lack of self-esteem and different study habits

Liu categorized the explanations into two distinct sections [7]. The primary factors contributing to foreign language anxiety are the focus on classroom instruction, academic research, professional obligations and advancement, personal interest, and self-assurance in teaching. The primary factors contributing to instructors' experience of teaching anxiety encompass apprehension over English language proficiency, concern over unfavorable outcomes, and self-assurance in English language competency. What's more, the teaching anxiety of the participants and the FLA level of the teachers are also significantly affected by age, gender, educational level, English proficiency, and whether they have visited English-speaking countries [7]. Lack of self-esteem and confidence causes most students considerable anxiety when speaking a foreign language. When required to speak in front of their classmates, students frequently experience inhibition. This inhibition arises when learners are expected to generate new responses publicly, which they may not have completely mastered yet. Therefore, this demand for public performance may be premature and induce anxiety in the learner [8]. In essence, students recognize that achieving a complete understanding of information in a foreign language can be quite challenging, particularly with regard to speaking and listening. This difficulty can lead to feelings of apprehension, especially for individuals who are self-conscious or introverted. It is not uncommon for these individuals to experience a sense of detachment during communication in a foreign language as if the words being spoken are not their own [9]. As a result, the potential for communication breakdowns is a constant presence in language classes [5]. Another significant factor contributing to students' anxiousness may be their various study habits. Deductive or analytical teaching techniques might not be suitable for all pupils, particularly those who desire to learn everything globally and practically [10]. Additionally, some kids are less tolerant of complexity and ambiguity in circumstances and exhibit higher levels of anxiety when they are [11]. On the other side, anxiety may result from a perfectionist inclination brought on by a set of irrational self-beliefs [12].

2.3. Effects of Foreign Language Anxiety

2.3.1 Academic, cognitive, and social effects

The consequences of FLA may be classified into three distinct categories: educational impacts, intellectual impacts, and social consequences [13]. The academic consequences encompass suboptimal outcomes, increased exertion perhaps stemming from excessive practice, and diminished

competence in second language acquisition. According to previous research, there is evidence to suggest that poorer grades are often observed in the context of second language acquisition. Additionally, it has been found that excessive studying might result in higher effort, which in turn may lead to worse results than first anticipated [14]. Less self-assurance regarding their degree of expertise may be felt by learners. It's possible that the student won't do well on future quizzes or examinations to the point where they decide against attending school or enrolling in a second foreign language course. Impaired performance on activities requiring high levels of cognitive ability is the cognitive impact. One of the most harmful consequences that worrying about learning a foreign language may have on a language learner is having a preconceived concept of failure or an experience of failure in utilizing a second language. The learning process may be influenced by several factors, affecting pupils from the beginning to the end. The primary role of this mechanism is to act as a barrier at the initial phase, impeding the flow of information into the cognitive processing system [13]. The presence of anxiety in the context of acquiring a foreign language has the potential to have adverse effects on the efficiency and precision of cognitive processes involved in knowledge acquisition and language processing. The retrieval challenges associated with retrieving previously acquired short-term information also impact communication during the output phase. FLA negatively affects how students connect and communicate with others on a social level. In circumstances where the target language is dominant, learners may experience a fall in linguistic confidence, which can result in greater levels of understanding. High-anxiety students may not want to socialize, which might increase their already elevated levels of worry by altering factors like motivation and attitude [15]. Anxious individuals become preoccupied with the immediate task and how they will perform, leading to a simultaneous consideration of the social consequences of their responses. Consequently, the prominence of self-related thoughts limits the availability of task-focused thoughts, thus detrimentally affecting performance [16].

2.3.2 Impacts on learning strategies

According to the study's findings, learners who experienced less anxiety employed learning tactics more frequently. Metacognition was the most commonly employed strategy category in the low anxiety group, followed by cognition and compensation. All three of these types were featured in the top three most commonly utilized strategy categories in the medium and high anxiety groups, albeit compensatory rather than metacognitive methods were more frequently employed [17]. Chen discovered that among Taiwanese college students, memory was the strategy category that was least utilized [18]. Regardless of the students' reported levels of competence or fear, social methods were employed the least. This outcome could be brought on by the participants' general lack of confidence while speaking English or by their inadequate exposure to the target language [18].

2.4. Implications for Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

Both the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory and the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale were used in the research. Hashemi studied FLA among undergraduates and offered instructive recommendations based on his findings [19]. Students' worry must be acknowledged as a starting point for addressing it. Students who haven't had enough exposure to English might benefit greatly from the adoption of communicative teaching methods [19]. Classroom stress may be significantly reduced by giving students additional opportunities to practice their language skills and by fostering a welcoming, informal setting where students feel at ease. Teachers may also benefit from having a basic understanding of the racial and cultural backgrounds of their pupils to identify any possible sources of worry [20]. The results of each questionnaire were compared to the students' test results. Both test anxiety and anxiety over learning a foreign language exhibited statistically significant correlations with test results, suggesting that both forms of anxiety had a detrimental impact on test results. An examination of correlations revealed a significant positive link between test anxiety and anxiety related to foreign languages. Therefore, it is advised that English teachers lower test anxiety and language anxiety by promoting student participation in class activities and fostering a welcoming and supportive environment.

3. Conclusion

This paper offers a detailed examination of foreign language anxiety, encompassing its origins, consequences, and ramifications for the instruction and acquisition of foreign languages. Based on an extensive examination of relevant scholarly works, it becomes apparent that foreign language anxiety is a multifaceted and distinctive concept that encompasses several aspects such as perceptions of oneself opinions, views, and behaviors, all of which are associated with the process of acquiring a second language within an educational environment. The core causes of foreign language anxiety include three factors related to academic performance: worry about assessments, communication anxiety, and stress about an upcoming foreign language test. The three main categories into which the impacts of foreign language anxiety may be classified are academic, cognitive, and social. To reduce students' fear of making mistakes, teachers should emphasize formative evaluation and feedback more than summative evaluation at the end of the semester. In order to reduce students' language anxiety, it is advocated that foreign language teachers stimulate student participation in class activities and foster an environment that fosters and supports students' foreign language acquisition.

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