

Review of the Effects of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety on Learners' Development of a Second Language Acquisition

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Abstract. Adult and teenage second language learners are very interested in foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA). In language classes all across the world, foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a significant issue. It is especially directly tied to expressive abilities in a second language. There are many subjective and objective factors that affect foreign language performance. Anxiety in FLA is one of the emotional elements, and it is the key factor among the factors impacting students' second language learning. Based on previous research and scholarly papers, this study conducts a literature review to organise the pertinent material on anxiety in the foreign language classroom (FLC), including its definition, causes, and effects on students' learning and performance. Anxiety in the classroom when learning a foreign language typically results from oral activities and has a detrimental impact on language abilities including listening, reading, and writing. Moderate anxiety has been shown to occasionally boost positive learning motivation, but excessive worry is still harmful to learning. Therefore, teachers need to adopt appropriate strategies in dealing with FLCA. The key to lowering anxiety in the FLA is creating a friendly and encouraging classroom atmosphere and developing positive teacher-student connections. Overall, this paper endeavors to provide educators with insights into anxiety in the FLC and how to cope with this affective factor in their educational practices to promote better student learning and acquisition of foreign language skills. This topic has important social and educational implications on a global scale and deserves further research and study.

Keywords: Foreign language classroom anxiety; second language acquisition; foreign language learning.

1. Introduction

Although emotions are seen as an irrational element in second language acquisition research, researchers have long been interested in examining the impact of cognitive variables on second language learning. There are other elements than cognitive ones that influence how well someone learns a language. Cognitive and emotional components are both important in learning a foreign language. Krashen's idea of "emotional filters" has prompted language learning academics to think about negative emotional variables in the classroom, which may diminish language learners' motivation [1]. Some scholars have started to explore the emotional components of language acquisition, particularly negative emotions.

Learning a second language is a very difficult process that is impacted by a wide range of elements, including not just the features of the language itself but also many additional elements. A multitude of objective and subjective factors impact performance in foreign language acquisition. While subjective aspects encompass both intellectual and non-intellectual elements, such as age features, learning attitudes, motivation, and emotion, objective components primarily pertain to the learning environment and learning circumstances. Subjective factors also include linguistic skill and cognitive capacity. Anxiety in the classroom is one of these irrational elements that have a significant impact on students' acquisition of second languages. Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a complex, multifaceted phenomena, characterised by feelings of stress and fear in the context of a second language [2].

The purpose of the following article is to help teachers and educational policymakers better plan and implement language education policies to better meet the needs of their students, assist them in overcoming anxiety in foreign language learning, and help them better achieve their language

learning goals. This is accomplished by doing a literature review on the causes and implications of anxiety in second language education.

2. Definition of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

Anxiety has drawn a lot of attention as an emotional element in learning a second language [2, 3]. At first, tension, apprehension, and concern were considered to be examples of the subjective experiences connected to autonomic nervous system activity that are referred to as anxiety. On the other hand, FLA, a kind of situational anxiety, is more concentrated on anxiety and tension felt in relation to second language contexts [4].

Horwitz et al. were the first to identify the unique characteristics of language anxiety. They compared FLA to three other anxiety symptoms, including communication anxiety, exam anxiety, and dread of receiving a bad grade, based on their study, and they identified it as a distinct "syndrome" associated with learning foreign languages [2]. Some people may have communication phobia when forced to speak in front of an audience. These people could experience frustration when learning a foreign language due to the contrast between their advanced thought processes and undeveloped foreign language abilities [5]. On the other hand, test anxiety affects those who have high standards for themselves and feel that only a flawless performance qualifies as success. Some language learners may regard language output as a test rather than a chance to communicate when learning a foreign language, which can cause anxiety [5]. However, the fear of receiving a poor grade does not just apply to exams; it also affects any circumstance where an evaluation could be made, such as speaking up in a foreign language class [2].

Foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) is a sort of FLA that has been extensively researched. Researchers like Botes have noted that while studying a foreign language, students may suffer a particular kind of anxiety called FLCA [6]. The groundbreaking research conducted by academics like Horwitz marked the beginning of the specialised study of classroom anxiety in foreign languages. FLCA was initially defined as "the complicated self-perceptions, attitudes, and actions that are connected to classroom learning and are peculiar to the process of learning languages [2].", It emphasises the concept's complexity. Anxiety in the classroom when learning a second language is thought to have a negative impact on performance.

In conclusion, FLA in the classroom is a component of FLA, which is itself a symptom of anxiety. Anxiety in a classroom setting, when students are studying a foreign language, is known as FLCA and can have an impact on students' behaviour and learning.

3. The Causes of Anxiety in Foreign Language Classroom

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) created by Horwitz et al. has been utilised in several investigations on why anxiety develops in the FLA [7,8]. The 33 items on the scale include a variety of anxiety-related topics, such as anxiety related to communication, assessment, testing, interactions, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and vocabulary and grammar.

Speaking is the second language acquisition task that causes people the most anxiety, according to research. When asked to participate in oral presentations, discussions, or any other language activities, introverted learners may exhibit extreme anxiety because they dislike social interaction and being the centre of attention. They may also exhibit extreme nervousness when speaking in front of a small group of people. In the context of learning a foreign language, particular forms of anxiety, such as listening anxiety, reading anxiety, and writing anxiety, have also been discovered [9]. Although hearing is said to be the most often employed of the four language skills, it could also be one of the more challenging to master since it is less clear. For second language learners, listening to a foreign language may also be highly difficult and anxiety-inducing [10].

According to Markova et al.'s results of a small empirical study using FLCAS, speaking was the aspect of learning the English language that caused the most anxiety in the group they surveyed, and

exams also had a tendency to do so [4]. Comparing the levels of test anxiety, fear of receiving a bad grade, and communication anxiety among Turkish children aged 10 to 14 years, Gürsoy and Akin employed an adaptation of Horwitz's FLCAS and discovered that test scenarios made kids the most apprehensive [11]. Additionally, there were hints that the respondents feared criticism from their peers. Be prepared for criticisms or corrective feedback from professors or peers when students start speaking orally in a second or foreign language, especially in speaking sessions. Anxiety is frequently sparked in second language learners by unfavourable remarks [12].

The Horwitz et al. developed FLCAS also specifically mentions the following anxiety-provoking situations, such as being tested in a foreign language classroom(FLC), not understanding what the instructor is saying in an FLC and being asked to answer a question in an FLC [2]. However, Price found the following additional sources of FLCA that were not covered by the Horwitz scale when she interviewed very nervous American college students about their experiences there: Peer bullying, having a foreign accent in a second language (L2), being unable to communicate properly, and the difficulty of the language lesson are all things that might make students anxious in an FLC [13].

Another somewhat different categorisation that offers another helpful paradigm for summarising potential reasons for anxiety is MacIntyre's classification of the causes of worry in the FLC into academic, cognitive, and social factors [14].

Regarding academic aspects, they include things like students' irrational ideas, teachers' humiliating error-correction techniques, and testing procedures [14]. instructors' intolerance, roughness in criticising students' mistakes, being singled out by instructors to respond to questions, and not being permitted to speak in their native tongue were all factors connected to how they taught [8, 15]. Li, Dewaele, and Jiang's qualitative data analysis of a different study also revealed that fear of teacher criticism was one of the primary causes of anxiety in FLC, and that test success, teacher praise, and increased group status were the primary factors in reducing anxiety [16]. Cognitive factors include personality qualities including poor self-esteem, shyness, and negative self-evaluation. Learners' personality qualities, such as poor emotional intelligence, a high degree of perfectionism, and holding unfavourable views of language competency, are also learner-related issues [17].

Last but not least, MacIntyre mentions the following social factors as social barriers: a bad accent, cultural faux pas, and competitiveness. This shows that anxiety in foreign language classes is connected to both the intrinsic traits of learners and the language learning environment. Both internal learner factors and external variables are triggers of anxiety, according to earlier research [14].

4. The Effects of Anxiety in Foreign Language Classroom

In many respects, anxiety is connected to the acquisition of second languages. It is well known that anxiety in the classroom can interfere with learning a second language. It has also been shown to have a deleterious impact on the acquisition of second languages [18]. Students who are under too much academic pressure may become burned out and experience physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. Anxiety is frequently characterised as a disease that degrades oneself, with reactions to anxiety serving to sustain negative feedback loops including distraction, fear of making mistakes, and concern about other people [19].

The majority of second or foreign language learners may suffer anxiety when speaking or interacting, according to several research [20]. High anxiety levels can have a variety of detrimental impacts on language learners, such as (1) a propensity to avoid communication, (2) difficulties focusing, (3) forgetfulness, and (4) possible panic when speaking in a second or foreign language without sufficient preparation [21]. When these circumstances arise, students start to refrain from speaking or interacting, which might lower their exposure to the target language.

One of the primary causes of college students' lack of production capacity in foreign languages is, in fact, their nervousness in foreign language classes. Language anxiety is a problem for college students, according to Gawli, and it might interfere with their ability to study [22]. A foreign language is essential for many individuals all around the world. Learning a second language fosters worldwide

collaboration, cultural interchange, and cross-cultural friendship in addition to helping students improve personally and professionally. Therefore, in today's globalised culture, mastering a foreign language is crucial.

Anxiety is frequently seen as a negative element in the FLC due to its negative impact on language learners' emotional and academic performance. However, some studies show that moderate anxiety may provide some possible advantages, albeit these benefits are generally conditional and may differ from person to person and context to set.

Liu et al. gathered quantitative and qualitative data from Chinese elementary and secondary school students. They discovered that when students' grades increased, they became more nervous and less joyful in English lessons. Furthermore, pupils behaved differently in class due to fear or enjoyment. They felt disturbed when they were nervous, which hampered their English learning, but they were more attentive and motivated in class and tried more to learn English [23]. In qualitative research, López and Cárdenas investigated the influence of emotions on the language acquisition process of 18 Mexican English language learners. They discovered that certain language learners could transfer negative emotions into enthusiasm for future learning, which in turn drove the students to do better on tests [24].

The findings of both of these empirical studies are consistent, indicating that, while negative emotions can limit students' attention and range of potential language input, these affective responses ultimately lead to more effort and concentration on learning a foreign language [25]. It is crucial to highlight that these advantages are often linked with mild anxiety, whereas extreme anxiety can still be harmful to language learning. Furthermore, due to considerable individual variations, different pupils may respond differently when presented with fear.

5. Recommendations for Teaching Practice

Following are some ideas for teaching practise to assist instructors in managing and lessening students' anxiety in the FLC, based on the preceding study of the causes and consequences of anxiety in the FLC and references to the available literature.

Given that anxiety may lead students to adopt avoidance strategies, especially when speaking is involved, teachers can use the following methods to reduce students' speech anxiety: help students overcome speech anxiety through carefully designed activities such as acting, role-playing, group work, and speech practice. These activities not only reduce students' anxiety, but also create a more positive classroom atmosphere and reduce students' concern about negative comments from their peers. In addition, techniques to increase emotional awareness and the inclusion of inspirational stories of success in overcoming obstacles in language learning content can help to reduce students' foreign language anxiety [4]. These methods can help students to better understand and manage their emotions and encourage them to find peace in times of anxiety while providing positive motivation. In addition, Nemati et al. suggested that foreign language enjoyment can be significantly enhanced and FLCA moderately reduced, especially in speaking, by introducing interesting classroom tasks, focusing on socio-cultural and intrinsic factors, and encouraging positive teacher and peer attitudes [26]. These approaches can promote more active participation in learning and reduce anxiety.

Additionally, whether or not students' anxiety levels increase or decrease depends on how foreign language teachers and students interact with one another [2]. To lessen anxiety, foreign language teachers should assist students recognise and controlling their anxiety, as well as set realistic language learning goals. Furthermore, foreign language teachers should correct students' faults with kindness, establish a non-threatening classroom setting, and arrange students in small groups to alleviate stress [27]. Jensen et al. emphasised the significance of compassion and closeness in the teacher-student interaction, noting that children who have close, supportive relationships with adults are more likely to internalise what adult's demand of them [28].

Oxford proposes a variety of tactics for instructors to utilise to reduce anxiety, including the use of humour to improve learners' communication experiences and to build agency and optimism.

Positive, organised, encouraging, and polite instructors are more likely to be valued by their pupils [29]. Positive teachers appreciate and recognise their pupils' achievements. When mistakes are committed, sympathetic humour is also appreciated since it helps to ease the underlying unpleasant emotional climate. Foreign language teachers must use non-threatening tactics to alleviate foreign language learning anxiety, such as promoting and facilitating group cohesiveness and providing a safe classroom atmosphere that supports language growth [30].

As a result, instructors should be warm, amusing, and sympathetic, and they should endeavour to organise innovative and engaging classroom activities to fit the language levels and interests of their pupils [29]. Teachers' abilities and optimism, paired with exciting teaching activities, will serve to establish a good classroom environment, boost students' foreign language learning capacity, lower students' classroom anxiety, and, as a result, improve their academic performance [16].

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, present research reveals that FLCA is an emotional experience centred on emotions of tension and fear connected with the second language learning setting. The uniqueness of this anxiousness has a negative impact on pupils' learning and performance. Second, this research investigates the elements that contribute to FLCA, including academic, cognitive, and social concerns. The most common and prominent is speaking anxiety, but anxiety connected to language skills also has a negative impact on the FLC. Teaching methods, teacher-learner interactions, and other factors can all contribute to FLCA. Third, FLCA negatively affects students' second language learning and development. It may lead to students' avoidance of communication, difficulty concentrating, and forgetfulness. However, moderate anxiety can also promote more focused learning, especially when students turn their anxiety into positive motivation to learn. Finally, this paper presents a series of recommendations for teaching practices to help teachers reduce students' anxiety in the FLC. These suggestions include using interesting teaching activities, developing students' affective awareness, creating a friendly and supportive classroom climate, and introducing positive teacher and peer attitudes.

Despite the existing literature and the extensive research on FLCA, there are still some future research directions that deserve attention. First, FLCA can be further studied in order to understand the anxiety characteristics and coping strategies of students of different ages. Second, the mechanisms of moderate anxiety can be studied in depth to reveal the process of how negative emotions are transformed into positive learning motivation. This will help to develop more effective intervention strategies.

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