

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF ALGIERS 2, ABOU EL KACEM SAADELLAH



Faculty of Foreign Languages
Department of English
Master Dissertation
Specialism: Didactics of Foreign Languages

**The Repercussion of Foreign Language Anxiety on
Students' Speaking Performance
A Comparative Study of Three Academic Articles**

*Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master in Didactics of Foreign Languages*

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Academic Year: 2021-2022

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Declaration

We, Asmaa KASMI and Selma BENLAOUER declare hereby that the work provided in this dissertation is the result of our investigation. We declare that all the information that is not original to this work is cited in the references section, and all the data that are original in this work have not been submitted elsewhere for any degree or qualification.

Date:

Signed

Dedication

We dedicate this modest work to our beloved parents, sisters and brothers who have always accompanied us throughout every phase in our lives and taught us to trust Allah and believe in ourselves.

To whom we will always be grateful.

Selma, Asmaa

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, all praises and thanks be to Allah, the Almighty.

We are grateful to our supervisor **Dr. Boukhedimi**, whose insightful leadership and knowledge benefited us to complete this project successfully. We would like to thank her for her continuous support and presence whenever needed.

Major thanks to the examiners for devoting their time to read and assess our dissertation.

This work would not have been completed without both parts' devotion, collaboration and hard work.

Selma, Asmaa

Abstract

The current study seeks to determine the extent to which foreign language anxiety affects university students' speaking performance. A secondary research, based on three academic articles on the influence of foreign language anxiety on university students' speaking performance, has been conducted to achieve this purpose. The studies discussed in the three articles were carried in different geographical contexts. Researchers adopted different research designs; namely, descriptive and correlational. They relied on observations, interviews and questionnaires inspired from the foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) as research instruments to collect data. The findings of the three studies reveal the manifestation of high-level anxiety during students' speaking performance; additionally, the latter mostly affect their communicative abilities. The comparative study reveals that foreign language anxiety negatively influences university students' speaking performance in a way that it lowers their self-esteem and motivation in achieving their foreign/second language proficiency in general and speaking in particular, as well as their cognitive capability to assimilate input and utter their thoughts correctly which inevitably affects their speaking test grades.

Key words: Foreign language anxiety, speaking skill/performance, university students, English as a foreign language.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FLA: Foreign Language Anxiety

FLCAS: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

FL: Foreign Language

L2: Second Language

LAD: Language Acquisition Device

LCDH: Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis

FLSAS: Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale

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General Introduction

Foreign language anxiety (FLA henceforth) has gained interest and has become a subject of research in foreign/second language learning contexts over the last few decades. It has drawn attention as an issue which hinders FL learning. FLA has progressed toward a remarkable phenomenon not only in the EFL context but also in the field of psychology.

Various researchers defined foreign language anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986, p.129) were the first to identify FLA as “a phenomenon related to but distinguishable from other specific anxieties”, they believed FLA to be a unique type of anxiety specific to foreign language learning. Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994, p.284) described FLA as being a feeling of tension and apprehension precisely connected with second language contexts.

The present study aims to provide deeper insights into the impact of foreign language anxiety on university students’ speaking performance. It includes a general introduction and two main chapters, which are followed by a general conclusion.

The first chapter discusses a number of definitions and theoretical perspectives assigned to FLA with particular focus on the effect of the latter on freshmen students’ oral production.

The second chapter provides an overview of three articles selected on the theme. Article (A) “Foreign Language Anxiety in EFL Speaking Classrooms: A Case Study of First-year LMD Students of English at Saad Dahlab University of Blida, Algeria” was written by Asma Melouah in 2013. Article (B) “Foreign Language Anxiety and Its Impacts on Students’ Speaking Competency” was written by Kathreen B Aguila and Ignatius Harjanto in 2016. Article (C) “Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: A Psycholinguistic Barrier Affecting Speaking Achievement of Saudi EFL Learners” was reported by Hussein Hammodeh Ahmad Al-Khotaba et al. in 2019. Furthermore, these studies have been reviewed through comparison and contrast. The chapter ends with an in-depth discussion of the different findings of the studies in relation to concepts and theories developed in the first chapter.

1. Chapter one: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter attempts to survey major accounts on foreign language anxiety's impact on university students' speaking performance. It consists of three sections. The first section is dedicated to defining major key words and concepts namely, foreign language anxiety, anxiety and speaking skill. The second section discusses theories, related to FLA's impact as a psycholinguistic barrier to foreign/second language learning developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), McIntyre & Gardner (1989, 1994), Aida (1994) and Krashen (1982). Finally, the third section examines a number of controversies about FLA's nature, role and components, as established by various figures, such as MacIntyre, Sparks, R. L. and Ganschow, L and Aida.

1.1. Definitions of key concepts related to FLA

1.1.1. Definition of Anxiety

According to Spielberger (1983), anxiety is a subjective feeling of tension, concern, uneasiness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. It is a basic human emotion which refers to an obscure sense of awareness, nervousness, or anticipatory concern for the future. Hence, the latter is also described as an emotion which is characterized by an irritating state of inner conflict toward something with unexpected outcomes. It is a normal response to a traumatic incident or perceived threat, and it can include a wide range of negative thoughts and skepticism. In fact, anxiety is categorized into three distinct types: trait anxiety, state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety. These are briefly examined as follows.

Trait anxiety is a broad and permanent personality trait which remains stable over time since it is a feature in an individual personality. According to Eysenck (1979), trait anxiety can damage cognitive functioning and interrupt memory. This can be demonstrated in a language-learning context, trait anxious learners face extensive consequences during their language learning process, therefore, their performance and achievement may deteriorate.

State anxiety is defined as an emotional state or a feeling of frustration. It can change over time and vary thoroughly. Spielberger (1972) states that anxiety is “the emotional reaction or pattern of response that occurs in an individual who perceives a particular situation as personally dangerous or threatening, irrespective of the presence or absence of objective danger” (p.489). That is, it is a temporary condition that occurs only at a specific time which affects one's feelings, reasoning and behavior.

Situation-specific anxiety is apprehension at a particular moment in time in response to a definite situation. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) suggest that situation-specific anxiety is a distinct anxiety form which occurs invariably over time within a particular context. Accordingly, this type of anxiety relates to the situations where anxiety is triggered, for instance, public speaking, oral examination, or engaging in a group discussion in English classes. Horwitz et al. (1986) suggested that FLA is independent from other types of anxiety. Thus, although state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety might be similar, the latter is specific only to FL contexts which makes it a unique form of anxiety, whereas state anxiety is experienced in a range of events.

1.1.2. Definition of Foreign Language Anxiety

Research in foreign language learning determines that foreign language anxiety has gained significant attention (Ellis, 2008) as it has been considered a crucial area in applied linguistics. FLA is generally defined as fear or apprehension experienced by learners when they perform in a second/foreign language (Horwitz, 1986). Such a feeling of anxiety is strictly associated with the target language performance making it a situation specific anxiety. Therefore, FLA does not relate to general performance anxiety. It is one of the most important factors influencing foreign or second language learning.

Broadly speaking, foreign language anxiety is a distinct and separate phenomenon related to language learning which affects one's achievement in learning a second/foreign language. Horwitz et al. (1989), McIntyre and Gardner (1991a)

perceive FLA as individual uneasiness in the language class or any situation in which language is practiced and used. In fact, there are several definitions of foreign language anxiety existing in the literature. Horwitz et.al (1986) define FLA as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 128). In other words, its distinctiveness appears in its level of intensity according to environmental conditions, perception of the level of threat in a FL context. In addition, Horwitz et al. (1986) classified FLA into three types.

a. Communication apprehension emerges from the difficulty in expressing thoughts and ideas satisfactorily. This implies that foreign language learners encounter issues in delivering speech and understanding messages from the interlocutor during interaction (Horwitz et al., 1986). That is, language learners suffer from the inability to express themselves or to be comprehended by others.

b. Fear of negative evaluation is the feeling of “apprehension about others’ evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (Horwitz et al. 1986, p.127). Simply put, it is feeling frightened about others’ negative judgements about one-self, and bypassing any assessment context.

c. Test anxiety, also known as apprehension over academic evaluation, refers to “a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure.” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 127). Learners generally experience a stressful psychological condition which results in fear of negative estimation from their parents or teachers regarding their results. Test-anxious students frequently set unrealistic goals for themselves, believing that anything less than perfect test results is a failure (Horwitz et al., 1986). Learners who set high expectations about their language production are prone to test anxiety.

These classifications suggest that FLA may lead students to put aside their language study indefinitely or abandon it altogether as they restrain students’ ability and ultimately limit their proficiency in the foreign language. Therefore, one can

deduce that foreign language anxiety is a situation-specific anxiety induced by the distinctiveness of formal foreign language learning contexts. According to Horwitz (2001), one-third of all foreign language learners experience language anxiety. University students are no exception to the impact of FLA.

1.1.3 Speaking Performance

Speaking is considered as language production under the form of combined sound sequences generating utterances. Actually, it is one of the four language skills, also known as a productive skill which requires both language comprehension and speech production models in order to attain language production. In fact, fluent and accurate oral language production involves psycholinguistic processing, i.e. mental activity, and psychomotor skills, i.e. activities that are primarily movement-oriented. For a learner aiming to construct instances of connected discourse, they should master the morphophonological system and a set of lexical, grammatical, semantic and pragmatic rules. Fundamentally, speaking is considered as a means of communication used by people in general and students in particular in order to achieve specific study goals or to voice their opinions, intentions, aspirations, and perspectives. Hence, speaking has three communicative functions, talk as interaction, talk as transaction and talk as performance. According to Richards (2008), the speaking activity necessitates talk performance in which the speaker organizes information in an easily understandable order, the use of discourse markers, repetition, and stress to emphasize key points. That is to say, using appropriate vocabulary, correct pronunciation, grammar and creating an effect on the audience are important skills to acquire for a student to adequately produce language orally. To conclude, the mastery of the speaking skill in English is of priority for many second/foreign language students.

1.1.4 Foreign Language Anxiety and University Students

In the EFL context, FLA is a phenomenon which is experienced generally by students whenever they are put in a situation where they have to express themselves using English in class. In fact, university students in particular ordinarily know how to control their emotions in different situations. Lieb (1991) describes them as “autonomous and self-directed learners; adults have accumulated a foundation of life experiences and knowledge; adults are goal-oriented; adults are relevancy-oriented; adults are practical and adults need to be shown respect”. It implies that young adults are independent individuals who are able to identify their own career objectives, comprehend abstract concepts, conscious about their actions’ consequences and personal boundaries. Hence, they are already well versed in a variety of topics and expected to have developed skills in different fields. Therefore, one might expect that lacking that foundational knowledge and competence might lead them to feelings of embarrassment, insecurity and nervousness. Although university students are known to be independent individuals and can enhance their own knowledge and experiences in second/foreign language learning, nevertheless; they are still subject to FLA in a way that it affects their speaking performance. This research paper will be devoted to discuss FLA’s repercussions on university students’ speaking performance in different theories as examined in Horwitz et al. and Aida ’s works.

Research in the FL learning/ acquisition field has provided generous evidence that foreign language anxiety has a negative impact on young adults’ speaking performance. Many scholars conducted studies to prove this issue. The latter will be further examined in greater detail

1.2. Theoretical Background

1.2.1. Horwitz et al.'s Research on Foreign Language Anxiety

Horwitz et al. (1986) were the first scholars who discussed foreign language anxiety. They conducted a study on university students who were invited to participate in a 'Support Group for Foreign Language Learning'. Horwitz et al. (1986) in their "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety" research proposed that second language communication prompts risk-taking and is inherently problematic since it affects students' psychological state, such as their self-esteem and motivation. When expected to perform in a language class, students come up against anxiety and hesitation. As Horwitz et al. (1986, p.128) state "any performance in the L2 is likely to challenge an individual's self- concept as a competent communicator and lead to reticence, self- consciousness, fear, or even panic". Therefore, output production in a second/foreign language generates a unique type of anxiety which eventually impacts language comprehension and production in a negative way, deteriorating students' attempts to perform in the target language. For instance, when a student would engage in a dialogue with their classmate, their attempt to form utterances and convey them would be disturbed by anxiety. Consequently, this disturbance may take the form of hesitation which implies that this student's utterances would be filled with long pauses and word fillers such as "uhh" and "uhm".

Besides, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) have claimed that anxiety related to learning a FL is a situation-specific form arising from the uniqueness of foreign language learning, rather than a general anxiety related to learning a foreign language. They developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) in 1986 to determine the real causes of language anxiety. The experiences which occurred in these support groups contributed to the development of the scale which is a tool used by foreign language instructors to establish and capture the scope and severity of students' anxiety in order to examine its effects on learning in various contexts.

1.2.2. Aida's examination of Horwitz et al.'s construct of FLA

Due to the popularity of the former constructs of FLA (Horwitz, 1986), Aida attempted to contribute to the development of FLA's concept. Actually, Aida (1994) conducted an exploratory study on students who were enrolled in second-year Japanese I at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research (1994, p.155) involved a non-Western language to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of language anxiety and its inferences for language education. The aim of Aida's study was to examine Horwitz et al.'s foreign language anxiety research using an FLCAS special for Japanese students. Aida examined the scale to determine if it reflects communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. She (1994) also measured the tool's reliability and the relationship of students' anxiety levels to their performance in Japanese language. Her study showed support for Horwitz et al.'s findings. Aida, in her results, claimed the FLCAS used in her study was as reliable as Horwitz et al.'s were. However, she reported that her participants experienced a higher level of anxiety in opposition to Horwitz et al.'s subjects. Aida (1994, p.162) identified a number of factors that affect students' anxiety in Japanese language learning, which were speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation while she excluded test anxiety from being a contributing factor to FLA opposing Horwitz et al.'s claims. Aida (1994) investigated the relationship between foreign language anxiety and performance "... indicating that the higher the students' levels of anxiety, the more likely they are to receive low grades..." (p.162). Students usually demonstrate their ability to use the second language in their performance. Aida (1994) asserted that there is a causal relationship between anxiety and performance in a way that anxiety plays a vital role in decreasing students' performance quality, in other words, their grades.

1.2.3. MacIntyre and Gardner's work on FLA

After Horwitz et.al proposed their theory of foreign language anxiety, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) cautiously examined the latter in their research paper "Anxiety and Second-Language Learning: Toward a Theoretical Clarification". They

attempted to clarify FLA within the context of psychology of social anxieties throughout their research conducted on adult introductory psychology students who were administered nine different anxiety scales. According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1994) “research has shown that language anxiety is the specific type of anxiety most closely associated with second language performance” (p.284). Thus, they have agreed on Horwitz et al’s (1986) idea that anxiety in language learning is situation-specific in the way that it is strictly related to language learning contexts only involving language skills, for instance, listening and speaking (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). They (1989) asserted that FLA is a consequence of recurring episodes of state anxiety. For instance, if students consistently experience state anxiety in the language class, because of numerous learning difficulties during the learning process, they may begin to associate anxiety with language learning. Their repeated state anxiety will now solidify into FLA (McIntyre & Gardner, 1989). According to their research (1994), a certain level of anxiety can improve language performance. They claimed that anxiety becomes debilitating only when anxious students start thinking unfavorably about their capacities and are too hard on themselves, to the point where their concentration and mental effort in their learning are disturbed. For example, a student would experience hesitation and worry if they tried to answer a question in front of their classmates and teacher due to their low self-esteem through doubting their capacities’ adequacy compared to their classmates’.

1.2.4. Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis

Krashen published “Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition” in 1982. This book helped him in the realization of the ‘Monitor Model’ theory through various revisions of his many attempts to construct the latter in order to describe how students’ emotional variables can impact their second/foreign language acquisition. It consists of five essential interconnected hypotheses mentioned in his second chapter entitled ‘Second Language Acquisition Theory’. As part of them, the Affective Filter Hypothesis will be investigated in depth along these following lines.

Dulay and Burt first proposed the concept in 1977 as ‘affective delimiters’. Krashen developed it and included three emotional variable components of the Filter: motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. He (1982) suggested that pedagogical goals should compromise an understandable input and an environment that encourages a low level of the affective filter. Krashen also claimed that learners must receive comprehensible input for an effective foreign/second language acquisition. However, emotional variables act as a barrier and prevent input from getting to the LAD, which is in the brain. Consequently, students’ anxiety level determines their ability to understand input, i.e. reaching the LAD device. Krashen stated (1982, p.31),

Those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a high or strong Affective Filter--even if they understand the message, the input will not reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device. Those with attitudes more conducive to second language acquisition will not only seek and obtain more input, they will also have a lower or weaker filter. They will be more open to the input, and it will strike "deeper" (Stevick, 1976).

Thus, Anxiety can fasten or stop students’ growth in foreign language learning. The filter explains why some students of second language cannot attain language competence even if they receive comprehensible input. Therefore, in order to reach full acquisition of the target language, students should have a low level of anxiety.

1.3. Foreign Language Anxiety: Criticisms and Conflicting Positions

Despite the popularity of foreign language anxiety theory, numerous controversies and criticisms arose and various conflicting views emerged. Educators interested in foreign language anxiety questioned three key points in Horwitz et.al theory, whether FLA is a cause or result of poor foreign language performance, the importance of the role of FLA and its components as follows.

Despite Horwitz et al. 's (1986) claims that foreign language anxiety is considered as a cause, Sparks and Ganschow (1995) argued that the latter ought to be a consequence stating that “one cannot discuss anxiety without inferring a cause” (p.236). In other words, FLA is not a cause of students’ poor language performance, but a consequence of their disengagement during their language learning process

which eventually will result in mediocre language performance and low grades. In support of Horwitz et al.'s point, MacIntyre (1995, p.93) hinted at the idea that there is some indication that anxiety arousal can be a causal agent in the development of individual differences in second language learning, using the example of the student who assimilates course content but “freezes up” on a test to validate the idea that anxiety is more likely to be a cause rather than a consequence of poor language performance.

Concerning the role of foreign language anxiety in foreign language learning achievement, researchers such as Horwitz et al. emphasized the significance of FLA's role, whereas others, such as Sparks and Ganschow stated that FLA is either independent or has a minor impact on foreign language learning. As a result, they (1991) proposed the Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis (LCDH) as an alternative to poor achievement in foreign language learning and as a main cause of foreign language learning difficulties. This hypothesis demonstrates that poor foreign language performance may not be affected by affective variables, but rather from syntactic, phonological and semantic native language inefficiencies. The inadequate mastery of these language components hinders successful FL learning. (Sparks and Ganschow, 1993a).

As mentioned above (p.7), Horwitz et.al (1986) have included three types of anxiety in their conceptualization of FLA. According to MacIntyre (1989) and Aida (1994), throughout their study of this issue, communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation seem to be strictly related to FLA while test anxiety is to be expected as a general anxiety problem rather than being specific to foreign language learning. Hence, test anxiety is restricted only to certain anxiety-provoking academic situations. Thus, it is regarded as a state which evokes in university students momentary reactions of worry experienced in any type of testing or examination rather than a component related to FLA.

Conclusion

A review of literature related to foreign language anxiety has provided insights on how the latter acts as a psycholinguistic barrier preventing students from achieving successful second/foreign language learning in general and mastering their speaking skill in particular. The survey of the studies mentioned in this chapter indicates the negative relationship between foreign language anxiety and university students' oral performance in a way that it deteriorates the quality of their learning process by causing intellectual and psychological distress. Sudden speech performance puts students in a vulnerable situation since they have to communicate or perform without sufficient time to reflect their ideas and create the appropriate utterances to convey their thoughts. The feeling of fear stems from the possibility of making a mistake or mispronunciation of words while speaking. This secondary research aims at highlighting how dramatically anxiety might affect students' perception of their EFL speaking ability. This point will be further explored in the following chapter through a comparative study of three articles from different geographical contexts.

2. Chapter two: Review of Empirical Studies

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to a comparative study of three articles from distinct geographical contexts. The studies which are reported demonstrate FLA's impact on students' speaking performance. The first section includes a review; in terms of methodology and important findings of the three articles: Article (A) "Foreign Language Anxiety in EFL Speaking Classrooms: A Case Study of First-year LMD Students of English at Saad Dahlab University of Blida, Algeria" written by Asma Melouah in 2013 , Article (B) "Foreign Language Anxiety and Its Impacts on Students' Speaking Competency" written by Kathreen B Aguila and Ignatius Harjanto in 2016, Article (C) " Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: A Psycholinguistic Barrier Affecting Speaking Achievement of Saudi EFL Learners" reported by Hussein Hammodeh Ahmad Al-Khotaba, Eid Hamoudeh Ahmed Alkhataba, Samsiah Abdul-Hamid and Ibrahim Bashir in 2019. The articles are compared and contrasted afterward in the second section. Finally, the third section involves a discussion of the different findings in relation to concepts and theories developed in the first chapter.

2.1. Overview of the Three Articles

2.1.1. An overview of Article (A)

The first article entitled was written by Asma Melouah (2013). She conducted a case study at Saad Dahleb university of Blida-Algeria on a sample of 30 First-year students of English who were randomly selected. Her research paper highlights side effects of harmful anxiety on students' perceptions of speaking EFL affecting their verbal language production. She assumed through her observations that most freshmen students generally get better grades in written examinations rather than speaking tests where they encounter considerable difficulties which hinder their oral performance. Consequently, the researcher felt the need to investigate the source and nature of students' anxiety and suggest solutions to solve the issue. For data collection

purposes, she administered a questionnaire as a modified version of the FLCAS established by Horwitz et al. (1986) since the latter could not meet the context and aim of her study. For this reason, Melouah adopted foreign language speaking anxiety scale (FLSAS). The collected data was later on illustrated as descriptive statistics (i.e., percentages) after being turned into numbers, stored and afterward analyzed through the use of Microsoft Excel. In her results, findings suggested that the nature of anxiety among First year LMD students of EFL turns out to be debilitating, as it restrains their speaking performance and the factors that mainly lead to this specific type of anxiety are fear of interaction, fear of perceptions of others (fear of audience), low self-esteem and lack of confidence, language proficiency, error correction/ fear of negative evaluation and fear of speaking with natives. Among all these factors, this study discerned fear of interaction as the primary source causing foreign language anxiety.

2.1.2. An overview of Article (B)

In the second article, a descriptive case study has been conducted on university students taking an English Conversation Class level II in Surabaya, Indonesia. The participants were 23 students. The article authors investigated whether foreign language anxiety might have a beneficial or inefficient influence on students' attempt to learn a foreign/second language, i.e. whether FLA enhances learning by boosting learners' confidence and motivation or it worsens it by causing intellectual and mental distraction. Therefore, they aimed to highlight factors leading to the students' foreign language anxiety, its impact on their oral proficiency that include features of vocabulary, grammar, communicative ability, pronunciation and intonation. The instruments they have used are classroom observations, a speaking assessment rubric selected from Authentic Assessment for English Language Learners by O'Malley and Pierce; the Foreign Language Class Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) employed from Horwitz et al. (1986) and self-formulated interviews. Through note taking, audio recording, and transcriptions of the data collected, Aguila and Harjanto found out that students were highly nervous throughout their verbal or nonverbal speaking productions. They underlined an inverse relationship between students' anxiety levels and test scores.

Therefore, when students' anxiety level is high, their scores are low and vice versa. Moreover, the researchers identified two types of factors that lead to FLA namely; classroom presentations, fear of being left behind and the inability to understand the lesson as ineffectual factors, while communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation as crucial ones to provoke FLA. Even though some students could maintain a conversation, many others struggled by having long pauses, losing words and focus, and forgetting what to say because of having poor vocabulary. Thus, Aguila and Harjanto concluded that foreign language anxiety influences students' cognition, which as a result negatively affects their communicative and interactive capacities.

2.1.3. An overview of Article (C)

Hussein Hammodeh Ahmad Al-Khotaba et.al (2019) published a research in which they conducted a correlational study on 100 preparatory year students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) at Northern Border University, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This study emerged from a concern with the general failure of EFL learners in Saudi Arabia to attain the intended level of English proficiency at their preparatory year in order to be well-prepared for university education. The researchers aim to consider the potential reasons for the latter. Hence, they suggest that, among other sources, psycholinguistic barriers contribute to Saudi EFL students' failure to learn English as they affect students' language comprehension, acquisition and production. Their primary aim was to examine the influence of foreign language speaking anxiety as a psycholinguistic barrier affecting speaking achievement of the participants. In order to collect data, they distributed questionnaires in order to determine the participants' attitude towards learning English and a speaking achievement test administered to 100 students at the university. The data collected was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages which represents data generated from the questionnaire), Spearman's correlation coefficient to discover the relationship between speaking performance and language speaking anxiety and Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 25 (used the analysis of quantitative complex data). The researchers deduced that EFL

learners experiencing a high level of foreign language speaking anxiety reveal mediocre performance in the speaking test. Those who have a low level of the latter, on the other hand, have remarkable performance, resulting in higher test grades. Therefore, their results demonstrate that there is a negative relationship between language speaking anxiety and EFL participants' achievement in speaking tests.

2.2. Comparison and Contrast of the Articles' Major Findings

Although the three articles reviewed in this second chapter have used different study methodologies and were from distinct geographical contexts, they aimed at describing the nature of the relationship between foreign language anxiety and students' speaking performance.

One of the main results reached by the previously mentioned researchers, although their studies were conducted in different periods of time, was that foreign language anxiety has a negative relationship with university students' oral production. In article A (2013) through the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the FLSAS questionnaires, most first year LMD students declared that the speaking course is mostly anxiety provoking. Most of these students (56 % of the respondents) stated that whenever they are put in any activity that requires them to use their oral abilities within the speaking course, they experience certain feelings of stress and anxiety which impede their EFL speaking performance. The findings of article B (2016) show that there is a slightly high level of anxiety experienced among the majority of the participants (The mean of all the students' scores of FLCAS in this study is 105.9 which is higher than the theoretical mean score 99). The majority of different situations included in the questionnaire, which students referred to, involve speaking in class. Therefore, the researchers had the ability to determine the nature of the relationship through the interpretation of these results.

Findings of Article (C) supported the results of prior articles that FLA had a detrimental relationship on participants' speaking performance. Pearson's Correlation was utilized by the researchers in their study to find the relationship between the two variables. The latter indicated (-0.242) a negative value which represents a negative

linear relationship between language speaking anxiety and EFL students' speaking achievement.

The three studies found numerous factors which engender FLA. However, they differ from one article to another. For instance, among the six factors discerned in article (A), fear of interaction is determined as a main source provoking FLA (58% of students fear being called on to answer a question in a speaking class). However, article (B) established 'communication apprehension' and fear of negative evaluation' as main factors (70% of students fear performing a speaking task in class without enough preparation and having the perception that others may be better at English). On the contrary, article (C) identified other factors. Personal anxiety, interpersonal anxiety, classroom procedures anxiety, learner beliefs about language learning anxiety, language testing anxiety interfere with FLA, i.e. the intensity of the latter influences the level of anxiety experienced by students.

The repercussions of foreign language anxiety on university students' speaking performance were illustrated differently in the three studies. In article (A), it appears that FLA's impacts students' psychological state through feelings of worry, self-doubt and easiness, as well as, it lowers their self-esteem and self-confidence. However, in article (B), this phenomenon affects students' dimensions of speaking competence. To illustrate, whenever a student encounters a situation which involves speaking, anxiety takes shape in hesitations, words fillers and long pauses, along with non-verbal gestures; for instance, thinking gestures, swaying body movements and hand movements. The results of this study also suggest that FLA affects students' cognition in a way that it disturbs their attempts to carry on a conversation in the target language. From another perspective, in the third article, the results of the speaking achievement test, which was administered to the freshmen students, indicate that EFL learners with high language anxiety have less achievement in speaking and vice versa. The results of these studies will be further discussed in relation to the theories previously mentioned in the theoretical background part.

2.3. Discussion

Horwitz et al. (1986) and MacIntyre & Gardner (1994) clarified FLA's conceptualization that it is a situation-specific anxiety related to learning contexts only. The data of article (A) emphasizes the latter. This implies that FLA interferes with students' engagement in foreign/second language learning and manifests in the feelings of apprehension and worry which will eventually affect their L2 performance resulting in mediocre language production.

Despite the agreement of the three studies that there are several factors which cause FLA, they have distinct perspectives. Certain factors deduced in both articles (A) and (B) comply with the factors that Horwitz et al. (1986) already mentioned in their research paper, such as 'communication apprehension' and 'fear of negative evaluation'. However, researchers in both studies provided new insights regarding these factors suggesting that 'fear of interaction', in article (A), is considered to be the main factor, while in article (B), 'communication apprehension' and 'fear of negative evaluation' are supposed to be the main ones. These are also present in Aida's study (1994). However, the findings of article (C) provided a distinct view of FLA's factors which do not match the previously obtained results. The research suggested different types of language anxiety instead of relying on the already established ones.

The impact of anxiety on university students' speaking performance engenders certain consequences. As stated in article (B), anxiety negatively influences student's cognition. As a consequence, it deteriorates their interactive and communicative ability leading them to experience forgetfulness and an incapability to maintain a conversation properly. It creates a 'mental block' that supports Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) which stipulates that emotional variables such as anxiety hinder students' performance in the target language. Additionally, FLA can also affect students' psychological state as it was demonstrated both in article (A) and Horwitz et al.'s (1986) work. The aftermath of FLA on both students' cognition;

inability of uttering thoughts correctly and emotions, worry, demotivation and having low self-esteem will certainly eventuate in poor language performance exemplified in low grades. Therefore, findings of article (C) regarding the latter correspond with Aida's claim (1994) that when students' anxiety level is high, their grades decrease.

Regarding the negative correlation of students' speaking performance with FLA, findings pertaining to the three aforementioned articles were in line with Horwitz et.al (1986) and Aida (1994) research. As previously mentioned (theoretical background, p.5-6, 8-9), interaction in a second/foreign language implies risk-taking which is troublesome since it is possible to provoke a person's self-concept as a skillful interlocutor entailing terror, fright or worry. This means that students with a low level of anxiety manage to have high speaking achievement and vice versa.

Conclusion

The comparative study conducted on the three articles selected from different geographical contexts has contributed to the understanding of how foreign language anxiety affects university students' speaking performance. The latter is difficult by nature, as it requires people to speak instantly with fluency and taking into account the flow of ideas to be displayed. To perform well, it is necessary to have good language skills and a thorough understanding of the foreign/second language. However, the majority of students are unable to achieve an adequate performance because of FLA. The findings of the current study are apt to support prior research by implying that FLA is a common harmful emotion which hinders students' learning in different contexts, namely; psychologically, cognitively and in their language performance achievement. It is a common phenomenon which occurs during students' oral production activities. Thus, one can deduce that there is a negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and students' speaking performance in which one variable increases as the other decreases, and vice versa.

General Conclusion

This dissertation was mainly oriented towards uncovering how foreign language anxiety impedes young adults' speaking performance, the causes behind such a phenomenon and the consequences that come along with it. This study has been divided into two chapters. The first chapter has presented a review of already established research and theory which extensively examines foreign language anxiety and its impact on college students' foreign/second language performance in addition to a presentation of diverse conflicting views concerning different aspects of FLA. The second chapter has been devoted to a comparative study and an overview of three articles chosen from different EFL study contexts. Each article was described in terms of its methodology and major findings and later on discussed in relation to previously mentioned literature related to foreign language anxiety.

The purpose of this research paper was to determine the causes behind foreign language anxiety experienced by university students in speaking situations, the nature of the relationship between these two variables; foreign language anxiety and students' speaking performance, and finally, unveiling FLA's repercussions on their foreign language speaking achievement.

The comparison and contrast study of the three articles indicates that foreign language anxiety prevents university students' from delivering appropriate speech in which they display language sub-skills accordingly; i.e. vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation are well presented. The findings of the three articles were in agreement with the fact that foreign language anxiety can impact university students' speaking performance through causing emotional and cognitive disturbances. However, regarding the factors FLA, Article (C) differ from Article (A) and (B). In other words, Article (C)'s researchers relied on different factors during their data interpretation process, namely, personal anxiety, interpersonal anxiety, classroom procedures anxiety, learner beliefs about language learning anxiety and language testing anxiety. Whereas, Article (A) and (B) persisted on already established factors, namely communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation.

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Abstract in Arabic

اثر القلق من اللغة الاجنبية على اداء الطلاب في التحدث

تسعى الدراسة الحالية إلى تحديد إلى أي مدى يؤثر القلق بشأن اللغة الأجنبية على أداء التحدث لطلاب الجامعة. تم إجراء بحث ثانوي لبلوغ هذا الغرض، بالاعتماد على ثلاث مقالات أكاديمية . الدراسات التي أجريت على المقالات الثلاث كانت من سياقات جغرافية مختلفة، إذ اعتمد الباحثون على تصميمات بحثية مختلفة ؛ كالوصف والعلاقة المترابطة، باستخدام الملاحظات والمقابلات والاستبيانات المستوحاة من مقياس القلق في الفصول الدراسية للغات الأجنبية (FLCAS) كأدوات بحثية لجمع البيانات. تكشف نتائج الدراسات الثلاث عن مظاهر القلق أثناء أداء التحدث للطلاب، حيث تؤثر هذه الظاهرة في الغالب على قدراتهم على التواصل. تكشف دراسة المقارنة أن القلق بشأن اللغة الأجنبية يؤثر سلبًا على أداء التحدث لطلاب الجامعة حيث انها تقلل من تقديرهم لذاتهم ودوافعهم في تحقيق كفاءتهم في اللغة الأجنبية/الثانية بشكل عام والتحدث بشكل خاص. بالإضافة إلى قدرتهم المعرفية على استيعاب أفكارهم ونطقها بشكل صحيح مما يؤثر حتمًا على درجاتهم.

الكلمات الرئيسية: قلق اللغة الأجنبية، مهارة التحدث/الأداء، طلاب الجامعات، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية