

دراسة حول تأثير قلق اختبارات اللغة الإنكليزية على تطور تعلم اللغة في سياقات اللغة الأجنبية

م.د. ناظم مظلوم هاشم علي

المديرية العامة للتربية في ذي قار، وزارة التربية، العراق

الملخص

تهدف الدراسة إلى استكشاف أثر القلق على تعلم اللغة الإنكليزية لدى طلاب المدارس الإعدادية في العراق، وتحديدًا من خلال الكشف عن وجود علاقة قوية بين القلق والتحديات الأكاديمية في السياق الرسمي. تم اختيار أربعة وستين طالباً وطالبة (ذكوراً وإناثاً) عشوائياً من المدارس الإعدادية. واكتشفت الدراسة وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في معدلات تعلم اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية. وأشار المشاركون إلى وجود علاقة قوية بين اختبارات اللغة الإنكليزية والقلق في الأنشطة الصفية. أظهر اختبار مربع كاي وجود علاقة إيجابية بين المتغيرين: القلق ومهارات التحدث $\chi^2(63,1), 11.00 = .003, p < 0.05$. وعلى العكس من ذلك، كشف اختبار مربع كاي عن وجود علاقة سلبية بين القلق والمهارات اللغوية المتضمنة الاستماع والقراءة والكتابة تراثياً. وبالمقارنة، تظهر النتائج أن احتمال إصابة الإناث باضطراب القلق ليس أعلى بكثير من الناحية الإحصائية مقارنة بحالة الذكور ($t = .089, Sig. = .930$). لقد حصل المشاركون عن أدنى متوسط الدرجات للمهارات اللغوية الأربع. بناءً على الإجابات المقدمة من 31% من المشاركين على استبيان FLCAS وكان المتوسط الحسابي 25.3 والانحراف المعياري 3.2، وهذا يبرر ان مهارة التحدث تعتبر الأكثر تحدياً لمتعلمي اللغة الأجنبية في المدارس الإعدادية. تؤكد توصيات الدراسة على الدور المؤثر للمدرسين في التخفيف من التأثير السلبي للقلق على التعلم. على وجه التحديد، تقترح الدراسة أنه يجب على المعلمين تحديد السبب الجذري للقلق ومساعدة الطلاب في التعامل مع القلق أثناء الانخراط في الأنشطة الأكاديمية. علاوة على ذلك، يجب عليهم تهيئة جو آمن لتعلم اللغة الإنكليزية، وهو ما قد يكون حيويًا للدراسات المستقبلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تدريس اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة ثانية أو أجنبية، اختبارات اللغة الإنكليزية، والقلق.

A Study of the Impact of English Tests Anxiety on the Development of Language Learning in Foreign Language Contexts

Dr. Nadhim Madhloom Hashim ALI

Abstract

The study aims to explore the impact of anxiety on English learning for preparatory schools students in Iraq, specifically by revealing a strong connection between anxiety and academic challenges in the official context. Sixty-four participants (male and female) were randomly selected from the preparatory schools. The study discovered significant differences in the rates of learning English as a foreign language. The participants indicated a strong relationship between English tests and anxiety in classroom activities. The Chi-square test showed a positive relationship between the two variables: anxiety and speaking skills $\chi^2(63,1), 11.00 = .003, p < 0.05$. On the contrary, the Chi-Square test revealed a negative correlation between anxiety and language skills, including listening, reading and writing skills, respectively. In comparison, the results demonstrate that the likelihood of females suffering an anxiety disorder is not statistically significantly higher compared to the case of males ($t = .089, \text{Sig} = .930$). The participants obtained the lowest mean scores for the four language skills. Based on the responses provided by 31% of the participants to the FLCAS questionnaire ($M = 25.3, SD = 3.2$), speaking emerges as the most challenging skill for foreign language learners in preparatory schools. The study's recommendations underscore teachers' critical role in alleviating the adverse impact of anxiety on learning. Specifically, it suggests that teachers should identify the root cause of the anxiety and assist students in coping with anxiety while engaging in academic activities. Furthermore, they should establish a safe atmosphere for English learning, which could prove vital for future studies.

Keywords: Teaching English as a second or foreign language, English language tests, and anxiety.

Introduction

The psychological factors significantly impact student performance, and language learning is reinforced. Numerous researchers have identified that anxiety affects learners' attitudes toward language learning in various ways, such as Anandari (2015), Cakici (2016), Sutarsyah (2017), and Botes et al. (2020). On account of the fear of failing the English language tests, high school students often encounter elevated levels of anxiety. Since the results of these English language tests establish their university admission status, this is important to the students. As a result, their fear of failing the English language tests in an academic environment substantially intensifies and manifests in their behaviour throughout the entire learning or testing period. Moreover, perspectives and personal observations that occur during English language tests exert an additional influence on learners. A critical condition is defined as an emotion of fear associated with the learning process, and it must be primarily negative. Weeks et al. (2019) identify an anxious personality as an individual who suffers anxiety more frequently or intensely than the majority of individuals and who has a tendency to perceive stressful situations as such. Horwitz (2001) distinguishes three types of anxiety affecting language learners' achievement: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety is a psychological condition in which an individual behaves consistently in a particular personality trait. Docan-Morgan and Schmidt (2012) define a trait anxious and anxious personality as an individual who suffers anxiety more frequently or intensely than the majority of individuals. As previously stated, state anxiety is a rapid response to a specific condition, such as nervousness, that occurs at a precise moment. In this respect situation-specific anxiety occurs in a particular situation, which arises in response to unusual, unknown, or anxious circumstances specific to a particular context (Vanin et al., 2008).

The current study implemented the widely acknowledged FLCAS questionnaire to examine the correlation between foreign language anxiety (FLA) and language achievement among preparatory students, as established by Horwitz et al. (1986). As a result, the current study used it to ascertain how these psychological factors contribute to increased anxiety levels, which harm students' learning during classroom activities. Anxiety is cited by Dornyei (2013) as one of the five most widely recognized individual factors, alongside learning styles, learning strategies, and motivation. Anxiety is a prominent variable among these elements that significantly impact how well learners learn. For this reason, the negative aspect of anxiety prevents students from achieving success and developing their academic

performances due to their lack of proficiency in a foreign language. For this reason, teachers are responsible for ensuring that their students are aware of learning-based learning strategies. In this regard, they must continue to develop a dynamic classroom environment by giving students increased responsibility for learning new knowledge independently.

Since 2006, Iraq's Ministry of Education has begun taking a student-centred approach that is now widely used in education and English language learning worldwide. The principles of this approach promote active learning through small group communication, which enables students to earn higher grades due to their improved skills and comprehension in the target language. It encourages students to actively participate in their academic achievement and teachers' motivation during classroom activities.

Teachers must determine academic anxiety and develop appropriate learning techniques to engage students in the learning process effectively. Birnbaum et al. (2017) mentioned that many teachers affirm that students retain anxiety regarding their learning environments. In this respect, student anxiety may be inadequate and problematic to learning in-class activities. Anxious personality traits may be associated with a learner's lack of proficiency and motivation in learning new knowledge in the target language. Horwitz et al. (1986) observed that foreign language anxiety is restricted to situations involving the improvement of students' proficiency along with links to the speaking skills in the target language. To minimize the adverse effects of heightened anxiety on students' academic achievements while acquiring English as a foreign language, teachers must guide students on how to acquire knowledge more efficiently.

1.1 Objective of the study

The objective of this study was to evaluate students' anxiety during the academic year 2023-2024 regarding English language performance and English tests. It is determining whether students' English language learning anxiety correlates with their English language proficiency. Furthermore, it examines the key factors causing foreign language anxiety and its effect on the social and ethnic characteristics of the students' trait anxiety in the academic context. Identifying the dominant anxiety style in the English mastery process and providing appropriate solutions to overcome the negative anxiety in the learning environment is also crucial to enhancing English skills efficiently.

1.2 Problem of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to determine the harmful levels of anxiety of Iraqi students who are learning English in preparatory schools. Consequently, there is an increasing need for studies on learning foreign languages. Based on the limited scope of research on anxiety issues in Iraq, the study is designed to address the existing gap in knowledge regarding anxiety issues in this context. Moreover, the objective is to evaluate the impact of anxiety on language acquisition among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students while considering gender separation in preparatory schools as mandated by the educational system regulations in Iraq.

1.3 Research Questions

The objective of the proposed study is to evaluate the extent of student anxiety experienced while acquiring the English language within an academic setting. To accomplish this, the following research questions are placed to tackle the essence of the problem:

1. Is there a correlation between anxiety and English tests in the formal context?
2. Is there a significant relationship between anxiety and gender in English learning?
3. Are there significant variations between anxiety and English language skills?

1.4 Alternative Hypotheses

Three alternative hypotheses are proposed to test the research questions as a specific statement of prediction for the research questions:

1. (H) There is a correlation between anxiety and English tests in the formal context.
2. (H) There is a significant relationship between anxiety and gender in English learning.
3. (H) There are significant variations between anxiety and English language skills.

Research Limitations

The study incorporates four limitations concerning the influence of anxiety on English as a foreign language learning:

1. The study comprised a random sample of sixty-four students from preparatory schools.
2. This study occurred during the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024.

3. The data collection procedures were implemented in Thi-Qar province, Iraq.
4. This study is severely constrained by the lack of prior research conducted in Iraq on the effects of anxiety on English learning.

2. Literature Review

The impact of educational changes directly affects how students behave when learning an impactful foreign language. The significant effect of individual differences among EFL students in making appropriate learning decisions that involve the use of anxiety to overcome learning challenges provides the student with motivation for success and the ability to overcome anxious feelings in various learning attitudes. The theory of foreign language anxiety, as proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), along with the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), has successfully addressed the perplexing findings of previous studies that explored the connection between anxiety and language acquisition.

Furthermore, anxiety has negative consequences, which impairs concentration and wastes valuable resources in the cognitive system, resulting in inefficient information processing during the learning process in the target language (Li and Pan (2009); Trang et al. (2012); and Reed and Stansfield (2018)). FLCAS has been used widely in different contexts, and various study focuses, as Eysenck et al. (2007) noted that the adverse effects of anxiety, engaging in activities that produce distracting information, impair concentration, and occupy valuable working memory resources can result in the mind processing data inefficiently. Additionally, Long et al. (2018) conducted a thorough investigation to analyze how mental health affects the modifications in teachers' attitudes and their actions toward students who are going through psychological distress, resulting in an ineffective mental process for acquiring new information. In their study, Subasi (2014) and Hashemi (2011) emphasize that there are numerous determinants of anxiety among language learners. Among these determinants are cognitive, cultural, personal, contextual, affective, and social aspects of the learning process. Among these, attitudes have a significant impact. By the same token, Language anxiety can arise from a multitude of factors, all of which have the potential to impact academic learning negatively.

In this context, every language skill incorporates diverse complexities that can create varying degrees of anxiety among students—taking into account that learning specific target languages generates a variety of constraints that hinder learning a language. Language proficiency stands as the preeminent factor among various origins of language complexity. It has been demonstrated that multiple syntactic means of complexification can impede language skill learning (Paquot et al., 2022).

Another possible explanation for this issue is disappointing: the fact that anxiety is a fear associated with the human nervous system in response to our emotions versus environmental danger. Fear and anxiety can manifest in a variety of ways, both within and between individuals; therefore, a scientific explanation of "fear" and "anxiety" must account for these complexities (Ledoux and Pine, 2016). Numerous studies have been conducted to determine anxiety's positive and negative effects on the learning process, most notably on the ability to speak in class due to language proficiency deficiencies. Therefore, anxiety is widely recognized as a negative emotion that impairs the process of obtaining newly acquired language abilities (Luo et al., 2020). In addition to developing and managing their skills effectively, students may contemplate anxiety and the positive effects of increasing their awareness in the learning environment by utilizing personal traits from social activity (Spielberger, 2013). A vital strength of the view lies within the fact that the optimal level of anxiety varies from person to person; positive anxiety, which is considered essential for personality development, is one such condition; and numerous types of anxiety situations exist, influenced by an individual's resources and experience (Al Majali, 2020).

Additionally, evidence indicates that English proficiency plays a critical role in learning and that its limitation results in emotional difficulties manifested by increased anxiety levels during classroom activities. Studies have shown that a student's speaking skills can achieve an improvement in anxiety, which significantly affects his or her anxiety level when confronted with other classmates. For most students, learning a foreign language poses numerous difficulties due to various influencing factors. Pourshahian et al. (2012) conducted a study that revealed that individuals with lower proficiency tend to experience elevated levels of anxiety. Similarly, Sayuri (2016) indicates that students perceive speaking as challenging not only because of personal characteristics such as low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, nervousness, and shyness towards others but also due to the requirement of mastering various linguistic elements, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension of ideas. In other words, anxiety is a natural human emotion that affects most students, particularly those in their

early learning years, due to a lack of control among male and female students at the basic level of schooling. For this reason, Horwitz et al. (1986) developed FLCAS as a necessary scale for assessing learners' anxiety levels when attempting to acquire English as a foreign or second language. In this regard, managing a student's anxiety is an effective strategy for remaining calm during classroom activities. To alleviate anxiety in students, teachers should observe their behaviour and pay close attention to their differences to redesign their methodologies to address their psychological challenges during the learning process.

The core problem concerns the harmful influence of anxiety on the process of acquiring knowledge. Highly anxious individuals indicate negative awareness during the learning process. That is, anxious individuals, expend more significant effort avoiding negative results in learning practice than they do seeking passing scores in English tests despite their overall lower performance in the target context. In practice, English students face increasing pressure to engage in anxious situations that adversely affect their learning. However, these troubling situations vary between students, which affects their academic performance. Fear of failing the English examinations, particularly the ministerial examinations (baccalaureate) in the 6th class of preparatory schooling, and particularly in the final lessons of senior education, students are qualified for university-level academics upon accomplishment of these English tests, which mark the last stage of the senior preparatory level.

2.1 Teacher's Role in Reducing the Students' Anxiety

A dominant viewpoint among English teachers is that anxiety hinders students from attaining a significant degree of proficiency in the target language. Torres and Turner (2014) argue that FL anxiety may manifest in students not only as a consequence of performance-related stress but also due to their perceptions of their teachers in the learning setting. Therefore, learners must adopt adequate learning strategies that promote anxiety reduction during English practice or tests. Teachers' attention affects the student's confidence and motivation regarding their proficiency in the English language. In this respect, Moskowitz and Dewaele (2021) underline that positive effects on students' motivation and engagement could be demonstrated by scientific evidence regarding the transmission of enjoyment from teachers to students (Moskowitz & Dewaele, Creating a positive learning atmosphere that fosters English learning and keeps minimal anxiety is not easy; thus, it is among the most significant obstacles in the classroom. Assisting language learners in attaining their goals and desires in the target language requires

teachers to consider their anxiety reactions carefully (Tanveer, 2007).

Some evidence suggests that teachers can assist students in the classroom by providing practical strategies for slowing down their anxious learning through various activities that effectively establish a conducive atmosphere in the formal setting. In other words, it is challenging to feel uneasy when learning about a positive study area. In this respect, students should be encouraged to keep a positive mind and track their positivity whenever they feel anxious (Marzban and Sadighi, 2013). Even though all students require is a fresh start to de-stress their learning in the target language. Students and language teachers must agree, as Shang (2013) maintained, that positive attitudes and motivations of students facilitate the learning of a new language.

As a result, one of the factors contributing to learner confusion in the EFL context is a lack of knowledge of speaking in the target language in front of a teacher and other classmates. The primary cause of failure when performing learning activities in front of the class is a lack of confidence in speaking English. Additionally, the fear of performing language tests for fear of failure or obtaining insufficient marks would disqualify the student from enrolling in the desired university education. However, contrary findings suggest that foreign language anxiety and academic achievement, particularly in the domain of speaking skills, are negatively correlated, as supported by Horwitz et al. (1986), (Huang, 2018), Tugan (2015), who, on the other hand, noted a limited correlation between students' anxiety towards learning a foreign language and their English achievement level.

The focus of EFL discourse corresponds to the impact of anxiety on formal language development. Since adverse affective states, including anxiety, can have a substantial influence on a student's learning performance and the teacher's professional credibility, it is crucial to address this concern (Ouyang et al., 2019). At the same time, another aspect of anxiety demonstrates that overly anxious students receive lower grades on formal examinations. Teachers must foster a tranquil learning environment conducive to language learners' efficiency. By maintaining a peaceful attitude in the classroom, teachers can captivate students and alleviate their anxiety.

Furthermore, teachers must always be ready to administer arbitrary exercises to strengthen the students' interest and encourage them to engage in the target language. Teachers might perceive these challenges as possible due to their perception of their competence as effective communicators and proficient language users. It could lead to aversion, reluctance, or panic toward using the target language (Horwitz et al., 1986). Besides, Luo, O'steen, et al. (2020) point out that teachers must consider the flipped classroom model to foster learning materials. It entails furnishing students with online learning resources before face-to-face instruction, which allows for increased preparation time and transitioning from comments generated by teachers and peers. In this respect, this atmosphere would also enable students to identify vocabulary lapses or better understand their lack of fluency. It is designed to identify students' difficulties and provide appropriate learning strategies to assist them in more appropriately improving their English skills in natural use, allowing them to learn more naturally to meet their communication needs in the target language.

2.3 The Impact of Anxiety on Gender English Performance

Anxiety occurs and affects many people regularly; it is a fact of life. Therefore, anxiety disorders comprise the most frequent variant of mental health problems (Kessler et al., 2005). However, anxiety disorders entail more than temporary distress or fear. Individuals affected with a psychological condition encounter ongoing feelings of anxiety. However, female participants indicate higher levels of anxiety compared to males due to psychological and cultural factors in Iraq territory. Hidayati (2018) states that females experience comparable levels of anxiety when attempting to communicate in the target language with others. Niomh (2019) notes that Individuals who suffer from social anxiety disorder frequently attribute their language anxiety to a generalized intense fear of social or performance situations, as well as anxiety toward them. They experience embarrassment as a result of their concern that others will negatively evaluate the actions or behaviors that are linked to their anxiety.

Nevertheless, both of them reflect an undying desire to provide answers to inquiries that arise throughout the class's exercises. In addition, when they are required or selected to deliver an oral speech and practice the speaking roles, this anxiety is enhanced. The adverse impact of language anxiety on learners has been frequently observed. In this regard, the desire of students to attend the classroom may be adversely affected due to the impact of language anxiety on how successfully they can master crucial language skills (Khodadady and Khajavy, 2013). In conclusion, psychological research in the field of education

has provided concrete evidence for the presence of anxiety among male and female students across different academic levels. Besides that, these strategies contribute significantly to enhanced English language proficiency.

3. Methodology

The FLCAS Anxiety Scale is widely used in foreign language classrooms as a feasible and practical instrument for assessing students' anxiety, as developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). In recent years, EFL Iraqi classes have included a communicative context to assist students in developing their English learning skills in light of the current context, namely 'English for Iraq. Contributing to the development of active students and mitigating the detrimental effects of language anxiety on the process of English language learning Anxiety, on the other hand, is regarded as a barrier to improving English language learning and performance.

The participants' anxiety regarding learning was measured using the FLCAS, and participants were asked to rate their level of anxiety concerning English language learning using a rating tool consisting of 33 statements. The respondents filled out an Arabic version of a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (indicating strong disagreement) to 5 (indicating strong agreement). Participants were instructed to read each statement and choose one response from the rating scale.

After it was translated by a panel of experts in education and language learning and teaching to prevent unnecessary, overly wordy items and ambiguous meanings throughout the instrument, the Arabic version of the FLCAS was beneficial in avoiding any difficulties that EFL students might have responding to each item. According to Creswell and Creswell (2022), a questionnaire design can answer multiple questions, including descriptive values concerning the correlation between variables. Consequently, the study aimed to investigate the correlation between learning English and anxiety in the academic setting. Horwitz et al. (1986) noted that these aspects are categorized into three, including communication apprehension (items 1, 4, 9, 14, 15, 18, 24, 27, 29, 30, and 32), fear of feedback by peers and teachers (items 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, and 28), and fear of language tests (items 2, 7, 13, 19, 23, 31, and 33) see Table 6.2.

3.1 Instruments

The current study examines the effect of anxiety on academic achievement in English learning at three different levels of preparatory schools in Iraq using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The study conducted this analysis using the FLCAS, a measurement instrument originally developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) and widely implemented by scholars worldwide to assess the influence of anxiety on students' academic achievement, such as Horwitz (2001); Mirawdali et al. (2018); Huang (2018); Al Majali (2020); Botes et al. (2020); and Fishstrom et al. (2022). It is used to determine the anxiety levels of EFL students in a language classroom setting. The anxiety experienced by the students was assessed using the FLCAS, which comprises thirty-three items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from one to five: (1) "Strongly disagree"; (2) "Disagree"; (3) "Neither agree nor disagree"; (4) "Agree"; and (5) "Strongly agree".

Table 3.1 FLCAS Categories of Anxiety

Anxiety Categories	Items
Communication Apprehension	(1, 4, 9, 14, 15, 18, 24, 27, 29, 30, 32)
Fear of language tests	(3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28)
Fear of feedback by peers and teachers	(2, 7, 13, 19, 23, 31, 33)

As illustrated in Table 3.1, FLCAS is classified into three categories: the first contains eleven items, the second contains fifteen, and the third contains seven items. The FLCAS reliability test revealed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .933 (N=64). Additionally, the FLCAS scale is divided into three categories: "low," "average," and "high". Along with that, during the academic year 2023-2024, the beliefs and perceptions of the selected participants regarding their anxiety regarding learning English as a foreign language were investigated.

3.2 Participants

Sixty-four students were randomly selected from various classes and the same academic level to participate in this study on the effects of English as a foreign language learning anxiety at preparatory school. Thirty females and thirty-four males, aged seventeen to nineteen, were among preparatory school students.

Table 3.2: The Demographic Information of the Sample

Gender	N	Age	Percent
Male	34	17-19	52.09
Female	30		47.91

As illustrated above, the variables scores of participants at all levels of school were significant at the preparatory (30.02%), secondary (30.02%), and intermediate (36.21%) levels, respectively.

4. Data Collection

To obtain the aim of the study, the descriptive statistics of the FLCAS were measured for each item of the questionnaire as listed in Table 6.2, including mean, standard deviation, mode, and t. test, p. value maximum and low value of rating. In this respect, for each item, the number of students who had opted for each choice was counted. These statistics help the readers understand which areas of language learning create more anxiety in the learning process. Furthermore, the chi-square test was implemented to determine whether a statistical relationship exists between students' anxiety and their performance on an English test. A statistical correlation signifies the existence of a relationship between students' anxiety scores and their performance on English tests.

The context of the FLCAS questionnaire and a proficiency test were conducted with the students enrolled in preparatory schools in Thi-Qar, Iraq, throughout the academic year 2023-2024. The questionnaire items were separated into two different groups. The first section relates to demographic data comprising gender, age, and English level. In addition, the second section includes 64 FLCAS items that the participants evaluated. The primary objective of the context questionnaire was to examine the learners' perspectives on language anxiety within the formal setting. The English language skills consist of four fundamental components: listening, writing, speaking, and reading comprehension. To ascertain the correlation between the anxiety scores of students and English test performance in preparatory schools, the researcher gathered and analyzed the data presented in this study provided by the participants who voluntarily signed a consent form.

Before conducting the study at the preparatory school in Thi-Qar, informed consent was obtained from all participants. A comprehensive set of instructions was furnished to aid them in completing the FLCAS questionnaire. A panel of TESL experts reviewed and translated the FLCAS's inquiries

into native Arabic to ensure accurate and reliable responses. Per the guidelines set by FLCAS, students were allocated a time constraint of 30–45 minutes to fill out and formally submit the entirety of the questionnaire.

5. Data Analysis

To determine the levels of the FLCAS questionnaire regarding the influence of negative anxiety on Iraqi EFL students in preparatory schools. By applying the FLCAS questionnaire, a quantitative analysis was conducted to ascertain whether there is a link between English language learning and anxiety. The researcher utilized Excel, a popular spreadsheet software, to input quantitative data for analysis following data collection. Consecutively, SPSS was employed for both data analysis and the description of results, serving as a vital software tool for quantitative data analysis in social science studies. In the same vein, descriptive statistics were computed to statistically demonstrate the variation of mean scores obtained by FLCAS. The findings would indicate the most important variables contributing to FLCAS encountered by Iraqi EFL students. The effects of anxiety on the English learning process were investigated through a descriptive and experimental analysis. Furthermore, the chi-square test was applied to examine the correlation between negative anxiety and academic English learning anxiety among Iraqi EFL students.

6. Results Discussion

In an attempt to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' thoughts regarding the influence of anxiety on academic performance, A significant correlation has been established between anxiety and English language performance in terms of enhancing the four language skills in the classroom, as demonstrated by quantitative and correlation analyses. Besides, the FLCAS's reliability was evaluated using SPSS software version 20, and Cronbach's alpha value of %77 was found to be consistent and acceptable for use in the current study.

Table 6.1 The Overall Descriptive Statistics of the Anxiety Categories

Anxiety Categories	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Mode
Communication apprehension	2.43	1.00	2.59	1
Fear of feedback by peers and teachers	2.83	.948	2.98	1
Fear of language tests	3.74	.881	3.70	5

As illustrated in Table 6.1, the descriptive statistics of the anxiety aspects indicated that the mean score for fear of language tests was 3.74, $SD=.881$, the median score was 3.70, and the mode was 5. At this point, all three results of descriptive statistics, including mean, median, and mode, were more significant than the average mean score of 3.00. The most frequently observed value in this domain was significantly increased above the average mean score of 3.74. In this respect, the participants' responses indicated that they used to have an average FLCAS rating, and the anxious participants could not effectively learn the teaching materials used in a foreign language context. In other words, this anxiety can interfere with the input flow, which is consistent with the communication process, particularly in speaking skills.

Furthermore, the mean score for fear of feedback by peers and teachers was 2.83, $SD=.948$, the median was 2.98, and the mode was 1. It was similar to the previously mentioned anxiety factors in that all results were set to be greater than the mean of 2.83 except for the inadequate mode score. Finally, the mean score for communication apprehension was 2.43, $SD=1.00$, the median was 2.59, and the mode was 1. Consequently, it was similar to the previous three aspects in that all results were set to be greater than the mean of 2.43, with one exception of the inadequate mode score.

Taking advantage of the descriptive analysis referring to the FLCAS questionnaire demonstrated that participants expressed varying anxiety levels concerning each item. The items of the FLCAS questionnaire that elicited the high and low mean scores were noted by participants as the primary sources of anxiety when practising English as a foreign language in an academic environment.

Table 6.2 Descriptive Statistics For FLCAS Questionnaire (Horwitz et al.,1986)

SN.	FLA questionnaire Items	M	SD
1.	“I never feel quite sure of myself when my foreign language class am speaking in”	3.02	1.18
2.	“I don't worry about making mistakes in language class”	2.89	0.94
3.	“I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class”	2.83	1.21
4.	“It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language”	3.45	1.19

5.	“It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes”	3.03	1.09
6.	“During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course”	3.28	1.14
7.	“I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am”	2.50	0.83
8.	“I am usually at ease during tests in my language class”	2.64	1.16
9.	“I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class”	2.70	1.16
10.	”I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class”	2.97	1.35
11.	“I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes”	3.11	0.99
12.	“In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know”	3.27	1.18
13.	“It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class”	3.38	1.18
14.	”I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers”	3.30	1.26
15.	”I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting”	3.09	1.24
16.	“Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it”	3.02	1.00
17.	“I often feel like not going to my language class”	3.23	1.13
18.	“I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class”	3.47	1.15
19.	“I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make”	3.27	1.22
20.	“I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class”	3.67	1.18
21.	“The more I study for a language test, the more con- fused I get”	3.11	1.32
22.	“I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class”	3.08	1.15
23.	“I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do”	2.91	0.95
24.	“I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students”	3.03	1.22
25.	“Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind”	3.52	1.11
26.	“I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes”	3.03	1.023

27.	“I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class”	3.27	1.144
28.	“When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed”	3.27	1.158
29.	“I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	3.23	1.330
30.	“I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language”	2.89	1.156
31.	“I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	2.83	.985
32.	“I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language”	3.05	1.214
33.	“I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions that I haven't prepared in advance”	3.33	1.169

Table 6.2, item 20, "*I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class,*" received the highest mean anxiety score ($M = 3.67$, $SD= 1.18$) in the FLCAS questionnaire. Moreover, Item 25, "*Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind*" ($M=3.52$, $SD=1.11$). Furthermore, Item 18, "*I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class*" ($M = 3.47$, $SD=1.15$), was the third most common source of anxiety for learners in the foreign context.

On the other hand, learners fear forgetting things they already know and intend to say due to the general anxiety they experience in language class. In this respect, item 7, "*I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am*" ($M = 2.50$, $SD= 0.83$); the other two items are relevant to the anxiety that learners have regarding communicating in foreign language classes as a consequence of inadequate participation with other. For instance, item 8, "*I am usually at ease during tests in my language class,*" received the lowest mean anxiety score ($M = 2.64$, $SD=1.16$) in the FLCAS questionnaire. Item 9, "*I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class,*" ranked as the lowest anxiety for learners in taking English tests in the academic setting ($M=2.97$, $SD=1.35$). In this context, it has been endorsed that anxiety plays a significant role in why numerous learners lack the desire to learn English.

Table 6.3: The ANOVA- one-way Test Anxiety Categories

Anxiety Categories	N		M	Med	SD	F	Sig.
	Valid	Missing					
Communication apprehension	64	0	2.43	2.59	.949	1.82	.002
Fear of feedback by peers and teachers	64	0	2.83	2.98	.948	2.45	.005
Fear of language tests	64	0	3.74	3.70	.881	1.43	.001

The results in Table 6.3 indicate that participants, despite their burning desire for student-centred teaching, displayed an adverse attitude toward their fear of learning new information and receiving low marks on the language tests. In this respect, the fear of language tests imposes limitations on specific students, preventing them from actively using the target language in a practical context without facing adverse criticism from their classmates and teachers. Moreover, most participants believe language practice and tests should precede the rules and regulations in language learning activities. Formal instruction in English language tests must not be neglected entirely if it enhances students' English communication aptitude.

The ANOVA one-way analysis of variance reveals significant differences among the mean scores of anxiety categories exposed to various techniques for English Language learning in an academic setting. English learning anxiety hinders several students from effectively utilizing the target language in practical scenarios due to the presence of emotional fear and negative feedback from teachers and other students. The results of the one-way ANOVA test indicate that the differences in means among the categories are statistically significant. For instance, the score for **communication apprehension** is $f(63,1) = 1.82, p < 0.05$. Additionally, the score for **fear of feedback by peers and teachers**, along with feedback, is $F(63,1) = 2.45, p < 0.05$. Additionally, the score for **fear of language tests** is $f(63,1) = 1.43, p < 0.05$. Notably, the p-value is below the conventional threshold of 0.05, indicating statistical significance for the observed differences.

Moreover, it appears that the participants are knowledgeable of the need to identify an easy technique for reducing their anxiety in English learning. Additionally, teachers can lower their students' anxiety levels when they possess a high level of psychological awareness and consider the need to foster

greater communication apprehension among the students to whom they provide adequate information. Hence, teachers must consider the anxiety levels of those they teach to foster an environment conducive to active discourse in English among students and teachers throughout classroom activities.

Table 6.4: Chi-Square Test for Anxiety and English Test Correlation

English Learning Anxiety	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Listening Skill	11.46 ^b	20	.933
Speaking Skill	11.00 ^c	11	.003
Reading Skill	12.31 ^d	21	.931
Writing Skill	15.78 ^e	22	.827

As seen in Table 6.4, the results indicate that participants encountered adverse affective experiences during their English language learning, and they suffer from anxiety whenever they are required to perform predictive skills in class, including speaking, reading aloud, role-playing, or getting evaluated by their teacher. To answer research question 1, “*Is there a correlation between anxiety and English tests in the formal context?*”, the correlation between anxiety and the English test was examined using the Chi-Square test. The results indicated a positive relationship between the two variables: anxiety and speaking skills $\chi^2 (63,1), 11.00 = .003, p < 0.05$. On the contrary, the Chi-Square test revealed a negative correlation between anxiety and language skills as measured by the following correlation coefficients: $\chi^2 (63,1), 11.46 = .933, p < 0.05$, $\chi^2 (63,1), 12.31 = .931, p < 0.05$, and $\chi^2 (63,1), 15.78 = .827, p < 0.05$ for listening, reading and writing skills, respectively. Thus, alternative hypothesis 1, “*There is a correlation between anxiety and English tests in the formal context,*” is accepted.

Due to the fact that EFL learners were required to complete these types of activities, they could become shy or hesitant to speak or partake for fear of making mistakes in front of their peers. Consequently, anxiety has a strong effect on language learners throughout the entire process of learning. The results suggest that motivation, interaction with others, and English proficiency substantially impact students' learning strategies for acquiring new information and alleviate negative anxiety during classroom activities, particularly English test sessions.

According to gender, the FLCAS scores of students are categorized in Table 4.5m, and the anxiety scores of males and females were equivalent ($M=1.03$; $SD=.171$; $M=1.04$; $SD=.183$). In addition, to ascertain the statistical significance of those differences, the independent samples test was employed. As far as gender influences the criteria in the context of anxiety disorders, there is a noticeable absence of significant variation despite the consistent association between gender and anxiety disorders observed by the current results throughout the learning cycle.

Table 6.5 Distribution Scores of Gender Anxiety

Gender	N	M	SD	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		t	Sig.
					Lower	Upper		
Male	34	1.03	.171	.029	-.092	.085	.089	.930
Female	30	1.04	.183	.033	-.093	.085		

As displayed in Table 6.5, the independent samples test results indicate no significant difference in anxiety scores between males and females ($t=-.089$, $Sig.=.930$). To answer research question 2, which is “Is there a significant relationship between anxiety and gender in English learning?”, the results demonstrate that the likelihood of females participants suffering an anxiety disorder is not statistically significantly higher compared to the case of males participants, considering the epidemiological implications of anxiety in English learning among both male and female participants. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that there is no significant difference in anxiety levels between male and female preparatory learners. Thus, the alternative hypothesis 2, which is “*There is a relationship between anxiety and gender in English learning.*” is rejected.

Therefore, the results of this study were consistent with previous studies that observed similar levels of anxiety among males and females when it came to learning. They found no statistically significant distinction between the two genders (e.g., Razak & Mohamad).

Most students confront anxiety as a result of the potential English errors that they may commit in the presence of the class. However, the anxiety levels of the participants decrease when they are arranged

in pairs or groups. Furthermore, the results of the present study indicate that the learning tasks model, which both male and female participants prefer, should be adopted. Therefore, they can gain a new perspective on learning, emphasizing their drive to acquire new knowledge in the target language. Additionally, they have the power to establish the subject matter of learning assignments by encouraging students to progress as required throughout the teaching materials. It can enable them to participate actively in class discussions and group activities, thereby decreasing their anxiety.

Table 6.6: Descriptive Statistics of English Skill Based on Anxiety Impact

English Skills	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentiles
Listening	64	20	40	29.28	6.45	40%
Speaking	64	20	31	25.38	3.28	31%
Reading	64	20	42	31.69	7.11	42%
Writing	64	20	44	31.87	7.11	44%
Valid N (listwise)	64					

As shown in Table 6.6, The majority of those participants involved in the current study display an intense desire to learn areas of English proficiency. Yet, they are concurrently overcome with anxiety regarding their academic performance. To answer research question 3, “*Are there significant variations between anxiety and English language skills?*” Participants are more likely to demonstrate confidence in their learning when they experience reduced anxiety in a formal environment. Most participating participants are anxious about class activities among their teachers and peers. The overall mean scores of the four language skills, speaking arises as the most challenging skill in the context of foreign language learning based on the responses provided by 31% of the participants to the FLCAS questionnaire (M = 25.3, SD = 3.2), speaking emerges as the most challenging skill for foreign language learners in preparatory schools. By engaging deeply with English system structures, EFL learners demonstrate their interest by memorizing numerous vocabulary items and phrases and reviewing grammar rules.

Furthermore, the listening skill level is approximately average at 40% (M = 29.2, SD = 6.4). Additionally, the participants' reading and writing mean scores are as follows: 42% (M = 31.6, SD = 0.8) for the former, followed by 44% (M = 31.8, SD = 7.1) for the latter. Thus, alternative hypothesis 3, “*There*

are significant variations between anxiety and English language skills,” is accepted. Using the learning contribution is a common strategy employed in foreign language classrooms to address test anxiety. A novel learning environment would be complex for EFL learners who are accustomed to a traditional teacher-centred approach to adapt to. As a result, the negative effectiveness of teacher correction and peer adjustments reduces adequate learning progress. Their insufficient knowledge of spoken English is a significant contributing factor to fostering effective communication in the classroom. Therefore, learning a new language should prioritize language usage rather than grammar rules in the target language.

Moreover, anxiety is a deeply embedded effect among those mastering a foreign language, with EFL learners being particularly susceptible. For this reason, test-taking, negative evaluation, and communication apprehension have significantly impacted language learners. In this context, When learners feel more at ease communicating with others in the target language, teachers can motivate them to share their thoughts and experiences regularly in English. This will facilitate their English language learning.

7. Conclusion

To understand foreign language anxiety in a broader scope, the aspects of anxiety, in general, language anxiety can arise from a multitude of sources. There is overwhelming evidence indicating the influence of anxiety on learners, particularly concerning their perception of barriers that hinder learning within the target and learning settings. The problem of English language learning anxiety received a great deal of attention from teachers due to its influence on language learners in the formal setting. One of the most notable findings from the data is that the current study shows that the students are generally anxious during English lessons, worried about being negatively evaluated, and fearful about tests. This phenomenon may be attributed to individuals' lower self-confidence and tendency towards competition. The results of this study suggest that Cooperative learning is generally viewed positively by both teachers and students in the learning cycle.

Despite the various problems with its implementation, the learner-centred approach (LCA) remains a feasible instructional strategy that can be utilized within preparatory schools in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). At the preparatory schools level, educational decision-makers must deliberate upon initiatives to foster greater student engagement and participation. Teachers' goal-setting for students to transition from inactive learning and concerns regarding active speech roles among students seem to

harmonize with the learner-centred ideology. Before implementing methodologies that demand student engagement, teachers must ensure that students are aware of being amenable to such orientations to learning English as a foreign language. Specific arguments associated with anxious learning should be considered when learning English effectively. It is essential to highlight that the learners' anxiety is reflected in the inverse relationship between fluency and accuracy when obtaining new information. When considering learning, it is of the highest priority to assess the needs of the students.

Briefly, the findings suggest that the development of knowledge is hindered by anxiety. Thus, considering the effects of factors resulting from anxiety is critical in the learning process. To foster and strengthen students' self-confidence, teachers must provide a relatively less challenging environment in formal settings. A positive correlation has been observed between student motivation and achievement in language learning. Moreover, teachers and learners must have an in-depth knowledge of the critical significance of active learning and employ the most effective pedagogical techniques when mastering English as a second language. In light of this, the subsequent learning recommendations are crucial to implement:

- A. Student Anxiety Control: Teachers can assist students in slowing down their anxious minds through practice. Several classroom activities could help with calming students who are anxious about learning.
- B. Altering the learner's mode: Students may find that a change of environment is sufficient to calm their minds. All students can benefit from a class break; no individual receives special treatment.
- C. Frequent Learner investigation: A teacher can withdraw the student and investigate the leading cause of his or her emotional distress. Training can also elevate the availability of endorphins, which is a further benefit of learning English as a foreign language.

In light of the findings, many students have a psychological barrier to learning a foreign language despite their success in other contexts. Besides, these findings can provide English teachers with valuable insights into the perspectives and beliefs of EFL learners regarding language anxiety when it comes to learning new information in the target language.

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