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Foreign Language Anxiety: Classroom Implications

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Autor:

Rocío Jacqueline Naula Asmal

Director:

Ana María Calle Calle

ORCID: : [0000-0002-1817-3095](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1817-3095)

Cuenca, Ecuador

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Resumen

La presente síntesis de investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar las causas, los efectos y las implicaciones pedagógicas de la ansiedad al momento de comunicarse en una lengua extranjera. En este caso se abordó la situación específica de ansiedad en inglés llamada *Foreign Language Anxiety*. Para este propósito, se examinaron 15 artículos (todos empíricos, escritos en inglés y enfocados en la ansiedad al momento de expresarse en inglés). Los resultados de este análisis demostraron que cuando los aprendices se expresan en el idioma inglés, la ansiedad ocurre en un momento específico debido a varias circunstancias tales como miedo a hablar en inglés o la corrección estricta por parte de sus profesores. Este fenómeno no debe ser malinterpretado como holgazanería o desinterés. Los resultados demostraron que es necesario el apoyo emocional por parte del docente y la actitud positiva del mismo para que el estudiante pueda continuar con su proceso de aprendizaje del idioma inglés. Nuevas investigaciones deben ser llevadas a cabo en contextos locales que aborden, entre otras variables, las causas y la ansiedad en otras destrezas de la lengua.

Palabras clave del autor: ansiedad, inglés, enseñanza, lengua extranjera



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Abstract

This research synthesis intended to analyze the causes, the effects, and the pedagogical implications of anxiety at the moment of communicating in a foreign language. In this case, a specific anxiety situation in English called *foreign language anxiety* was investigated. Fifteen empirical studies were examined (all of them written in English and focused on language anxiety at the moment of speaking in English). The results demonstrated that anxiety occurs in a specific moment due to various circumstances, such as the fear to talk in English or strict correction from teachers. This phenomenon should not be misinterpreted as laziness or disinterest. The results demonstrated that emotional support from teachers and a positive attitude is necessary. In this way, learners can continue with their process of learning English. Also, research should be conducted in the local context. These new studies should discuss the causes of anxiety in other language skills.

Author Keywords: anxiety, English, teaching, foreign language



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*“When tiring days come,
remember baby the beautiful us,
the power to get up again, it's in you”
Exo Power*

Dedication

First, I would like to dedicate this work to my family, my parents, my sisters, and my grandma who indirectly accompanied me during this long journey. This work is dedicated to these incredible people whose encouraging words helped me to continue, especially during those moments when I used to say that my progress was not enough. Hearing them that I was doing right allowed me to finish. Also, I would like to dedicate this work to the person who cried and celebrated along with me. My dear best friend; thank you, Diana, for listening to me and showing endless support. Without you, I would not be able to be here where I am. Lastly, I dedicate myself. Despite the ups and downs that I went through, I defeated my impostor syndrome and my anxious moments; I made it. Despite how long it took me to do this, I was capable of doing it. Dear Jackie, you did it. Also, thanks to Jehovah for allowing me to finish it. Finally, to the one who is not with us anymore, Grandpa, I know you are proud of me.

*"You've got no reason to be afraid
You're on your own, kid, yeah you can face this
You're on your kid, you always have been"
Taylor Swift, You're on Your Own Kid*

Introduction

Through time, language anxiety has been defined as “a mental block” that impedes learners' progress (Kráľová, 2016, p. 2). This phenomenon started decades ago. However, more explanations about its origin and effects must be explained. Therefore, this research synthesis intends to present an overview of its origin, causes, effects, and its pedagogical implications.

The following chapters will explain in detail what the author intended in this study. In the first chapter, the author gives an overview of the study. Research questions and objectives are key elements of this section. The second chapter presents the definition and theories of language anxiety and the literature review of 15 studies. This information helps to understand what has been said and done regarding language anxiety. The third chapter explains the methodological aspects, such as the type of research that was carried out and how the data for this study was collected. The fourth chapter presents an exhaustive analysis of the data collected, which showed that there are three main causes of anxiety and there are more cognitive effects than physical ones. Lastly, in the fifth chapter, the author gives conclusions and some recommendations on how teachers may handle language anxiety.

CHAPTER I: Description of the Study

1.1. Background

It is well-known that the most challenging part for a person learning a language is its production (Tello, 2015). Even though learners are good at different skills, at the moment of speaking or writing in a foreign language, most present certain anxiety levels (Horwitz, 2001). This type of anxiety is called Foreign Language Anxiety. (FLA)

FLA is a unique type of anxiety that concerns language acquisition. There is a considerable body of research that deals with FLA. Previous findings have suggested that language anxiety might be an obstacle to using or acquiring the language and its production (Sadiq, 2017).

According to a seminal author, Spielberger (1971), anxiety in language learning is viewed as a psychological issue on the part of the learners. It is related to our nervous system; consequently, our motions and ability to learn a language are also affected.

FLA is the feeling of unease, worry, nervousness, and apprehension experienced in learning or using a second or foreign language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994) (seminal work).

In addition, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) (seminal work) stated that

when anxiety is limited to the language learning situation, it falls into the category of specific anxiety reaction. Psychologists use the term specific anxiety reaction to differentiate people who are generally anxious in a variety of situations from those who are anxious only in specific situations (p. 125).

Sadiq (2017) asserted that “language anxiety is not a new phenomenon” (p. 1) and it has been addressed from different angles. For instance, Bhatti, Memom, and Pathan (2016) claimed that for several authors, it is important to define anxiety first, and then the type of anxiety and its circumstances. Then we can talk about language anxiety. Also, researchers pointed out that it is important to differentiate between anxiety and language anxiety (Bhatti, et al., 2016). Lastly, Azizpour and Gholami (2022) stated that “researchers have attempted to define foreign language classroom anxiety as a significant psychological difference in individuals in foreign language learning and teaching” (p. 323). Foreign language classroom anxiety is a special type of anxiety, and it is different from personality anxiety.

Focusing on the causes of anxiety, Tello (2015) claimed that students’ higher expectations when learning a language contribute to FLA. Students think that learning a language is easy, and when they become aware of its difficulty, anxiety appears. According to this author, anxiety also heavily impacts the confidence or self-efficacy that students might have when

performing a given task, eventually influencing their academic outcome and language proficiency.

Finally, addressing the effects, Tello (2015) mentioned that the impact that anxiety has on self-esteem and academic achievement is something that should be investigated. There is no consensus on the causes and effects of anxiety in the language classroom. Therefore, the proposed study will analyze the causes and effects of FLA in learning a language, in this case, English as a Foreign Language.

1.2. Statement of the Problem:

The current need to learn English as a Foreign Language has increased considerably. As a result, the demand for efficient speakers of the language has augmented (Sadiq, 2017). Communicating without any barriers is certainly a challenge that learners have to overcome. Learners of English often express feelings of stress, nervousness, and anxiety while learning how to speak the target language. In most cases, English learners feel anxious when they have to show their abilities and proficiency in the language, especially when they have someone who is judging their abilities. It could be their peers or their teachers (Buitrago & Ayala, 2008).

In addition, due to anxious moments, learners might not be able to show that they have mastered the language. As a result, some teachers tend to generalize that it is a lack of knowledge or laziness. It becomes necessary for teachers to be able to notice that this assumption of not mastering the language involves anxious moments and the fear of speaking. Castro and Guillén (2013) stated that few studies have discussed the issue of anxiety in the classroom. In addition, Buitrago and Ayala (2008) affirm that studies have not mentioned how teachers should handle FLA.

According to Tüm and Kunt (2013), other language learners, such as pre-service English teachers also experience language anxiety. These prospective teachers, at the beginning of their careers, were language learners as well, so they struggled and dealt with anxiety at the same time. However, it does not mean that they are not proficient in the language, or they are not well-prepared to teach the language, in this case, English (Tüm & Kunt, 2013).

As Horwitz et al. (1986) and Young (1991) expressed, “We have been truly surprised at the number of students who experienced anxiety and distress in their language classes” (p. 90). Language learners wonder why they cannot speak English well despite their acquired knowledge. Tüm and Kunt (2013) also pointed out the high number of university students facing language anxiety, which has impeded the correct learning of the language. This

research aims to analyze some of the possible reasons for language anxiety as an obstacle and how teachers can encourage students to overcome it.

1.3. Rationale

Being aware of what anxiety involves will help educators change their attitudes toward different levels of anxiety. This will help improve students' performance. Buitrago and Ayala (2008) mentioned that a teacher could help students overcome anxiety in the classroom and de-stress learners using specific strategies. It remains important to observe and check out how psychologically prepared an English teacher is to help students overcome those situations. Teachers must be informed about the causes as well as the effects of anxiety to deal with this problem in the classroom. This work attempts to inform teachers about these issues.

Ohata (2005) claimed that "language anxiety cannot be defined linearly but rather it can be better construed as a complex psychological phenomenon influenced by many different factors" (as cited in Tanveer, 2008, p. 11). This author emphasized that teachers, even though they are in charge of teaching a foreign language or second language, tend to misinterpret the origin of anxiety. Therefore, the teacher should help students by integrating them into the classroom and avoiding discrimination because of their different behavior. Overall, Kráľová (2016) stated that although authors consider anxiety as a mental block, there has not been a consensus about its causes and effects.

Based on what has been presented in this section, analyzing different studies that report distinct points of view regarding anxiety in learning languages is a further step to investigating the causes and effects of language anxiety for English as a Second Language / English as a Foreign Language learners.

1.4. Research Questions:

After preliminary research, the following questions have emerged:

1. What are the reported causes and effects of language anxiety on EFL learners?
2. What are the reported solutions to counteract language anxiety in EFL learners?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers and students toward Foreign Language Anxiety?

1.5. Objectives

1.5.1 General Objective:

To analyze the implications of language anxiety for the language classroom.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

- To determine the factors that cause Foreign Language Anxiety and the possible solutions to overcome it.
- To identify the effects of Foreign Language Anxiety

- To analyze the perceptions of teachers and students regarding Foreign Language Anxiety

CHAPTER II

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

In this section, different definitions of language anxiety are presented. In addition, a discussion about a variety of types of anxiety is provided, along with different theoretical views that have analyzed this phenomenon.

2.2. Foreign Language Anxiety: Definitions

It is essential to provide a conceptual basis for this research synthesis. This theoretical framework will focus on the following definitions: anxiety, trait anxiety, state anxiety, situation-specific anxiety, and language anxiety. Also, the possible solutions to counteract anxiety. Furthermore, in this section, language anxiety according to different areas, such as psychology and educational psychology will be defined. Background information about how language anxiety has been defined through time is also considered.

“Language anxiety has become a great concern in second and foreign language learning research over the last three decades and is a topic that triggers significant differences of opinions” (Thi, 2012, p. 69). This author mentions that the definition of language anxiety (LA) is still unclear. The theories of Horwitz and her collaborators (1986) have an impact on the field of investigating language anxiety, but they should be revised. Thi (2012) claimed that Horwitz's theories have contributed to defining LA, but they involve just a hypothesis of what LA is.

Also, Ortega (2009) stated that anxiety has been studied intensely, and it has been defined as the experience of strong feelings of apprehension, tension, and fear. In addition, this author has stated that the main theories contributing to the field of defining LA are Horwitz', et. al (1986) and Macintyre's and Cope's (1994). Although the studies of these authors have some differences, their results are similar.

From a different perspective, Zhang and Zhong (2012) asserted that according to psychologists, anxiety should be considered distinctively because there is a difference between trait anxiety and state anxiety. Based on Scovel (1978), trait anxiety is defined as someone's tendency to be nervous, whereas Spielberg (1972 b) claims that state anxiety is a temporary apprehension induced by a temporary situation.

2.2.1 Anxiety within Other Areas

It is relevant to start analyzing the definition of anxiety within the area of psychology. According to Scovel (1978), some psychologists have defined anxiety as a state of apprehension or vague fear. But it is “clearly an emotional state” (Scovel, 1978, p. 134). Lamendella claims that anxiety was considered an emotional state defined as “the arousal of the limbic system” (1977, as cited in Scovel, 1978, p. 134).

In addition, according to Scovel (1978), anxiety was measured in three different ways: a) behavioral tests, b) subject self-report, and c) psychological tests. Although there are various ways that anxiety has been measured, it is still unclear what the possible causes of anxiety are. Scovel (1978) stated that before measuring anxiety, intrinsic and extrinsic factors that cause anxiety should be considered, and the different perspectives should be analyzed. As can be seen, anxiety cannot be easily described because it is not a simple, unitary construct that can be comfortably quantified into either “high” or “low” amounts (Kleinman, 1977 as cited in Scovel, 1978, p. 137).

Lastly, Scovel (1978) and other researchers have considered that it is necessary to make a distinction between two types of anxieties. These are momentary anxiety and the permanent predisposition to be anxious. In the next section, state anxiety and trait anxiety will be discussed in detail.

2.2.2. State and Trait Anxiety

According to Spielberger (1972a), an adequate definition of anxiety involves distinguishing between stress and state anxiety. Thus, it is essential to mention that stress can be considered a temporary circumstance that might influence low performance. However, anxiety cannot be considered a temporary state.

State anxiety is a transitory emotional reaction or response by an individual who perceives a certain situation that puts them in danger or can cause fright (Spielberger, 1972a). Increased feelings of tension and apprehension characterize this emotional state. In some cases, it can involve physical reactions like excessive sweating and increased heart rate. In addition, the length of this state depends on how threatened or endangered someone feels.

On the other hand, trait anxiety “refers to relatively stable individual differences in anxiety proneness, that is, to differences in the disposition to perceive a wide range of stimulus situations as dangerous or threatening, and in the tendency to respond to such threats” (Spielberger, 1972b, p. 39).

Trait anxiety is defined as an individual who is differentially disposed to experience state anxiety (Spielberger, 1972b). Trait anxiety comprises residues of experience as a specific circumstance that threatens or involves self-esteem, or failure. Also, this author emphasizes

that trait anxiety can predict performance in circumstances in which stress is produced (Spielberger, 1972b).

2.2.3. Situation-Specific Anxiety

Finally, this section will present another type of anxiety, which is Situation-Specific Anxiety. Oh (1990, as cited in Bhatti et al., 2016) mentioned that Situation-Specific Anxiety could be defined as the type of anxiety that students experience in the classroom. This anxiety type involves feelings of inadequacy, failure, self-centered thoughts, and emotional reactions.

Another definition of specific anxiety, given by MacIntyre and Gardener (1994, as cited in Bhatti et al., 2016) encompasses the fear that is experienced by a learner in a situation in which the learner must use a foreign language that they are not proficient in it. As a result, both Situation Specific and Specific Anxieties could negatively impact students' performance (Bhatti et al., 2016).

2.2.4 Language Anxiety or Foreign Language Anxiety

Hortwitz (1986, as cited in Kráľová & Sorádová, 2015) claims that when anxiety is related to learning a foreign language, it is called second/foreign language anxiety. Also, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986, as cited in Hortwitz, 2001) propose that language anxiety is responsible for students' negative emotional responses to language learning.

According to Young (1991, as cited in Walker & Panayides, 2014), two approaches define language anxiety. One of the views regards it as a manifestation of various general types of anxiety. The other one considers anxiety reactions when an individual is learning a language. Similarly, Alpert and Haber (1960, as cited in Oiter & Al-Otaibi, 2019) mentioned that language anxiety could be classified into two different types: debilitating or harmful anxiety and facilitating or helpful anxiety. In the case of facilitating anxiety, Young (1991, as cited in Bhatti et al., 2016) defines it as a positive force that can improve learners' performance, whereas debilitating anxiety is defined as a negative force. This anxiety type can lead to low performance.

In addition, Oiter and Al-Otaibi (2019) mentioned that there is consensus about how debilitating (harmful) anxiety has negatively impacted learners' performance. Some of the effects of this anxiety are reduced class participation, frustration, and worry (Oiter & Al-Otaibi 2019).

Lastly, according to Kráľová and Sorádová (2015), language anxiety has been studied deeply since the 1980s with the inception of Stephen Krashen's theory of the Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen hypothesized that some factors such as anxiety and self-confidence play an essential role in acquiring a second language.

Also, Kráľová and Sorádová (2015) said that the intensive research in the area of Foreign Language Anxiety has made anxiety one of the most examined variables in the field of

education and psychology. The research on FLA has focused on how anxiety interferes with the acquisition of a foreign language in a specific environment in the classroom. Moreover, some researchers such as Horwitz and her collaborators (1986) have investigated how the role of FLA is related to academic achievement. In the next section both theories, Krashen's and Horwitz's, will be discussed.

2.3 Theories to Explain Foreign Language Anxiety

Oiter and Al-Otaibi (2019) stated that it is vital to recognize the theories of second language acquisition and analyze the insights that each approach has provided. The models of second/foreign language acquisition that will be discussed are Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) and Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety.

2.3.1. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

Oiter and Al-Otaibi (2019) mentioned that Krashen's hypothesis is a fundamental theory in the field of second language acquisition. Krashen states that affective factors are related to the second language acquisition process, which involves affective variables. These variables are the following: 1) motivation, 2) self-confidence, and 3) anxiety. Krashen and other authors, such as Oiter and Al-Otaibi (2019), state that these variables are associated directly with the success or failure of acquiring a foreign language.

Lightbown and Spada (2013) state that the affective filter hypothesis is a symbolic barrier that prevents learners from acquiring the language even when the appropriate input is available. Therefore, when learners have strong or high filters, they experience anxiety, lack of self-confidence, and poor motivation. All of these factors can prevent the learner's success (Krashen, 1982). On the contrary, this author mentions the case is different when a student has a low anxiety filter and an appropriate amount of input. In this situation, learning takes place.

In addition, Krashen (1982) asserts that the affective filter hypothesis creates a direct relationship between the affective variables and the acquisition process. The effect of how strong or weak the affective filter is, as mentioned above, affects the acquisition process. For example, when learners' affective filter is strong, their anxiety will impede upon acquiring a second/foreign language even though there is a great amount of input. Learners cannot see their progress because the effect of the filter limits them.

To summarize, the importance of this theory indicates that the role of the teacher does not rely on creating a "comprehensible input, but also is necessary to create a situation that encourages low filter," (Krashen, 1982, p. 32) where a low anxiety level exists. Therefore, it

depends on the role of the teacher in creating an environment with considerable input and low-anxiety situations.

Based on the affective filter hypothesis, the language instructor can make the acquisition process easier by facilitating input and making it understandable in a low-anxiety situation, contributing to an appropriate and learning-conducive classroom environment. Finally, Oiter and Al-Otaibi (2019) said that the learner will gain input and participate in class without feeling judged based on this theory.

2.3.2. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's Theory

Král'ová and Tanistrakova (2017) Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) study has made a valuable contribution to the definition of LA and its measurement through their test Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which serves as a tool to evaluate LA. In order to properly understand FLCAS, it is important to analyze Horwitz et al., 's (1986) definition of LA.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) state that LA is “a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process” (p. 128). This premise used later in several studies proved that there is no direct relationship between anxiety and foreign language achievement (Thi, 2012).

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) suggested that FLA should be viewed as situation-specific anxiety that emerges from the uniqueness of learning a foreign language. It is not just a case of general classroom anxiety. Also, this type of anxiety was considered the responsible factor that can lead to students' negative emotional reactions (Riasiti, 2011, as cited in Oiter & Al-Otaibi, 2019)

According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), the effect of LA is that learners have immature abilities. These authors explained that language learners usually feel and express themselves effortlessly while using their first language. However, the situation changes drastically when the learner has to do it in a second language. Students feel observed and possibly judged. As a result, learners feel they lack some mental abilities to communicate (Horwitz, 2001).

In addition, Horwitz and her collaborators (1986) proved their theory by observing, teaching, and receiving feedback from language learners in around thirty university classrooms. Horwitz et al. (1986) proposed that no other field of study requires self-concept and self-confidence to the same level as foreign language study (Thi, 2012). In other words, a student who is good at different subjects may struggle to learn a subject when learning it using a foreign language. This is an example of FLA that differs from general anxiety.

Finally, Thi (2012) said Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's theory has been widely accepted with subsequent research and provided evidence about the uniqueness of anxiety in the classroom with their test FLCAS. This test was used to measure the different anxiety levels and the negative reactions. It was considered an effective tool to measure anxiety, and it was used by several authors later.

2.4. Literature Review

2.4.1. Language Anxiety: An Overview

This section provides an overview of the different studies that have analyzed the causes and effects of language anxiety. In addition, the possible solutions to counteract LA. The first part will briefly mention the most common causes and effects. In the second part, relevant studies regarding the causes, effects and possible solutions of language anxiety will be explained in detail.

The following section discusses previous research (Gawi, 2020; Zhang & Zhong, 2012) regarding possible causes and effects of language anxiety that students go through in their learning processes. Most of the researchers stated that the most common sources that lead to anxiety are the following: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, and classroom environment (Fergina, 2010; Gawi, 2020; Iscan, 2011; Oiter & Al-Otaibi, 2019; Tobout et al., 2018).

However, these parameters were already mentioned in Horwitz's study (1986). Horwitz mentions that some students experience anxiety or get anxious when asked to express themselves in English. In addition, other research studies state that anxiety originates from erroneous learners' beliefs, low confidence in teachers' correction, students' preparation for the lesson, and social pressure; these sources were mentioned in Young's (1991) study. Regarding the effects of LA, there are a few studies that mention the positive effects that anxiety has. A majority of researchers claim that usually, anxiety harms students (Fergina, 2010; Gawi, 2020; Iscan, 2011; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Zhang & Zhong, 2012). All the previously mentioned studies report that anxiety negatively impacts students' self-confidence. Physical reactions like sweating, excessive heart palpitations, etc. are other effects. A learner's emotional state is also affected by anxiety; learners tend to experience frustration, depression, and sadness (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009; Zhang & Zhong, 2012). Also, procrastination and quitting are some consequences of anxiety (Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015). Lastly, it is mentioned that anxiety not only impacts speaking skills, but other skills are affected as well (Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015).

2.4.2. Studies Related to Causes of Language Anxiety

The studies analyzed previously cite Hortwitz et al.'s (1986) research. This study claims that there are 3 possible sources where anxiety originates: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of a negative evaluation. However, there are other studies based on Young's (1991) that claim that other components contribute to the experience of anxiety: learners' beliefs about language teaching, instructors' beliefs about language teaching, classroom procedures, and others. In this section, these variables will be explained. However, before defining these variables, each component of Hortwitz's (1986) hypothesis must be analyzed.

2.5. Components of Foreign Language Anxiety

As previously mentioned, Hortwitz and her colleagues (1986) stated that FLA is a unique type of anxiety that only occurs in the language classroom. They proved this after applying several tests to university students. Based on this study, the following 3 main components were identified: Communication Apprehension, Fear of negative Evaluation, and Test Anxiety.

Anahid and Altalhab (2020) emphasize the importance of the three main components asserted by Horwitz. These authors claim that it is vital to understand that LA is not a combination of these three sources. Overall, it is important to understand that these three factors are considered the basis of language anxiety, each of them occurring separately.

2.5.1. Communication Apprehension:

This is defined as the type of anxiety about communicating with people. This type of anxiety includes production apprehension and reception apprehension, which means talking in front of others and receiving and responding to messages. In addition, this type of anxiety leads to a fear of speaking and involves the fear of not understanding others (Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015).

McCroskey (1978, as cited in Gawi, 2020) gave another definition of communication apprehension, as the level of anxiety or fear related to real or expected communication. In addition, Alnahidh and Altalhab (2020) said that communication apprehension can be associated with first or second language acquisition. They claim that this type of anxiety is caused due to some personality traits like shyness, quietness, and fear. As a result, this type of anxiety is directly connected to learners' self-images (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020).

Gawi (2020) showed that communication apprehension directly impacts students. In his study, this author, through a questionnaire given to 50 male Saudi students, proved the hypothesis that Saudi male students have experienced anxiety related to communication apprehension. The author recommends that it is essential to practice the language inside the classroom. Furthermore, the teacher can encourage students to participate in class, but the teacher should not be harsh in correcting learners' mistakes.

2.5.2. Test Anxiety:

Alnahidh and Altalhab (2020) define test anxiety “as the fear of failure in evaluative situations” (p. 56). These situations can either be oral or written examinations. Test anxiety might occur before, during, or after these oral or written performances. However, the same authors assert that oral tests are the ones that cause the most anxiety.

Sarason (1984, as cited in Bhatti et al., 2016) mentioned that the cause of this type of anxiety leads to students' poor performance during or after the evaluation. It is caused by distractions that students have in class. Gawi's (2020) study, for example, demonstrated that students have experienced a moderate level of test anxiety. This author suggests that teachers should increase students' self-confidence by encouraging them to participate in class and letting them know that making mistakes does not matter.

2.5.3 Fear of Negative Evaluation:

Horwitz et al. (1986, as cited in Gawi, 2020) mentioned that the fear of negative evaluation is the fear of others' assessment. This type of anxiety can occur in academic and social events when the learner feels judged for his level of English (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020). Moreover, Bhatti et al. (2016) claimed that this type of anxiety is associated directly with learners' social skills. Therefore, it occurs when they present something in the oral mode. It depends if the learners succeed or fail in their first experience. In other words, their first experience and first impression become very important. In addition, fear of negative evaluation can happen in the classroom. When students are encouraged to participate voluntarily in class, sometimes they limit themselves to participating because they think their classmates and teacher will judge them.

Gawi's (2020) study also showed that the students experienced a low level of anxiety related to the fear of negative evaluation from students. In this case, having excellent support from teachers can help students to boost their confidence. Nevertheless, Ahmad's (2016) research in which students had to do daily presentations for 5 minutes showed that the level of communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation were the most prominent sources of anxiety.

The results demonstrated that most of the students felt anxious to give a presentation in English. The reason why students did not want to do presentations is because of the pressure they felt; also, students mentioned that they felt observed by their peers and teacher when they committed mistakes. Besides that, students tended to compare themselves with others (Ahmad, 2016).

2.6. Other Components of Language Anxiety

As mentioned, other studies have cited Young's research whose study claimed that there are six possible sources of FLA these are 1) personal and interpersonal anxieties; 2) learner beliefs about language learning; 3) instructor beliefs about language teaching; 4) instructor-learner inter-actions; 5) classroom procedures; and 6) language testing.

In this last part of this section, the 3 common sources from Young's research, (1991) that have been mentioned in the different articles will be discussed. These are learners' beliefs, teachers' beliefs, and classroom procedures.

2.6.1. Learners' Beliefs

Kurtoğlu and Sabuncuoğlu (2015) examined learners' beliefs and perceptions about themselves. These researchers claimed that students tend to compare themselves and experience anxiety. This tendency appears in the classroom when students are asked to do certain activities, such as oral presentations, and class participation. According to Bhatti et al. (2016), students experience anxiety because they believe they are incapable of doing a great job or will give a bad impression of themselves. Therefore, those ideas limit them from being active in class.

2.6.2. Teachers' Beliefs:

The second source of anxiety is teachers' beliefs. Ohata (2005, as cited in Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015) said that how teachers communicate with their students may impact positively or negatively. Teachers are in charge of creating a good atmosphere in which learners can feel comfortable. Therefore, it is essential to mention that the relationship between teachers and students may lead students to experience anxiety (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020). Another aspect of teachers' beliefs is the instructor's ideas about their students' performance. Teachers may consider that their students are not capable of reaching an expected language level. Students are aware of this teacher's impression, which causes them anxiety (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020). Another thing that needs to be analyzed is teachers' procedures in the classroom.

2.6.3 Procedures in the Language Classroom

Kurtoğlu and Sabuncuoğlu (2015) study explored how teachers handle the atmosphere in the classroom. One of the aspects that causes anxiety is the teacher's correction. These authors said that teachers tend to point out students' mistakes or correct them harshly in front of their peers. As a result, learners did not want to participate if they were harshly punished. These actions directly impact their self-esteem. In addition, the research by Morton, Vesco, and Awander (1997, as cited in Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015) emphasized that teachers should treat students fairly in the classroom. Teachers' and students' interaction makes students feel

closer to their tutor. However, some students feel that they are being mistreated because the teacher treats them differently.

2.7 Effects of Language Anxiety

Regarding the effects of anxiety, some researchers claim that anxiety has more negative effects than positive effects. Fergina (2010) mentioned that the effects of LA have been debatable. Based on Scovel's (1978) study (as cited in Fergina, 2010), the author said that positive anxiety might help students communicate easily and encourage students to participate in the classroom. Whereas, Gardner (as cited in Fergina, 2010) emphasized that anxiety directly affects learners' confidence. In general terms, the following aspects are the most common effects reported.

First, most of the studies analyzed previously have claimed some of the effects of anxiety (Hortwitz, et al. 1986; Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015; Iscam, 2011; MacIntyre & Gardner 1994; Zhang & Zhong 2020) including some physical reactions that learners have experienced such as perspiration, headaches, tension, and pain in certain parts of the body, among others. Moreover, in Hortwitz' and Cope's (1986) study sweetness, palpitation, apprehension, and difficulty in concentration were mentioned as well as the effects that anxiety caused.

Second, there is an effect related to the cognitive part. Kurtoğlu and Sabuncuoğlu (2015) based on their analysis of Gardner's and McIntyre's (1994) studies suggested language anxiety impacts negatively. These researchers emphasized that anxious learners tend to divide their attention between trying hard to understand their teacher's instructions and the task that they have to perform. As a result, their performance is poor.

Another aspect is the affective filter factor based on Krashen's theory because the level of anxiety that learners experience makes it almost impossible to receive the input necessary to keep learning (Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu 2015). Therefore, some learners tend to hide in the last rows of the class or are unwilling to participate in class. In addition, anxious learners tend to procrastinate their tasks, skip classes, and lastly drop the course (Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu 2015).

Finally, LA and its impact on different skills encompasses other effects. Language anxiety has been associated directly with speaking skills (Cheng, 2002, as cited in Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015). Several studies claimed that anxiety mostly happens at the moment of speaking. Therefore, the other skills are not considered as much as the speaking skills. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994, as cited in Fergina, 2010) mentioned that anxious students find it extremely difficult to write an essay because they feel they do not have enough vocabulary to express their thoughts. Following the same idea, Kurtoğlu and Sabuncuoğlu (2015) stated that reading anxiety is the result of false expectations that learners have about understanding

a text in a foreign language. Finally, regarding listening, Cheng (2002, as cited in Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu 2015) suggested that anxiety occurs when the learners are not able to understand every word that they hear in the listening task or when they are talking to someone. As a result, they feel anxious and bad.

In conclusion, the different effects mentioned above differ in the way they are manifested. It is essential to remember that each student is different. Therefore, in some cases, not all the effects could appear at a specific moment.

CHAPTER III

3.1 Methodology

A research synthesis is the systematic secondary review of accumulated primary research studies (Norris & Ortega, 2006). This research synthesis focused on identifying the most important causes and effects and the possible solutions to overcome LA in EFL learners. Also, it attempted to understand teacher's and student's perspectives on language anxiety. To obtain the proper sources for this work, a complete search was developed. The following section explains the criteria used in the research carried out:

- The different articles were collected from databases such as ERIC, ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the virtual library of Universidad de Cuenca. In addition, the articles had to be peer-reviewed studies from the above databases.
- Empirical studies with different educational levels regarding teaching English were considered.
- Also, qualitative and quantitative studies were taken into account, as well as mixed methods research.
- The last aspect was the time reference; articles published since 2005 were considered as well as seminal works.
- The terms used in this research were *anxiety*, *language anxiety*, and *foreign language*.

The following chapter discusses the analysis carried out in this work.

CHAPTER IV

4.1 Data Analysis

The 15 studies analyzed for this research synthesis were grouped into different categories to respond to the proposed research questions. These categories encompass sources or causes of language anxiety, the effects of language anxiety, teacher's perspectives on language anxiety, and students' perceptions of language anxiety.

It is important to provide an overview of the participants, the origin of the studies, as well as the educational level of the subjects, to have a general perspective of all the studies. The first table displays their origin

4.2 Geographical Origin of Studies

Table 1 Origin of participants

Origin of Studies

Authors	Origin	Total of studies
Fergina (2010)	Japan	1
Alnahidh & Altalhab (2020); Gawi (2020); Sadiq (2017)	Saudi Arabia	3
Iscan (2011)	India	1
Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu (2015); Tüm (2019)	Turkey	2
Liu & Wu (2021); Horwitz & Yang (2008)	China	2
Tsiplakides & Keramida, (2009)	Greece	1
Azizpur & Gholami (2022);	Iran	1

Wu (2010)	Taiwan	1
Tobout Seng & Abdullah (2018)	Libya	1
MacIntyre & Gardner (1994)	Canada	1
Bhatti, Memon & Phatan (2016)	Pakistan	1

N=15

Table 1 presents the different studies conducted in several countries. The data obtained showed that most studies took place in Asian countries and fewer in European nations. On the other hand, only one study has been conducted in the American continent. It might be inferred that researchers from Asian countries take into account, not only linguistic and cognitive phenomena, but the wellness of their students as well. Therefore, they consider their students as a whole, and part of their wellness, as an important phenomenon when learning English.

Regarding the participants of the different studies, they were divided by gender, age, and English levels as well. The next table is going to present the educational level of the participants, which can offer an overview of the type of the students who experience FLA.

4.3. The Educational Level of the Participants

Table 2 Participant's Educational Level

Authors	Educational Level	Number of studies
Alnahidh & Altalhab (2020); Fergina (2010); Gawi (2020); Iscan (2011); MacIntyre & Gardner (1994); Sadiq (2017); Tobout Seng & Abdullah (2018); Wu (2010); Horwitz & Yang (2008)	University Students	9
Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu (2015); Tsiplakides & Keramida (2009)	Secondary Students	2

Liu & Wu (2021)	English Teachers	1
Azizpur & Gholami (2022)	Teenagers and Adults program in Language Institute	1
Tüm (2019)	Prospective English Teachers	1
Bhatti, Memon & Phatan (2016)	College students	1

N=15

The previous table shows that most studies dealing with LA have been carried out at the tertiary level. Most of the participants in these studies are intermediate English learners. Less research involves teenagers and adults, and there are no studies that include children as participants. This might lead us to conclude that anxiety has been detected in teenagers and young adults.

The next category provides information on the possible causes of LA. Therefore, the following table intends to answer the first part of the following question:

What are the reported causes and effects of language anxiety on EFL learners?

Table 3 Causes of Language Anxiety

4.4 Causes of Language Anxiety

Author	Cause	Number of studies
Fergina (2010); Gawi (2020); Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu (2015); Oiter & Al-Otaibi (2019); Tobout, Seng & Abdullah (2018); Wu (2010)	Communication apprehension	6
Gawi (2020); Wu (2010)	Fear of Negative Evaluation	2

Gawi (2020); Wu (2010)	Test anxiety	2
Zhang & Zhong (2012)	Other causes	1
Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu (2015); Oteir & Al-Otaibi (2019)	Teaching style	2

N= 6

Note: some of the studies consider more than one cause. That is why the total number of studies in Table 3 is six.

Table 3 shows the different sources of anxiety which are divided into the following categories: communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and teaching style. It is important to point out that those variables were mentioned in the different studies proposed by Hortwitz et al. (1986) and Young (1991).

In fact, these sources have not varied since the studies conducted by Hortwitz et al. (1986) and Young (1991). However, the most predominant causes seem to be communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. Based on the data obtained, it can be inferred that the emotional state is related to the cognitive one. Most learners who experience communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation cannot speak a foreign language; therefore, they cannot start developing their oral skills. Even though learners are willing to express themselves in English, due to their emotional state, they cannot communicate at all (Gawi, 2020).

Other possible variables mentioned in Zhang and Zhong's (2012) study were learner-induced anxiety, classroom-related anxiety, skill-specific anxiety, and society-imposed anxiety. Regarding learner-induced anxiety, the authors mentioned that erroneous or unrealistic beliefs are the main reason why learners experience anxiety. Learners tend to set high standards that are nearly impossible to accomplish. Besides that, learners tend to underestimate the time that it takes to acquire the language and be proficient. Some learners want to be proficient in a short period (Zhang & Zhong, 2012). In addition, classroom-related skills are about how peers and teachers may contribute to experiencing anxiety. Skill-based anxiety refers to the amount of pressure that learners feel at the moment of speaking. Learners feel overwhelmed at the moment of expressing themselves in English due to their lack of vocabulary or their accent. As a result, they do not want to communicate in a foreign language. Lastly, society-

imposed refers to the idea of changing identities when using a foreign language. In other words, learners struggle with their own culture and foreign culture because they think they might lose their own identity. Also, it was reported that parents' expectations can be a cause of anxiety (Zhang & Zhong, 2012).

In addition, teaching styles may increase anxiety (Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019). It will depend on how teachers regulate the classroom atmosphere. So, teachers must take into consideration how they call on students and the way to correct learners' mistakes (Oteir & Al-Otaibi 2019).

Teachers are in charge of perceiving which learner is struggling or who is experiencing any level of anxiety. However, if they manage the class traditionally because of their beliefs, without considering the elements mentioned above, this may cause anxiety among learners. Strictness, which is part of the traditional style, is a major source of anxiety (Ohata, 2005, as cited in Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015). As a result, learners tend to drop the course and hide in the last rows of their classroom, and in general terms, these causes hinder the development of oral skills. The effects of anxiety are going to be mentioned in the next table.

4.5. Effects of Language Anxiety

Table 4 Effects of Language Anxiety

Author	Effects	Number of studies
Hotwirtz et al. (1986); Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu (2015)	Physical reactions	2
Iscam (2011); McIntyre & Gardner (1994); Oteir & Al-Otaibi (2019); Zhang & Zhong (2012)	Cognitive effects	4
Fergina (2010); Liu & Wu (2021)	Other effects	2

N=8

Table 4 attempts to answer the second part of the following question:

What are the reported causes and effects of language anxiety on EFL learners?

Table 4 presents the impact that LA has on students, which involves adverse effects. The studies collected were classified into 3 categories: physical reactions, cognitive effects, and other effects. Although previous researchers had classified the effects as negative and positive effects, in this synthesis, the author tries to point out the specific consequences or effects of

LA. Moreover, the second consequence related to physical reactions involves sweetness, nervousness, and palpitation. They are side effects of language LA (Hortwitz, 2001; Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015).

All the variables presented in Table 4 are the side effects of anxiety. Most of the researchers identify that cognitive activity involves encoding, storage, and retrieval processes. However, LA can interfere with each of the previous processes. As a result, a divided attention situation emerges in the classroom. In other words, students divide their attention between “task-related cognition and self-related or emotion-related cognition” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, as cited in Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015, p. 331). Therefore, students try to do their assigned tasks and deal with their emotions simultaneously. As a result, they showed poor performance because of memory loss, willingness to communicate, and procrastination (MacIntyre, 1995, as cited in Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015). As a consequence, anxious learners tend to be more cautious at the moment of speaking because they do not want to make mistakes in front of their peers and teachers (Isan, 2011).

Fergina's (2010) study emphasized that the effects of anxiety could be positive; the author said that anxiety can encourage learners to improve their abilities in the language. On the other hand, Liu and Wu's study stated that there were some negative effects that Chinese teachers experienced, such as bad sleep, depression, and lowered devotion to teaching and working, which caused teachers not to concentrate and do their work properly (Liu & Wu, 2021).

In addition, it is important to analyze teachers' attitudes toward students who experience anxiety. The following table presents teachers' perceptions regarding anxiety.

4.6. Teacher Perceptions

Table 5 Teacher perceptions

Author	Key perceptions	Number of studies
Azizpour & Gholami, (2022); Liu & Wu (2021)	Emotional support; misinterpretations from teachers toward anxiety	2
Tsiplakides & Keramida, (2009)	Handling anxiety	1
N= 3		

The information in Table 5 attempts to answer the following question

What are the perceptions of teachers toward foreign language anxiety?

Most of the articles present different perspectives from both students and teachers who have experienced anxiety. Regarding teacher perspectives, Tm (2019) emphasizes that few studies mention this issue. However, in this analysis, researchers point out two perceptions. First, teachers tend to misinterpret anxiety as laziness, which can cause misunderstandings (Azizpur & Gholami, 2022). Second, emotional support may help students to deal with their anxiety. Two studies claim that it is essential to have adequate emotional support, which can significantly reduce the amount of anxiety in students (Azizpur & Gholami, 2022; Liu & Wu, 2021). Tm's (2019) study claimed that teachers must support students, so they develop confidence and proficiency in the target language. Despite the importance of emotional support, sometimes teachers do not know how to deal with or treat anxious students (Tm, 2019).

In the present analysis, it was found that some authors show different ways to deal with anxiety. First, teachers should consider different situations when assigning a task to students. To avoid anxiety, teachers should consider the level of difficulty and time assigned to learners (Azizpur & Gholami, 2022). Another option that helps to prevent anxiety is that teachers should prepare students when they are advancing to a new lesson. Finally, teachers must create a relaxed environment in the classroom which might help to reduce the amount of anxiety (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009).

The following table intends to answer the following questions:

- What are the perceptions of students toward FLA?
- What are the reported solutions to counteract LA in EFL learners?

4.7. Student Perceptions and Possible Solutions

Table 6 Student Perceptions

Author	Most relevant perceptions	Number of studies
Alnahidh & Altalhab, (2020);	Teacher relationship	2
Bhatti, Memom & Pathan (2016)	Classroom environment	

Choubey (2011)	Fear of negative evaluation	1
	Using humor as a tool to reduce anxiety	
Horwitz & Yang (2008)	Sociocultural variables;	1
	Affective variables like motivation	

N= 4

Finally, the last table deals with students' beliefs about LA and the reported solutions to counteract it. Regarding this issue, some researchers point out the feelings of students. They claimed that students are anxious because their peers and teachers are constantly evaluating them (Bhatti, Memom & Pathan, 2016). Another factor mentioned is how the teacher manages the classroom. Bhatti et al. (2016) and Alanadih and Althalhab's (2020) studies stated that the place where students feel more anxious is in the classroom. Force participation in class is one of the factors that provoke anxiety (Alnahidh & Althalhab, 2020). This matches the previous assertion of Table 3 regarding teaching styles, especially strictness, as a variable that may cause anxiety.

Some researchers claim that teachers should know their students' backgrounds (Horwitz & Yang, 2008) which can contribute to reducing anxiety. In Horwitz and Yang's (2008) study, motivation is mentioned as a factor that may be related to the success of acquiring a second language, and it can also be related to anxiety. Lastly, Choubey (2011) mentions how important it is to include humor to have a relaxed environment in the classroom. As a result, anxiety can decrease.

In conclusion, the results obtained in this analysis are the following. First, it is important to emphasize that traditional teaching styles may cause anxiety (Oiter, & Al-Otaibi (2019). Second, regarding the sources where anxiety lies, communication apprehension and negative evaluation were the most prominent (Gawi, 2020). Third, there are more cognitive effects than physical effects that anxiety produces (Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015).

The results also show that due to the fear of negative evaluation, learners tend to be more cautious at the moment of speaking (Azizpur & Gholami, 2022; Iscam, 2011). Finally, most researchers emphasized that teachers should create a relaxed class environment where learners are not forced to participate and speak (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). Also, teachers' emotional support and the correct way of handling anxiety may help students deal with this feeling (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009; Tüm, 2019).

CHAPTER V

5.1 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1.1 Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate the causes and effects of LA on EFL learners by analyzing 15 empirical articles. Besides, the effects and the most common perceptions from teachers and students regarding the reported solutions towards LA were also analyzed.

It is also important to point out how the notion of anxiety has evolved. The concept of anxiety has been analyzed and compared among researchers. Some of them mention that anxiety is a “mental block” (Král'ová, 2016, p. 2). However, LA is not just a mental block. Many researchers claim that language anxiety is an emotional state that learners suffer at a specific time, and it occurs when learners are trying to demonstrate their abilities in the language (Gawi, 2020; Zhang & Zhong, 2012).

Focusing on the research question related to the causes of anxiety, and according to the results analyzed in chapter four, there seems to be a main cause of language anxiety that involves communication apprehension (Gawi, 2020, Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015; Oiter & Al-Otaibi, 2019). Other causes, such as fear of negative evaluation and classroom procedures happen less frequently.

A second objective focused on analyzing the impact of LA on learners, in other words, its effects. Fergina's (2010) study stated that there are positive and negative effects. However, the consequences of anxiety cannot be stated in a simple way as the aforementioned ones. In this analysis, the side effects were also classified according to the level of impact that they had on students. These were physical effects, cognitive effects, and other effects (Hortwitz, 2001; Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015; Liu & Wu, 2021).

Cognitive effects are the ones that have more impact on learners because they deal with cognitive processes like encoding, storage, and retrieval, which play an important role at the moment of acquiring a language (Kurtoğlu & Sabuncuoğlu, 2015). When learners are trying to focus on each of these stages, anxiety comes up, and they do not succeed in the previous processes.

Lastly, it was essential to understand both teachers' and students' perceptions of anxiety; this way it is possible to handle it adequately. Teachers' and students' views helped to determine ways of overcoming LA, and thus they contributed to reaching the objective regarding solutions. First, teacher's perceptions of anxiety stated that it is paramount to have emotional support from teachers, and it is important to know how to differentiate between anxiety and laziness (Azizpur & Gholami, 2022).

Regarding students' perception, the authors claimed that it is important to have a good relationship between teacher and student. Having a good rapport may help to create a good environment in the class, which, at the same time, will increase students' confidence (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009).

5.1.2. Recommendations

Regarding the scientific area, there were several studies when researching LA. However, just a few of them have done an overview of language anxiety's impact on the educational area. Most of the articles analyzed anxiety from a psychological perspective rather than the educational aspect. Also, when researching LA, most of the scholars specified speaking anxiety, but fewer mentioned the four skills. Although this paper deals with anxiety in general, there should be more studies analyzing anxiety and its impact on other skills.

Based on the results obtained in this study, it seems that anxiety occurs in secondary and tertiary education. There are no articles that report children and LA. Therefore, future research needs to be conducted in elementary schools. In addition, a few studies were conducted in our continent. Further research needs to be conducted in schools, and universities in Latin America in particular, in our Ecuadorian context.

Regarding the phenomenon of anxiety, the same causes reported by Hortwitz et al. (1986) and Young (1991) are still taking place in English classrooms. However, it seems to be that in Ecuador, no studies have been conducted, and it is unknown if these causes take place here. It is also important to see the effects of language anxiety in Ecuadorian classrooms, as there is no research in the local area. Also, research needs to be done on how a teacher may create a good environment in the classroom, specifically in the public sector where educators have to deal with very large classes.

Since the results of this research concluded that all the reported causes and effects of LA imply fear of negative evaluation and the side effects are mostly cognitive rather than physical, more studies need to be conducted on the cognitive relationship between anxiety and cognitive processes.

Lastly, some practical recommendations can be provided. Findings suggest several guidelines on how teachers can handle anxiety. First, educators must distinguish anxiety from laziness. Second, teachers need to create a good atmosphere in the classroom. Third, it is important to encourage students to participate in the activities, but the educators do not need to force them. Finally, it is necessary to encourage positive interaction between teacher and student in the classroom.

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