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The Effects of Xenoglossophobia on EFL Student's Academic Achievement and Motivation

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Autores:

Julisa Alexandra Gualoto Barrera

Jhon Alexander Ochoa Ordóñez

Director:

Tammy Mercedes Fajardo Dack

ORCID:  0000-0002-9330-4622

Cuenca, Ecuador

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Resumen

Esta síntesis de investigación se realizó con el objetivo de determinar los principales efectos de la xenoglosofobia en los logros y la motivación de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE). Para responder a las preguntas de investigación establecidas, se recopilaron 20 estudios empíricos para categorizar y analizar información. Después del análisis de datos, los resultados mostraron la existencia de cuatro variables que afectan los niveles de ansiedad ante el aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero: rendimiento académico, motivación, evaluación académica y desempeño lingüístico. Además, una quinta variable surgió del análisis: el género mismo que desempeña un papel vital, ya que determina qué variables se ven más afectadas y cómo el individuo maneja la ansiedad. Además, esta investigación examina las estrategias comunes utilizadas por maestros y estudiantes para manejar la ansiedad. Los resultados destacaron la importancia del papel del maestro en la creación de un buen ambiente de aprendizaje y el uso de enfoques/técnicas más amigables para lograrlo. Por otro lado, el estudio también analizó la capacidad del estudiante para manejar las estrategias de afrontamiento, ya que contribuyen a disminuir los niveles de ansiedad ante el aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero. Finalmente, la recomendación para futuras investigaciones es estudiar la xenoglosofobia en el contexto latinoamericano, ya que hay poca información disponible, además de que es importante considerar que la ansiedad puede ser el factor principal que obstaculiza el rendimiento de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave del autor: ansiedad al idioma extranjero, desempeño lingüístico, variables, y estrategias



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Abstract

This research synthesis was conducted to determine the main effects of xenoglossophobia on EFL students' achievements and motivation. To answer the established research questions, 20 empirical studies were used to categorize and analyze information. After data analysis, the results depicted the existence of four variables affecting Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) levels: academic achievement, motivation, academic assessment, and language performance. Additionally, a fifth variable emerged from the analysis: gender, which plays a vital role, as it determines which variables are more affected and how the individual manages anxiety. Furthermore, this research examines the common strategies used by teachers and students to manage anxiety. The results highlighted the importance of the teacher's role in creating a good learning atmosphere and the use of more friendly approaches/techniques to achieve it. On the other hand, the study also analyzed the student's ability to handle coping strategies, as they contribute to diminishing FLA levels. Finally, the recommendation for future research is to study xenoglossophobia in the Latin American context, as there is limited information available, and it is important to consider that anxiety can be the primary factor hindering student performance.

Author Keywords: foreign language anxiety, language performance, variables, and strategies



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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the remarkable individuals who have supported me throughout this journey. To my mother, Luz, my sister Doménica, and my uncle, Raúl, whose unconditional love and steadfast support have been the light that illuminated my path, even in the darkest of times. Your willingness to offer a comforting embrace has been the source of my determination. To my best friend, Andrea, whose unwavering friendship and emotional support have been a constant source of strength and inspiration throughout this process. Finally, I want to dedicate this thesis to myself, for the immense effort and dedication I have poured into this project. Overcoming the adversities that arose along the way has instilled in me a profound sense of resilience and self-belief, fueling my determination to succeed.

Julisa

I dedicate this thesis to my past self. It is just now that I appreciate what life taught me being the son of a cook and an absent father, because only in adversity, and during the long nights with a cat on my legs and a book in my hands, I understood that my only chance to break the circle was education.

Jhon

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Introduction

The phenomenon of foreign language anxiety, commonly referred to as xenoglossophobia, encompasses the emotions of unease, anxiety, nervousness, and apprehension that language students often experience when expected to use or learn a second or foreign language (Horwitz et al., 1986). This phenomenon has been widely documented across numerous studies conducted by researchers around the world (Liu & Huang, 2011; Amiri & Ghonsooly, 2015; Wu, 2010).

Language researchers agree that the anxiety triggered by the language learning process is one of the primary obstacles that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners encounter (Wu, 2010). Alnuzaili and Uddin (2020) go so far as to state that xenoglossophobia is a real problem that deters teachers' efforts to effectively teach a foreign language. Hashemi (2011) further emphasized that language anxiety can dramatically influence the entire process of language learning and teaching.

In today's globalized world, the ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages has become increasingly important. However, the widespread presence of xenoglossophobia among language learners poses a significant challenge to achieving this goal. Understanding the effects of this phenomenon on students' achievements and motivation is crucial in order to develop effective strategies and interventions to help language learners overcome this barrier and succeed in their language learning endeavors. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges to language learning, as online education has not proven to be a complete solution for overcoming xenoglossophobia. A recent study by Hanif et al. (2021) showed that even in an online environment, EFL learners still suffered from English speaking anxiety, indicating that the issue of xenoglossophobia persists across different learning modalities.

The presence of xenoglossophobia in the language learning process is a widespread issue that merits serious attention. Numerous studies have consistently demonstrated the detrimental effects of language anxiety on students' performance and learning outcomes. For instance, Liu and Huang (2011) found that anxiety is one of the most prominent and pervasive emotions, consistently hindering second language learning. Similarly, Amiri and Ghonsooly's (2015) study revealed a significant negative correlation between students' anxiety levels and their performance on final examinations.

Given the significant impact of xenoglossophobia on language learners, a comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon is essential. Therefore, this research synthesis is structured across five distinct chapters. The opening chapter sets the foundation, outlining the research background, problem statement, rationale, research questions, and study objectives. The subsequent chapter delves into the theoretical framework, establishing the key conceptual underpinnings regarding the effects of xenoglossophobia. This second chapter also incorporates a comprehensive literature review, detailing the various articles selected for analysis. The third chapter then articulates the methodological approach, describing the process by which this research synthesis was conducted, as well as the criteria considered for study selection and inclusion. Moving forward, the fourth chapter focuses on data analysis, presenting the examination and categorization of the reviewed studies. Finally, the concluding chapter synthesizes the research findings, offering conclusions and recommendations for teaching practice and future research endeavors.

Chapter I

Description of the Research

Background

Anxiety in general is defined as “a psychological or physiological state resulting from physical, emotional, behavioral and cognitive factors” (Alnuzaili & Uddin, 2020, p.1). According to Horwitz et al. (1986), when anxiety is limited just to a specific situation, such as using a foreign language (FL), we use the term *specific anxiety*.

Several studies and findings in the area of language teaching are related to the need for recognizing the affective area within the learning process (Velázquez Macias, 2012). In the words of Horwitz (2001), as there is a growing acceptance of learners' feelings and reflections in the learning process within the foreign language teaching and learning community, one of the most highly examined variables in the field of foreign language learning is the specific anxiety known as *foreign language anxiety*. As specified by Velázquez Macias (2012), foreign language anxiety or *xenoglossophobia* originated from the Greek prefixes xeno: foreigner or stranger, glosso: language or tongue, and phobos: fear or antipathy, which implies a preoccupation about foreign languages.

Krashen (1982) in his Affective Filter Hypothesis had already mentioned the influence of the three components, motivation, self-confidence, and *anxiety*, in language learning. Regarding the subject of this research study, it is said that high anxiety situations in the classroom result in the failure of the language input reaching the language acquisition device located in the brain (Krashen, 1982). “The ‘affective filter’ refers to the idea that these affective factors, such as language anxiety, can block input, disrupting acquisition” (Marsala, 2020, p.7); for instance, the students' success and motivation may be affected negatively.

According to Tseng (2012), the most usual factors that trigger anxiety in students are commonly related to: a) The pressure imposed on students by teachers and parents regarding getting good grades, b) the students' deficiency in their ability to learn the target language, and c) students' consternation of making mistakes and the reaction of the social group to them.

The most recent evidence of the always present xenoglossophobia (even in the former virtual environment due to the pandemic) has shown that virtual education has provided

environments which are comfortable and friendly as well as a source of confidence to EFL learners as they didn't encounter the audience. Nevertheless, still several students suffered from English speaking anxiety since the focus of online classes were on speaking and voice (Hanif et al., 2021).

Related to the idea of xenoglossophobia being present in different educational contexts, it is important to mention that personal characteristics, especially motivation, play an important role while learning a FL. As stated by Liu and Huang (2011), overemphasizing learning English for utilitarian purposes (and not for self or intrinsic motivation) may result in pressure and *anxiety* in the learners, which may ultimately 'debilitate their English performance.' Indeed, Alnuazaili and Uddin (2020) mentioned that learners, due to their individual difference factors, suffer a varied nature and degree of anxiety. Liu and Huang (2011) also mentioned that motivation, affected by attitudes towards and orientations to learn a second language, enhances SL/FL learning and keeps learners' interests to learn the language.

Statement of the Problem

Language anxiety appears to be the most important variable in language learning as many learners endure discomfort and frustration when facing it (Asif, 2017). The problem is being recognized as a threat to students as it impairs the process of learning (Koshy, 2020). Although anxiety has been shown to be a factor that hinders the language learning process, little is known about its effects as well as the strategies that can be used to avoid it. According to Alnuzaili and Uddin (2020), the interest in overcoming and researching about foreign language anxiety experienced by learners is urgent and a must as scarce literature and studies on such topic are available. Moreover, in the words of García (2010), despite the fact that there are studies that have attempted to identify and understand the relationship between anxiety and language learning, the results of several of these studies are inconclusive. Moreover, during the recent Covid outbreak, a study conducted by Hanif et al. (2021) showed how online education provided a comfortable, friendly environment and confidence to EFL learners, but still they suffered from English speaking anxiety, showing that online education has not proved being beneficial for learners to completely overcome Xenoglossophobia. In this light, and according to Alnuzaili and Uddin (2020), the factors (affecting language learning) are both external and internal in nature, so it is not possible to define, understand, and study xenoglossophobia in a simple linear way. Therefore, there seems to be a need to study foreign language anxiety in more depth.

Finally, it is necessary for language teachers as well as learners to take measures to alleviate anxiety levels, since anxiety turned out to be the most powerful and negative predictor for the students' performance in English (Liu & Huang, 2011).

Rationale

Different studies carried out by multiple researchers all over the world have shown the widespread presence of xenoglossophobia. According to Liu and Huang (2011), anxiety is one of the most prominent and pervasive emotions; its effects are consistent, hindering L2 learning. In the study conducted by Amiri and Ghonsooly (2015), the results showed a significant and negative correlation coefficient between the students' score in anxiety scale and their performance in their final examination. Moreover, according to Wu (2010), language researchers agree that the anxiety that is triggered by the language learning process is one of the primary obstacles that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners encounter when learning a foreign language. Alnuzaili and Uddin (2020) stated that xenoglossophobia is a real problem that deters teachers' efforts to teach a language in a foreign language environment.

Moreover, some authors in different studies such as Hashemi (2011) emphasized that language anxiety can dramatically influence the process of language learning and teaching. In this sense, it is necessary to analyze the causes and effects of xenoglossophobia through a research synthesis since it is an approach to gather a set of particular characteristics and findings on different empirical research in order to create generalizations (Hedges & Cooper, 2009). The compilation and analysis of those findings is an essential step to develop new and significant knowledge, and it is this knowledge what makes it possible to progress in the research of foreign language anxiety to propose possible new techniques to overcome it.

Research Questions

1. What are the reported effects of xenoglossophobia on EFL students' academic achievement and motivation?
2. What are the key strategies EFL students and teachers use to overcome xenoglossophobia?

Objectives

General Objective:

To study the impact of xenoglossophobia on EFL students' academic achievement and motivation.

Specific Objectives:

- To analyze the effects of xenoglossophobia on EFL students' academic achievement and motivation.
- To discuss the main strategies used by EFL students and teachers to overcome xenoglossophobia.

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework, as mentioned by Varpio et al. (2020), refers to a logically developed and connected set of concepts and theories that will provide the grounding of a research study. Furthermore, the theoretical framework for a thesis is not a summary of thoughts about the research study, rather it is a synthesis of the ideas of experts in the field of research (Kivunja, 2018). The aspects that are going to be defined in this chapter to provide the basis for the analysis and interpretation of the research data are foreign language anxiety, Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, factors associated to xenoglossophobia, and methods to measure foreign language anxiety.

Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety, also known as xenoglossophobia, is a widely spread issue that affects students all over the world. As mentioned by Velázquez Macías (2012), the term *xenoglossophobia* derived from the Greek prefixes *xeno* (foreigner or stranger), *glosso* (language or tongue), and *phobos* (fear). Based on Tafifet et al.'s (2022) words, this condition describes an exaggerated fear of using foreign languages. Moreover, these authors mentioned that people with xenoglossophobia tend to avoid the study of foreign languages as well as the speakers of those languages.

Research made about this type of anxiety has been conducted by many researchers for over 40 years. As explained by Oteir and Al-Otaibi (2019), xenoglossophobia is a challenging problem in foreign language learning. According to Hortwitz et al. (1986), when feeling anxious, learners may have problems such as reduced word production and difficulty in understanding spoken instructions. Similarly, Woodrow (2006) stated that learners may feel nervous about oral assignments and that presenting in English in front of native speakers or classmates is the most nerve-wracking activity for them. Moreover, anxious learners often find it difficult to respond to their own errors effectively (Gregersen, 2005). According to Sato (2003) there are seven identifiable types of anxiety that prevent the learner to be self-confident and rely in his/her ability to express verbally; this classification is comprehensible expression, communication achievement, language's domain topic relevance, pronunciation comparison with others, and fear of committing mistakes.

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

The base for studying xenoglossophobia was set as part of the Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1982). In his research he confirmed that multiple affective variables can influence the success in second language acquisition heading to his classification: 1) Motivation: Learners with a higher level of motivation will perform better while acquiring a language. 2) Self-confidence: Learners with a more positive attitude towards themselves and their image will do better in language learning. 3) Anxiety: Low levels of anxiety appear to be conducive to a better language acquisition (Krashen, 1982).

As explained by Marsala (2020), this hypothesis refers to the idea that these affective factors can cause input blocking, meaning that "if anxiety levels are raised to a certain extent, it may be impossible to acquire language in that moment" (p.7). Learners with a higher affective filter receive the input, but it will not reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition (acquisition device), so the attempts for acquiring competence in the second language will be hindered (Krashen, 1982). Equivalently, Dulay and Burt (1977) mentioned that the affective filter is a barrier that can prevent input from being fully used for language acquisition. They also stated that language learners with excellent attitudes are presumably less affected and to have low affective filters; that is, to have a low resistance to receiving and processing input effectively.

Factors Associated to Xenoglossophobia

There are several variables that can interfere with language learning. A categorization on these variables was proposed by Kráľová (2016). He stated that the factors influencing learners' xenoglossophobia are the interpersonal factors, which are recognized as the student-teacher or student-student interpersonal interaction during language learning; the intrapersonal factors, which are all variables that result from the learners' personal characteristics, that is, their beliefs, thoughts, and attitudes towards the language learning process; and the impersonal factors that refer to all non-personal variables involved in foreign language learning (Kráľová, 2016). For the aim of this study, the latter will not be taken into consideration.

Similar ideas were developed by Mirhadizadeh (2016), who suggested that internal (within the individual) and external (outside the individual) factors are the ones that affect learners' FLA. In accordance with Mahmoudi (2015), internal factors include learner's motivation, intelligence, risk-taking ability, etc. On the contrary, social class, first language, teachers, early start, and L2 curriculum are part of the external factors.

In a research made by Daud et al. (2019), three factors affecting EFL learners' xenoglossophobia were identified: social, linguistic and personal factors. The social factor refers to how learners react to the responses or comments of people around them when speaking English. The linguistic factor affects learners' FLA by making them feel that the grammar they know is not enough, that their vocabulary is limited, or their English pronunciation is poor. Finally, the personal factor relates to how a person interacts with other people and how they influence the learner's decision to learn English.

In contrast, a different categorization of factors impacting students' FLA was proposed by Malik et al. (2021). This categorization involves perceived cognitive factors and perceived socio-cultural factors. The first category is associated with learners' background knowledge and includes aspects such as unfamiliar topics, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation and proficiency level. On the other hand, the socio-cultural factors are related to learners' geographical background, lack of exposure to the language, gender, social status, self-identity, and the role of parents.

Methods to Measure Xenoglossophobia

Foreign Language Anxiety Test. The nature of the phenomenon xenoglossophobia has brought extensive research about how to measure it. In 1986, the Foreign Language Anxiety Classroom Scale (FLACS) was developed by Horwitz et al. Through the use of the FLACS, it is possible to measure the scope and severity of xenoglossophobia in students, and also to make evident some common characteristics among anxious learners in this context. The test is reflective since it uses questions that focus on three aspects: test-anxiety, communication apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation in the foreign language classroom. These aspects are measured in 33 questions using a four-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree), where the final results report that students who have high marks on the test are afraid of using the target language, and as reported for the author, "anxious students are afraid to make mistakes in the foreign language" (p.130) and for instance there are less likely to participate or be involved actively in the class. Test Anxiety Scale (TAS).

The test anxiety scale. It is another common and reliable measurement used to quantify anxiety levels in language learners. The test was originally developed by Sarason in 1958 as a 21 item true or false test scale. Various changes were made after different revisions by the author. The current TAS consists of a 37 item questionnaire **that is fulfilled**

using a Likert scale: 1) never, 2) once, 3) a few times, 4) often, and 5) very often. The TAS can be used in different ways as the author mentioned. The test scale is useful to compare groups of extreme scorers in a particular type of situation or also it could be used as a dependent variable to monitor experimental or clinical treatment.

Literature Review

Anxiety, as already stated, is recognized as an important area of study in relation to foreign language acquisition because of the influence it can have on the learners' performance during their learning (Velazquez Macias, 2012). For this reason, it is necessary for EFL teachers to have the resources available to identify signs of anxiety and its consequences, create adequate learning environments for students and, in turn, alleviate their foreign language anxiety. With the purpose of providing information on the effects of xenoglossophobia on EFL students' academic achievement and motivation, this chapter presents a systematic review of published studies that synthesize the evidence for further analysis. This literature review consists of two main sections: results obtained regarding the impact of xenoglossophobia on EFL students' academic performance and motivation, and strategies applied to overcome it.

Effects of Xenoglossophobia on EFL Student's Achievements and Motivation

Several studies have explored the effects of xenoglossophobia among EFL students, positioning this factor as one of the most recurrent issues that prevent the FL to be acquired, and also affecting levels of personal achievement in the classroom.

In the study conducted by Atef-Vahid and Kashani (2011), the authors portrayed that "anxiety is still proven to be a major factor affecting foreign language learning" (p.38), through the application and analysis of the FLACS to a group of 38 female high-school students. The results, as expected, showed that "one-third of the students experienced moderate to high-anxiety levels while learning the English language" (p.29) and also reassured that students "with lower English language learning anxiety were likely to achieve higher scores on the final English exam" (p.36). Along the study, Atef-Vahid and Kashani (2011) nulled three previous hypothesis: 1) English language learning anxiety exists in a very low degree among third year high school Iranian students, 2) there was no significant correlation between English language learning anxiety and English achievement, and 3) the four types of English learning anxiety, that is communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and English classroom anxiety have no significant correlation with overall English

proficiency. Final results showed that “those students who have moderate to high English language anxiety showed less academic achievement than those who have less English language anxiety” (Atef-Vahid & Kashani, 2011, p. 37).

Similarly, Karagöl and Başbay (2018) conducted a study whose aim was to find out the relationship among attitude towards English, foreign language anxiety, and English speaking skills of 518 students who were enrolled at Ege University School of Foreign Languages Preparatory Class by using the FLACS. The researchers showed that foreign language anxiety creates a problem for students in the process of language learning. Moreover, they concluded that “if students develop a negative attitude and high anxiety levels, it becomes difficult for them to motivate themselves to learn that language” (Karagöl & Başbay, 2018, p.818). Besides, in this study it was observed that the proficiency level did not have a statistically significant difference in relation to learners' attitude toward English and foreign language anxiety.

Choi et al. (2019) studied the notion of a self-demotivating stage in language anxiety. In their study, they stated that “Korean students' English learning motivation consistently decreases until 9th grade, but increases again gradually starting from 10th grade to 12th grade” (p.2), showing that FLA occurs because the participants feel parental pressure (expectation) as a significant factor that increases the effect of English anxiety in their learning path. An interesting fact about this research is that it was conducted with a group of 414 adolescents, 169 males and 245 females, portraying that gender differentiation was not only a factor that influences how the students handle language acquisition, but also how gender is an aspect that determines how anxiety is managed. In the words of Choi et al. (2019), “gender gaps in English anxiety can be interpreted as the girls were socialized to express their anxiety while the boys were expected to suppress their anxiety” (p.9), also making evident that as the self-directed learning got worse, the level of English self-efficacy decreased and anxiety increased.

In this same light, Tsai and Chang (2013) argued “the effect of motivation and anxiety on the process of foreign language acquisition has been somewhat ignored” (p.28), and it appears that only external factors, as the previously mentioned parental pressure, are being explored. Complementing the findings from Choi et al.'s (2019) in relation to gender and anxiety, the study conducted by Tsai and Chang (2013), with a total number of participants of 857 freshmen students (453 males and 404 females), found that while English class anxiety was the biggest issue for male students, English use and test anxiety were the ones for the

female group. The problem was not only limited to anxiety but also motivation. In the words of the authors, “students are tired of learning English, are lacking motivation, and have elevated learning anxiety in class” (p.35) due to the way in which the classes are presented; that is, applying a traditional teacher-centered approach.

Likewise, a study that shows the relationship between students' anxiety and their achievement in examinations, taking into consideration gender, was made by Amiri and Ghonsooly (2015). The data was collected by employing two instruments, the FLACS and an Achievement Test (AT) to a sample of 258 Persian students of both genders (193 females and 79 males). The obtained results showed that there is a significant difference between males and females in their achievement, being the female participants the ones that showed more anxiety.

Given that most of the studies concerning xenoglossophobia are correlational in nature, some of them explored the impact of FLA with respect to students' performance on academic assessments. Among these studies is the previously mentioned, Amiri and Ghonsooly (2020). Their results revealed that the students' anxiety related to any of the FLACS components significantly and negatively impacted students' achievement in examinations. Similarly, Salehi and Marefat (2014) conducted a study in which the effects of FLA and test anxiety (TA) on foreign language test performance, as well as the relationship between both phenomena, were investigated. The data was collected by using two questionnaires, the FLACS and the Test Anxiety Scale (TAS). The participants of this study were 200 pre-intermediate students of English as a foreign language at the Iran Language Institute Karaj Branch. As per the results, FLA and TA were found to have a negative correlation with language performance. Another key finding of the study was that the students with high language anxiety tend to have high test anxiety too and vice versa. In the words of Salehi and Marefat (2014), “it implies that trying to reduce one type of anxiety will automatically reduce the other type to some extent” (p.937).

A research study that aimed to investigate the correlation between Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) and Non-native English-speaking (NNES) students' academic performance is the one conducted by Alaofi and Russell's (2022). Their study is similar to the studies described above in that it investigates foreign language anxiety by using the FLACS. The participants, Chinese and Arab students, were two groups of first-year students attending English classes in computer and engineering schools. The results showed a significant low negative correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and

students' performance in academic assignments. Furthermore, this study explored the impact of xenoglossophobia on students' academic performance regarding gender and nationality, and it was found that "there was no significant difference observed when the results were compared based on gender" (p.4), and that when looking at the factor of uncomfortableness speaking with native speakers "correlation results with programming assignments for each group by nationality" (p.4). According to Alaofi and Russell (2022), that means that Chinese students present a significant negative correlation while Saudi students show no correlation with any of the academic performance aspects. Finally, "no significant correlation was found between FLA levels and students' English proficiency scores in general or in the level of groups" (Alaofi & Russell's, 2022, p.4).

The impact of language anxiety has been evidenced in students' academic assignments as mentioned before, but also in their language performance. For instance, Hewitt and Stephenson (2012) mentioned that several teachers have the perception that their students are usually nervous regarding language learning which, with no doubt, leads to poorer language performance. For the authors, "this perceived anxiety seems to be related to poorer language performance than a student would normally be capable of" (Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012, p170). The research was made to investigate the relation between language anxiety and oral performance by applying the recurrent FLACS test to 40 students (28 women and 12 men) in a university-level elective English course. The data collected suggest that in both investigations there was an evident influence of anxiety in oral performance (in the latest study the effects of anxiety seemed to be even higher). In the words of Hewitt and Stephenson (2012), "English was of poorer quality the more anxious they were" (p.186). It is hence evident that oral achievement is also affected by xenoglossophobia since it hinders oral practice.

A research study in foreign language learning that focused on the effects of psychological factors in EFL learners' achievements was developed by Gawi (2020). Among the psychological aspects found is xenoglossophobia. Gawi's study explored the impact of foreign language classroom anxiety on Saudi male students in the College of Science and Arts in Almandaq at Albaha University by using an anxiety questionnaire as the main instrument to collect data. The questionnaire contained three variables that affected students' xenoglossophobia: communicative apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The research results revealed a slightly higher level of communicative apprehension, a moderate level of test anxiety, and a low level related to fear of negative

evaluation, which “suggests that the students at the College of Science and Arts suffer a moderate level of foreign language anxiety” (p.269).

To close this section a final study is included, Tuncer and Doğan's (2015). This quantitative descriptive study was conducted with the aim of identifying to what extent Turkish students' English classroom anxiety affects their academic achievement in English language. The participants of the study involved 271 university students at Firat University who were already enrolled to study at various engineering departments, and thus were receiving compulsory English prep-class education during the academic year. The data was collected by applying the FLACS, and after the analysis it was concluded that foreign language anxiety at the beginning of the preparation class was not effective as a predictor of students' academic performance. On the contrary, “it was observed that the students' anxiety, at the end of the education, accounted for the academic failure with its speaking anxiety in language class dimension, and predicted academic achievement with its interest towards language class dimension” (Tuncer & Doğan's, 2015, p.14). These important data helped reach the conclusion that students' anxiety, which evolved and steadily increased during their preparation for English language instruction, strongly predicted their academic performance.

Strategies that EFL Students and Teachers Use to Overcome Xenoglossophobia

Xenoglossophobia has been long analyzed as a major negative factor that hinders language acquisition in EFL students; consequently, strategies to overcome this phenomenon have been left aside, being not the solutions (or possible attempts of a solution), but the problem the main interest of many researchers. It is here when investigators as Fujii (2016) took part. Fujii's research led to a conceptualization of strategies for reducing students' language anxiety; the same categorization will serve for the purpose of this research. The four dimensions are a) building confidence, b) cooperation with others, c) assistance from the teacher, and d) less-stressful teaching methods. At the end of his study, even though Fujii (2016) stated that “help from classmates and teachers seemed to reduce students' anxiousness” was the strategy that appears to be more effective to improve learning in high anxiety level students, all four strategies have been shown to be equally effective in low-anxiety level students.

As an example of the **first dimension**, building confidence, the study that was conducted by Alrabai (2014) where he implemented self-confidence improving strategies to reduce language anxiety among Saudi learners, must be mentioned. According to Alrabai (2014), “increasing students' self-confidence can be achieved by reinforcing students' ability for

success” (p.11), and this reinforcement was achieved by primarily recognizing student’s efforts and achievement with positive feedback, appropriate praise, recognition, and rewards. Two interesting findings are that fear of negative evaluation decreased the most by applying this strategy, and also that demonstrating proper teacher behavior, which refers to avoiding negative attitudes toward the English class, positively increases the effects of the application of strategies to overcome xenoglossophobia among students.

Another study that explored the **first dimension** is Tsymbal’s (2017). The aim of the study was to find the best psychological and pedagogical strategies to reduce EFL learners’ language anxiety. The conclusions indicated that teachers should build students’ self-confidence by the use of positive reinforcement and more encouragement. But learners can also use different coping strategies for FLA. Among the strategies reported in the study are participating in class with a positive attitude, addressing difficulties actively, distancing oneself from troubles, preparing for speaking English in advance, and making greater efforts to endure one’s anxiety. In the same line, the study made by Nazar (2023) also compiles students’ coping strategies for FLA. The results showed that practicing the English language outside the classroom, using the mirror, self-recording, overcoming shyness and stress, and reminding themselves why they wanted to learn English are some of the ways students controlled their anxiety. In accordance with Nazar (2023), students’ strategies play a vital role in controlling their anxiety because in that way they can use the language more confidently and without any fear of making mistakes.

Jin and Dewaele (2018) conducted a study that falls under the **second dimension**, which is cooperation with others. This research study reported the effects of Chinese adult learners’ positive orientation and perceived social support on FLCA. The results showed that teacher-perceived emotional support hardly affects students’ xenoglossophobia. According to this authors “adult learners at the stage of tertiary education are more autonomous and tend to seek independence from their teachers who are thus relieved of their ‘baby sitter-like’ role” (Jin & Dewaele, 2018, p.10). On the contrary, it was demonstrated that using student emotional support as a strategy to overcome FLCA is crucial as “peer classmates are those with whom a learner interacts most frequently in regular school life” and; what is more, “how close students feel with their classmates matters in terms of psychological comfort” (Jin & Dewaele, 2018, p.10).

On the other hand, we can also talk about how collaboration in primary and secondary school students can be a great strategy to overcome language anxiety inside the classroom.

The study conducted by Koeltzsch and Stadler-Heer (2021) focused on how a collaborative environment among peers can significantly decrease the fear of committing mistakes. In the words of the authors, the strategy is effective since “priorities change: winning the game is prioritised over the error-free use of the foreign language” (Koeltzsch & Stadler-Heer, 2021, p.3). The researchers used escape games (gamification approach) as a tool to engage and make students collaborate among them to solve the puzzles with a lower level of anxiety. Researchers found that student’s perception about the game/s was great, and the fact that they prefer to play together with others (classmates) show how effective the strategy was.

To talk about the **third dimension**, assistance from the teacher, we can mention that the role of teachers is constantly recognized as “a unique position to identify and assist students with excessive anxiety” (Ginsburg et al., 2022, p.2), so from this perspective it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of the teacher’s possibilities to decrease anxiety levels among EFL students. In the same investigation made by Ginsburg et al. (2022), they studied how effective teachers were to lessen student’s anxiety, and the results were discouraging. The research concluded stating that there is a remaining need to improve teachers' knowledge about students' anxiety; hence, anxiety is still a factor constantly present in the classroom despite the teacher’s attempt to help students.

An interesting approach to overcome anxiety was studied. Stroud (2013) researched about teachers and their use of humor as a tool to decrease language apprehension in students. It is important to mention that since the study was carried out in Japan there were more barriers due to the cultural factors. The study was made with the participation of 104 students from six different Japanese private schools. In words of Stroud (2013) “students felt (as expected) that humor was very beneficial to learning and can lower anxiety, improve retention, promote higher levels of participation, result in more enjoyment and create a more comfortable class atmosphere” (p.82), showing that humor was a good approach for teachers to reduce anxiety among students.

With respect to the **fourth dimension**, less-stressful teaching methods, Han and Haider (2022) directed a research study to investigate the impact of FLCA on academic success through mediating the role of emotional intelligence communication (EIC) and moderating the role of classroom environment. The findings showed that EIC significantly and positively mediates the relationship between FLCA and academic success, and that “emotional intelligence has the ability to reduce students’ foreign language anxiety and so improve their language skills” (Han & Haider, 2022, p.1). Besides, it was demonstrated that an appropriate

classroom environment positively and significantly moderates the relationship between FLCA and emotional intelligence communication. Alike, Asif (2017) also conducted a research study to investigate the strategies that Saudi teachers use to successfully cope with language anxiety. He came to the conclusion that EFL teachers should employ various kinds of creative methodologies for FLA reduction. In line with Asif (2017), some of these methods are the use of humor during the class, the creation of a friendly atmosphere, and the use of technology and attractive material.

In brief, this literature review analyzed the impact of FLA on EFL students as well as the strategies teachers and students use to overcome it. Therefore, all the information was divided into two main points: effects of xenoglossophobia on EFL student's academic achievements and motivation, and strategies that EFL students and teachers use to overcome xenoglossophobia, which covered four important dimensions; a) building confidence, b) cooperation with others, c) assistance from the teacher, and d) less-stressful teaching methods. To conclude, the studies analyzed and presented in this chapter will serve as the basis for the deeper analysis needed to achieve the objective of reporting the effects of xenoglossophobia on EFL student's academic achievement and motivation.

Chapter III

Methodology

A research synthesis is the integration of existing knowledge and research findings pertinent to an issue. The aim of a synthesis is to increase the generality and applicability of those findings and to develop new knowledge through the process of integration (Wyborn et al., 2018). To gather data about effects of xenoglossophobia on EFL achievement and motivation, a profound analysis of the literature was conducted. The articles included in this research synthesis were searched in important academic databases such as Scholar Google, Redalyc, ResearchGate, and ScienceDirect. Moreover, the terms that were used so as to find resources/information that best serve this study were the following: Xenoglossophobia, Foreign Language Anxiety, Speaking Apprehension, English Apprehension, Effects of Xenoglossophobia, Effects of Foreign Language Anxiety, Techniques to Overcome Xenoglossophobia. The criteria considered to guide the selection of studies to be analyzed were the following. First, in order to be updated with the latest research made on the topic, the data considered to be analyzed was taken into account from 2015. Second, Spanish and English articles were accepted since we as bilingual speakers were able to analyze information in both languages. Third, the studies could present any student's L1, but the target language must be English, since this is the focused population in which the study focused. Finally, the studies could have any approach as different methods of data gathering were useful in order to focus on real and relevant findings.

Several studies were extracted from the following journals: *Journal of Language Teaching & Research*, *International Journal of Creative Research Thought*, *Education Research International*, *Journal of ELT research*, which were considered for this study since they are important and reliable sources for researchers in the field around the world. Lastly, the analysis procedure was conducted to categorize the data according to the themes that emerged during the analysis itself.

Chapter IV

Data Analysis

The following section presents the analysis of the data gathered from the different studies in order to find an answer to the study research questions. It is important to remember and emphasize that when selecting the studies there were no restrictions regarding the location and characteristics of the participants. Therefore, this analysis contains studies developed in different countries such as Iran, Korea, China, Arabia, etc. In addition, studies with participants of both genders as well as different ages were considered. Furthermore, the selected studies include research conducted from 2013 to 2023.

After careful and systematic analysis of 20 studies, the following categories were identified: Effects of xenoglossophobia on EFL students, and students and teachers' strategies to overcome xenoglossophobia.

Effects of Xenoglossophobia on EFL's Students

This category presents the various effects of xenoglossophobia on EFL students' language learning. As shown in Table 1, different areas hindered by language anxiety have been identified.

Table 1

Effects of Xenoglossophobia on EFL Students

Author/Year	Effects			
	Academic Achievement	Motivation	Test Performance	Language Performance

Atef-Vahid and Kashani, 2011	•		•	
Alaofi and Russell, 2022	•			
Amiri and Ghonsooly, 2020	•		•	
Karagöl and Başbay, 2018		•		
Choi et al., 2019		•		
Tsai and Chang, 2013		•		
Salehi and Marefat, 2014			•	
Gawi, 2020			•	•
Hewitt and Stephenson, 2012				•
Tuncer and Doğan, 2015				•

Table 1 presents four variables that are commonly affected by xenoglossophobia: Academic achievement (shown in 3 studies), motivation (shown in 3 studies), academic assessment

(shown in 4 studies), and language performance (shown in 3 studies). All these variables were observed to be hindered in the EFL class by anxiety factors while using or being part of an English environment.

The first variable being affected is academic achievement. As mentioned by Atef-Vahid and Kashani (2011), students who tend to have English foreign language anxiety are more likely to have lower achievement regarding the learning outcomes as grades. Moreover, Amiri and Ghonsooly (2020) found in their study how second language anxiety negatively affects student's performance, especially in examinations, and they showed how closely related xenoglossophobia and language test anxiety, being the latter a common effect among EFL students that hinders their general capability of achieving academically. There are also contrasting ideas about the relationship between anxiety and performance. Alaofi and Russell (2022) in their research with Chinese and Arab students showed how Chinese students were clearly affected by anxiety in their assigned tasks; on the other hand, the Arab group showed no correlation between FLA and their academic performance during the study.

The second variable affected by the already mentioned phenomena is motivation. Karagöl and Başbay (2018) and Tsai and Chang (2013) depicted how student's perception and overall motivation toward language learning play a fundamental role in their English level. Tsai and Chang (2013) showed how students are tired of learning English due to the teaching methods resulting in higher levels of FLA. This enlightens Karagöl and Başbay's (2018) research that exhibits if learner's motivation to acquire the language is good, their proficiency level would be good as well, but in the same sense (and as in the majority of cases) if the student's attitude towards learning is bad or negative, it would also result in a poor English level. After all, motivation has been shown to be not a linear variable as Choi et al. showed in 2019. The Korean students they studied made visible a phenomenon that the authors called *self-demotivating stages* showing that learners' motivation decreased over the years until the ninth grade; after this stage, they regained their motivation from tenth to twelfth grade. More accurately, their demotivation starts and goes until they are around 14-15 years old, and they recover from that age until they are 18 years old. Korean society is well known for being competitive regarding getting into a good university. The fact that Korean students throw themselves into studying in this fierce *competition* in their last scholar years may be the reason why the motivation peak reaches its maximum when they are transitioning (or trying) to higher education.

The third variable affected is test performance which was evidenced in the studies conducted by Atef-Vahid and Kashani (2011), Amiri and Ghonsooly (2020), Salehi and Marefat (2014), and Gawi (2020). In their study, Atef-Vahid and Kashani (2011) claimed that the learners who were likely to get higher grades in their exams were the ones with lower FLA. Likewise, the results obtained in the study of Amiri and Ghonsooly (2020) showed that the impact of xenoglossophobia on learners' results in examinations is negative. Salehi and Marefat (2014) revealed that there is a negative correlation between Test Anxiety (TA) and FLA as learners with high levels of xenoglossophobia tend to have high levels of anxiety when taking tests. For instance, students who reduce their FLA reduce their TA too. On the other hand, Gawi (2020) established that TA is one of the three variables affecting students' xenoglossophobia. In this way, the results showed that FLA impacts (in a moderate level) students' achievements in their evaluations.

The last variable is language performance. Gawi (2020), Hewitt and Stephenson, (2012), and Tuncer and Doğan's (2015) highlighted the significant impact of foreign language anxiety on EFL learners' language performance and also discussed how students' anxiety levels play a crucial role in predicting their language outcomes. Tuncer and Doğan's (2015) study emphasized that students' anxiety levels, especially in speaking anxiety and interest in the language class dimensions, were key factors in determining academic success or failure. Similarly, Hewitt and Stephenson (2012) highlighted teachers' perceptions of students' nervousness in language learning, linking this perceived anxiety to poorer language performance beyond students' actual capabilities. Additionally, Gawi's (2020) study showed moderate levels of foreign language anxiety among students with varying degrees in the variables of the questionnaire applied. The findings demonstrated that communicative apprehension is the variable with a higher impact on learners' performance. It can be inferred that this result was reached since the relationship between xenoglossophobia and learners' achievements often follows a mutual structure, where heightened anxiety levels, in this case, a significant level of communicative apprehension, correspond to worsening language performance. The findings in these three research studies collectively underscore the detrimental effects of foreign language anxiety on language performance in EFL learners.

Interrelation of Xenoglossophobia Effects with Gender

Along the same line, there is an important variable that must be considered for the data analysis regarding the effects of FLA on EFL students. There have been comparisons to analyze the differences between the effects of learners' xenoglossophobia based on their

gender. To illustrate this, Table 2 presents the studies that have explored this variable, the specific effects of FLA that the authors analyzed concerning their participants' gender, as well as the differences exhibited by both males and females according to each effect.

Table 2

Interrelation of xenoglossophobia effects with gender

Variable	Author/Year	Effect	Males	Females
Gender	Alaofi and Russell, 2022	Academic achievement	There is no significant difference based on participants' gender	
	Amiri and Ghonsooly, 2020	Academic assessment	Show less anxiety	Show more anxiety
	Choi et al., 2019	Motivation	Express their anxiety	Suppress their anxiety
	Tsai and Chang, 2013	Academic assessment and language performance	Show more class anxiety	Show more anxiety when using the language and when taking tests

The research studies included in Table 2 exhibit the significant role of gender differences in how foreign language anxiety affects various aspects of academic performance, assessment, motivation, and language proficiency. The study by Choi et al. (2019) shed light on how gender influences the expression and suppression of anxiety in language learning. In their study, it is highlighted that boys tend to express their anxiety more openly while girls are expected to suppress it, impacting their English anxiety levels, especially in their motivation. On the other hand, Tsai and Chang (2013) found that male students faced higher English

class anxiety whereas females experienced more anxiety related to English use and tests, affecting their language performance as well as their achievements on examinations negatively. Similarly, the research conducted by Amiri and Ghonsooly (2015) also revealed that females exhibited higher levels of anxiety in examinations compared to males, influencing their performance on English evaluations. Interestingly, a study on the effects of xenoglossophobia showed no significant gender-based differences. This research study is Alaofi and Russell's, in which it was demonstrated that the impact of FLA in students' academic achievements did not vary significantly based on gender. These findings collectively demonstrate the different ways in which gender impacts the experience of foreign language anxiety and its effects on EFL learners.

Strategies that EFL Students and Teachers Use to Overcome Xenoglossophobia

The strategies that EFL students and teachers use are another key factor in the educational process, but in this case, the purpose of using them is to overcome or reduce xenoglossophobia or at least try to.

The different strategies are clustered in Table 3 following different categories for a better comparison of the studies: Students' strategies (cooperation among students and students coping strategies) and teachers' strategies (building student's confidence, assistance from the teacher, and less-stressful teaching methods). All the different strategies used advocate the same objective, to diminish language anxiety.

Table 3

Strategies to Overcome Xenoglossophobia

	Strategy	Author/Year
Students' Strategies to Overcome Xenoglossophobia	Cooperation Among Students	Jin and Dewaele, 2018 Koeltzsch and Stadler-Heer, 2021

	Students Coping Strategies	Nazar, 2023 Tsymbal, 2017
Teachers' Strategies to Overcome Xenoglossophobia	Building Student's Confidence	Alrabai, 2014 Tsymbal, 2017
	Assistance from the Teacher	Ginsburg et al., 2022
	Less-Stressful Teaching Methods	Han et al., 2022 Stroud, 2013 Asif, 2017

Students' Strategies to Overcome Xenoglossophobia

Among the strategies used by students to decrease their levels of foreign language anxiety, **cooperation** is one of the most common and important ones. Jin and Dewale (2018) depicted how the class environment, regarding peer closeness, is an influential factor since classmates' collaborative and positive attitudes can improve psychological comfort, especially in students with higher anxiety levels while Koeltzsch and Stadler-Heer (2021) observed that when a positive and collaborative environment is established in the classroom, the fear of committing mistakes decreases. Interestingly, the latter authors used escape games to engage students to collaborate among themselves. When students are focused on a common objective (collaborate), they are less likely to feel apprehended in making mistakes while using the target language.

Students' coping strategies are also an excellent way to diminish FLA. Nazar (2023) and Tsymbal (2017) recognize in their studies how effective students' strategies such as deep breathing, meditation, use of humor, use of a mirror for practicing speaking, self-recording (video), and recognizing and controlling shyness and stress are beneficial in the sense that are ways in which students first self-evaluate and self-regulate their apprehension; for example, to talk in front of an audience to improve their English abilities, especially pronunciation that is widely known for being the hardest skill for anxious language learners.

These improvements are closely related to all the previous variables since self-controlling the fear of using English and practicing autonomously builds students' confidence and therefore, their performance using the FL increases as well.

Teachers' Strategies to Overcome Xenoglossophobia

The role that teachers can play in decreasing anxiety levels among learners of English as a foreign language is crucial. The studies analyzed proposed a variety of strategies that teachers can implement. The first strategy is **building student's confidence**. Alrabai (2014) and Tsymbal (2017) agree that at first, it is important to recognize the role of students' self-reliance in using English in class; this can be achieved by using positive reinforcement. Students can achieve higher levels of confidence by the action of the teacher prizing their ability to succeed with rewards. This improvement in their self-perception results in higher motivation and levels of participation-practice. It is important to mention that a reward is not only a material item such as candy but also prizing words.

As the second strategy, **assistance from the teacher** involved a more profound job. Ginsburg et al. (2022) highlighted teachers' unique position in the context of foreign language learning. The researchers emphasized that teachers are uniquely positioned to recognize, assist, and provide support to students experiencing excessive levels of anxiety, underscoring the critical role they play in addressing this pervasive issue. From this perspective, it is essential to acknowledge the significance of teachers' capacity to decrease anxiety levels among EFL students. This study also delved into the effectiveness of teachers in alleviating students' anxiety. Surprisingly, there is still room for improvement in teachers' ability to manage students' anxiety effectively. Nevertheless, the researchers emphasized the transformative power of teachers' positive encouragement and the importance of fostering a positive, motivating, and supportive class environment. These elements are deemed crucial for achieving the desired outcomes in English language learning.

The last strategy is the use of **less stressful teaching methods**. While the studies in this category share the common goal of exploring effective methods to mitigate FLA, the specific approaches and contextual factors examined vary. Han et al. (2022) emphasized the significant mediating role of EIC in the relationship between FLA and academic success. Their findings suggest that enhancing students' emotional intelligence can effectively reduce their FLA and, consequently, improve their language skills. In a similar vein, Asif (2017) recommended that EFL teachers must employ a variety of creative methodologies to alleviate FLA, such as the cultivation of a friendly atmosphere and the incorporation of

technology and attractive learning materials, etc. Asif (2017) and Stroud (2013) examined the use of humor in the classroom, and both agree that it is an effective tool to decrease language apprehension among students. Interestingly, conducted in the Japanese context, Stroud's (2013) study found that students perceived humor as highly beneficial, as it helped lower anxiety, improve retention, promote higher participation, and create a more comfortable class environment. However, the researcher noted that cultural factors in Japan posed additional challenges in implementing this strategy. It can be deduced that one of the reasons has to do with their formality and cultural reserve. Japanese culture is characterized by greater formalism and emotional reserve compared to other cultures. The use of humor in the classroom could clash with these cultural norms.

This data analysis has made it possible to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this research synthesis. As mentioned earlier, the analysis was divided into two sections. The first section examined the effects of xenoglossophobia on EFL students. In this section, each research study was categorized according to four variables commonly affected by xenoglossophobia: academic achievement, motivation, academic assessment, and language performance. Additionally, an important variable emerged regarding the differences in the effects of learners' FLA based on gender. For the analysis of this variable, the research studies were categorized according to the differences exhibited by male and female students concerning each effect mentioned in the first part of this section. The second section presented strategies to overcome xenoglossophobia. Here, the strategies were grouped into two categories: Students' strategies (cooperation among students and students' coping strategies) and teachers' strategies (building student confidence, assistance from the teacher, and less-stressful teaching methods). After conducting the analysis of the data related to the mentioned sections, the necessary connections have been made to develop the corresponding conclusions.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This study set out to analyze the effects of xenoglossophobia on the academic achievement and motivation of EFL students. Guided by this general objective and through a thorough exploration of the existing literature, two main aspects were considered: The reported effects of xenoglossophobia on EFL students, and the key strategies used by both teachers and learners to overcome it. By addressing these aspects, it is intended to contribute to the ongoing efforts to create more inclusive and supportive learning environments for EFL learners, ultimately fostering their academic success and personal growth in the language learning process.

The first conclusion obtained from the analysis is that there are four main variables negatively affected by xenoglossophobia: academic achievement, motivation, academic assessment, and language performance. Xenoglossophobia negatively impacts academic achievement by hindering students' learning outcomes. It was reported that students with FLA are more likely to have lower academic achievement in their language learning (Atef-Vahid and Kashani, 2011; Amiri and Ghonsooly, 2020; and Alaofi and Russell, 2022). According to Karagöl and Başbay, (2018); Choi et al., (2019); and Tsai and Chang, (2013), the impact of xenoglossophobia on motivation is evident as it can be concluded that students' perception and overall motivation toward language learning plays a fundamental role in their English proficiency level. The negative effects of FLA on academic assessment and test performance are also notable. Students with xenoglossophobia tend to experience higher levels of anxiety when taking tests, leading to poorer performance in examinations (Atef-Vahid and Kashani, 2011; Amiri and Ghonsooly, 2020; Salehi and Marefat, 2014; Gawi, 2020). Furthermore, the impact of xenoglossophobia on language performance is significant, with heightened anxiety levels correlating with worsening language performance (Gawi, 2020; Hewitt and Stephenson, 2012; Tuncer and Doğan, 2015).

Continuing with the first conclusion, it is important to point out that according to the information analyzed, it was found that gender differences play a significant role in how xenoglossophobia affects students' experiences in language learning. It is concluded that

this emerging variable affects various aspects of academic performance, assessment, motivation, and language proficiency. Learners' gender influences the expression and suppression of anxiety in language learning, impacting their English anxiety levels, especially in their motivation (Choi et al., 2019). Additionally, male students may face higher English class anxiety, while females may experience more anxiety related to English use and tests, affecting their language performance and achievements negatively (Tsai and Chang, 2013). Understanding these effects is crucial for developing effective strategies to address xenoglossophobia and support EFL students in overcoming language anxiety.

The second conclusion is that the key strategies employed by students to overcome their FLA are cooperation among peers and coping mechanisms. At the same time, the teacher's role in building students' confidence, providing assistance, and implementing less stressful teaching methods is fundamental. These strategies have been found to collectively contribute to mitigating language apprehension and fostering a positive learning environment for EFL students. Students who give and receive help from their classmates alleviate their FLA. Research by Jin and Dewale (2018) reported the influential role of a positive class environment and peer collaboration in improving psychological comfort for students with higher anxiety levels. Additionally, Koeltzsch and Stadler-Heer (2021) observed that establishing a positive and collaborative classroom environment reduces the fear of making mistakes, thereby contributing to decreased xenoglossophobia.

Moreover, students' coping strategies, as identified by Nazar (2023) and Tsymbal (2017), encompass effective techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, the use of humor, self-recording, and stress management. It can be concluded that these strategies enable students to self-regulate their apprehension and improve their English abilities, particularly in challenging areas such as pronunciation. By the same token, teachers play a pivotal role in building students' confidence by providing positive reinforcement, as highlighted by Alrabai (2014) and Tsymbal (2017). The recognition of students' self-reliance in using English in class and the use of rewards contribute to higher levels of confidence and motivation. Additionally, it was found that teachers who provide essential assistance to students experiencing high levels of anxiety, emphasize the transformative power of positive encouragement and foster a supportive class environment (Ginsburg et al., 2022). Furthermore, the implementation of less-stressful teaching methods is crucial in mitigating xenoglossophobia. In this regard, Han et al. (2022) emphasized the role of emotional intelligence in reducing foreign language anxiety and improving language skills. Similarly, Asif (2017) concluded that the use of creative methodologies, friendly atmospheres, and

technology integration helps to alleviate language apprehension among EFL students. In conclusion, the strategies utilized by both EFL students and teachers are diverse and complementary in addressing xenoglossophobia. Students' cooperation and coping strategies work in tandem with teachers' efforts to build confidence, provide assistance, and implement less-stressful teaching methods. By integrating these strategies, EFL students could effectively overcome xenoglossophobia and enhance their language learning experience.

To sum up, xenoglossophobia negatively affects EFL learners' academic achievement, motivation, academic assessment, and language performance. Furthermore, it has been determined that gender differences play a fundamental role in how xenoglossophobia affects students' experiences in language learning. Further, the study has revealed the key strategies used by both students and teachers to overcome this phenomenon. Students resort to peer cooperation and coping mechanisms, while teachers play a crucial role in building students' confidence, providing assistance, and implementing less-stressful teaching methods. By integrating these strategies, EFL students can effectively overcome xenoglossophobia and enhance their language learning experience.

Recommendations

After conducting this research synthesis, some recommendations have emerged from the in-depth analysis of the studies. First, teachers must learn not only how to teach but also how to create a positive atmosphere in the classroom to diminish the effects of FLA. Moreover, students and teachers need to be aware of different strategies to overcome xenoglossophobia, so it is necessary to board these topics with pre and in-service teachers to create awareness among the stakeholders of the learning process.

Second, despite the efforts to investigate FLA in different countries, no investigation conducted in Ecuador was found; therefore, further research could assess xenoglossophobia levels among Ecuadorian students and the possible strategies to overcome it.

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