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English Language Speaking Anxiety: A Quantitative Study

Nargis Mari¹

Abdul Hameed Panhwar²

Sanaullah Ansari³

Abstract

The present study attempts to investigate the extent of English language speaking anxiety among the English as foreign/second language learners, studying at a public sector university in Sindh, Pakistan. The study is quantitative in nature and the data is gathered using random sampling survey method. Participants of the present study are studying in part II. A theoretical framework based on Horwitz et al (1986), a well-known theory followed by Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is adapted. For the purpose of data analysis, SPSS (V.24) is used to determine the general descriptive statistics of the study. This study reveals the level of anxiety among students. It also concludes that learners even at a university level face language anxiety specifically in the EFL context. This study also assist the teachers and course designers for necessary steps be taken to overcome the English language speaking anxiety among EFL learners in EFL classroom.

Key words: Speaking anxiety, Communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation

¹ PhD Scholar, Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

² Professor, Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

³ Professor, Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

Introduction

Psycholinguists that have researched the significance of anxiety when speaking English have found that anxiety does negatively affect the performance of foreign language learners (Abbas & Iqbal, 2018). Learning a language has always been challenging for people in many Asian countries who are doing it as a second language (Malik, Qin, Asif, & Khan, 2020). Bailey (1983), MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), Tschumi and Young (1994), and other scholars have suggested that anxiety is a psychological issue that impacts those learning a foreign language. Anxiety is defined as a state of unease, uneasiness, confusion, and uneasiness.

Language anxiety has been regarded as the most complicated and nuanced psychological issue in human psychology (Trylong, 1987). The psycholinguists came to the conclusion that a large proportion of learners of foreign languages experience anxiety, which leads to stuttering and stammering in them. Numerous linguists and experts from all over the world have focused their attention on this problem because it cannot be avoided (Abbas, Pervaiz, & Arshad, 2018). One of the main problems with the target language acquisition and development process is anxiety that arises throughout the process of learning the target and second language. It is also the main source of crippling anxiety. (Malik et al., 2020). Prior to now, only teachers and instructional strategies could engage in foreign language acquisition and pedagogical teaching (Abbas, Jalil, & Rehman, 2019).

The present study aims to ascertain the level of anxiety experienced by EFL students at the Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh. However, this investigation will further illuminate the linguistic components of target language learning for possible cognitive linguistics study for EFL learners and teachers.

Objective of the Study

1. To investigate English language speaking anxiety among English as Foreign/second language learners, studying at university level.

Research Question of the study:

Q1: What is the extent of English language speaking anxiety among EFL/ESL learner studying at university level?

Literature Review:

1.1. Second/foreign language

Language is essential tool for communication and human language is a distinct language with sufficient linguistic feature to convey the message clearly and accurately. Sapir (1921, pp. 3-23) "Language is a system of freely created symbols that is exclusively human and a spontaneous means of communicating concepts, feelings, and wishes". The most important features of human language that make it distinct include arbitrariness, duality, discreteness, and productivity etc.

According to the need of the time, several languages have been introduced by man all over the world. More than 7000 languages are spoken all over the world. Each language makes the world a diverse and beautiful place. Modern era of science and technology has connected the world in such a way that it has been turned into a global village and people all over the world have access to almost each corner of the world. It seemed to be impossible for people to understand each and every language to communicate with others. It craved for a language which behaves as Lingua Franca: “a shared language or means of communication that allows individuals to comprehend one another regardless of their linguistic, cultural, or racial backgrounds”.

English was opted as mode of communication due to its prestige round the world due to colonialism and imperialism, especially after World War II. Historically, English first evolved as Lingua Franca between 19th and 20th century. Today English is spoken in about 142 countries of the world. The countries, whose indigenous language is other than English, use English as second/foreign language. About 67 countries use English their foreign language.

English used in Pakistan

Zaidi and Zaki (2017) state that according to sociolinguistic and anthropological perspective, Pakistan can be considered as multilingual context where most of the people use their native language along with Urdu as their national language. English is the foreign language used in Pakistan which also enjoys the prestige as official language of the country. In Pakistan English is in a great paradox. On one hand, it helps young Pakistanis to establish good social ties and on the other hand, it prevents others from doing so or, at least, seems to be the greatest impediment of their path. He states that many people even in urban area are not familiar with even Basic English vocabulary. He further declares that English is required in educational and professional areas in Pakistan Rehman (2020). English has an important role in the educational institutes of Pakistan. English is used as medium of instruction at institutes. Moreover; English also has an indispensable role in maintaining foreign relations. Thus, being an official language, English has a distinct significance in Pakistan. However, it's also the hindrance for many of the people in Pakistan mainly students of different levels Rail (2020).

Anxiety:

English Language plays an indispensable role in current era but it can confront troubles if some barriers are not overcome promptly. One of the prominent and perilous barrier in speaking process is anxiety. It prevents one from speaking in front of public fluently and clearly. One of the psychological phenomena that is studied the most is anxiety. Anxiety is defined as a combination of distinct behavioral traits that are amenable to systematic study and contemplative emotions that are beyond the reach of epistemology (Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2001). In a larger sense, anxiety is the instinctive sensation of tenseness, apprehension, restlessness, and concern brought on by an activation of the SNS (Spielberger, 1983).

It is commonly acknowledged that speaking and studying a second or foreign language can be anxiety-inducing for language learners. Zheng (2008) claims that fear and anxiety are the most dangerous learning deficits when it comes to a person's ability to learn a second language. Furthermore, anxiety has been shown to be a role in determining the amount of plausible input that the environment can supply. According to Krashen (1982), a learner's capacity for receiving input under specific circumstances determines how well they will acquire a language. Since worry prevents students from absorbing the understandable information, it follows that they would not be able to learn the language and would perform poorly in it. Determining the level of worry that can impede the acquisition of a second language is therefore crucial.

According to William et al. (1990), there has been a lot of study done on speech anxiety, most likely because of its ubiquity, the availability of its participants (mostly college students), and the fact that it resembles common clinical presentations of anxiety (Turner, Beidei, & Larkin, 1986). Furthermore, according to Borkovec and O'Brien (1976), 25% of adults have experienced "much" dread when speaking in front of a group. It's interesting to note that the definition of speech anxiety is frequently ambiguous and not explicitly stated, but it is primarily determined by the specific dependent measures that are employed (such as questionnaires; Watson & Friend, 1969). Maladaptive cognitive and physiological responses to external stimuli that do not lead to productive public speaking habits are known as speech anxiety. Other names that might be used to express speech anxiety include audience anxiety, situational anxiety, stage fright, and communication fear.

MacIntyre (1998, p. 27) believed that, in order to identify language anxiety on a larger scale of study over anxiety, Measures of anxiety in particular circumstances involving second or foreign languages should be included in studies on language anxiety. One type of anxiety that is situation-specific is language anxiety. He defined language anxiety as the uneasiness and unfavorable emotional response elicited by learning or utilizing a second language. Foreign language anxiety is described by Horwitz and Cope (1991, p. 31) as an inclusive complex of self-perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes associated to language acquisition in the classroom that arises from the particularities of the language learning process. Two seminal publications that identify patterns have guided much of the research on anxiety in language learning conducted in the most recent period. Initially, focusing on the relationship between anxiety and proficiency in a second language, Scovel (1978) discovered that previous worries led to wildly inconsistent outcomes. Scovel pointed out that different anxiety measures and ideas produced contradictory and inconsistent results. He asserted that if it were understood to distinguish between enabling and incapacitating fear, then mysterious experimental results might be explained. A task is considered to be facilitating anxiety when the level of difficulty it presents just the perfect amount of anxiety. While some worry may be beneficial in moderation, excessive anxiety can have debilitating effects and result in missed deadlines or subpar work.

Horwitz and Cope (1986) also produced a very good study article. The academics are familiar with the idea of anxiety associated with learning a new language. The authors were able to identify linguistic anxiety as a situation-specific anxiety construct that is mostly independent of other types of worry by placing it within the context of related ideas of anxiety. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale that they offer is the primary element of their paper. This self-report tool, which elicited anxiety reactions unique to foreign language classroom environments, led to an enormous number of related investigations. These investigations' findings demonstrated that, depending on the situation, language anxiety can be extremely detrimental in second or foreign language classrooms.

Three main approaches are used in research to measure anxiety: self-reports by participants, which measure the internal feelings and reactions of the subject of the study; physiological evaluation, including blood pressure or heart rate testing; and behavioral observation or rating (Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2001; Daly, 1991). Participants' self-reports are widely used in educational research to examine the anxiety phenomena. As a conclusion to the entire discussion, Language anxiety is recognized as a rather distinct form of anxiety. It is a particular kind of situation-specific psychological phenomenon that is exclusive to language learning environments. Furthermore, a strange correlation has been found between linguistic anxiety and other individual differences such as motivation, mood, and personality traits.

Types of speech anxiety

Three general categories have been used to describe anxiety: trait, situational, and state anxiety. It is possible to identify a contrast between these three categories, even though there isn't a clear-cut difference between them. On the one hand, trait anxiety is linked to a generally stable inclination to feel anxious in a range of contexts, while on the other, it is linked to a time-limited sense of emotional state flashing. Situational anxiety, or the likelihood of feeling worried in a specific kind of situation, is located in the middle of the continuum.

Trait anxiety

Characteristic anxiety, which manifests as concerns, anxieties, and worry in various contexts, is a component of the personality trait neuroticism vs emotional stability. Elwood et al. (2012) cited Knowles and BunmiOlatunji (2020) as defining trait anxiety as a person's propensity to perceive events as hazardous, ignore situations that cause worry, and exhibit high physiological arousal. However, Kelly and Olatunji (2020) imply that a substantial risk factor for anxiety-related psychopathology is trait anxiety (Andrews, 1991; Eysenck, 1992; Rachman, 1998). According to early studies, trait anxiety differs from state anxiety but probably contributes to it (Cattell & Scheier, 1958; 1961; Spielberger, 1966). Kelly and Olatunji (2020) have also examined the cognitive, behavioral, physiological, and neural correlates of trait anxiety. Their findings provide important new information about the mechanism by which trait anxiety may increase

susceptibility to the emergence and maintenance of anxiety-related psychopathology. Furthermore, although the precise relationship between trait anxiety and depression is unknown, evidence indicates that the two may be related (Weger & Sandi, 2018).

The available information suggests that trait anxiety might represent a unique pattern of behavior at the levels of cognitive, behavioral, physiological, and neurological study. This response pattern may be associated with susceptibility to the emergence of anxiety and anxiety-related disorders (Andrews, 1991; Eysenck, 1992; Rachman, 1998). Characteristic-anxious people may be afraid of contamination if they exaggerate the danger of defiling and explain that danger as having a negative consequence. When there is contamination, these people would become quite anxious and would resort to certain actions or coercion to temporarily ease their discomfort.

Trait anxiety, according to Pappamihel (2002, cited in Riasati, 2011, p. 908), is the propensity for a person to experience anxiety or nervousness in any situation. Unquestionably, this kind of worry is ingrained in a person's personality and is therefore persistent and challenging, if not impossible, to overcome. A person with trait anxiety is likely to experience anxiety in a range of contexts. Learning a language will be hampered if anxiousness turns into a trait. Furthermore, this idea might be related to the definition of trait anxiety, which is defined as a person's inclination to worry under any situation (Spielberger, 1983 cited in Kondo, 2009, p. 130).

Situational Anxiety

Anxiety that arises from a particular scenario is known as situational anxiety. Since everyone encounters events that tend to make them feel worried, this kind of anxiety is widespread and should not be seen as any more concerning. Specific context anxiety is the term used to describe the complex and consultative nature of some issues (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a: cited in 2001, p. 113). It is caused by specific events or situations, such as pressure from exams, public speaking, or participation in class (Ellis, 1994, p. 480). Conversely, situation-specific anxiety is defined by Spielberger (1983) as an individual's propensity to experience anxiety in a particular environment and at a specified moment. One type of trait anxiety that is felt in a particular situation is situation-specific anxiety. Thus, linguistic anxiety may be a component of situation-specific anxiety.

Factors responsible

Anxiety-related factors can be ascribed to multiple factors. According to (Horwitz, 1986), learners of foreign languages may experience anxiety due to issues with the three dimensions of anxiety. First, trepidation about communicating; second, a dread of receiving a poor review; and third, a generalized sense of unease. The explanation of these aspects will serve as the foundation for the idea of anxiety related to learning a foreign language, giving insight into the cause of the anxiety.

Communication apprehension

Speech apprehension is a behavioral attribute associated with the psychological conceptions of shyness and impediment. It is characterized as a dread or anxiety about existing or prospective speech in front of the public (McCroskey, 1984). Conversely, Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 128, cited in Tanver, 2007, p. 11) define communication apprehension as “a type of meekness characterized by fear or anxiety about communication with other people”. Remembering the previous sentence, Tanver (2007, p. 3) claims that anxiety related to communication can occur in routine communication scenarios or can be a part of a general anxiety trait that impacts various facets of an individual's life. Learner personality traits like meekness, silence, and reticence are thought to be factors that contribute to communication anxiety.

When people have to showcase their abilities or themselves in front of others, they get nervous. They worry that people will think less of them or that their intelligence and/or significance are inferior. Many people experience severe anxiety or even phobias related to public speaking, which is similar to giving a speech in front of a larger group of people (Ahmed, Pathan, & Khan, 2017). Therefore, it may comfort you to know that you are not alone if you are afraid of public speaking. For leaders—especially visionary, servant, charismatic, or transformative leaders—where communication is very important, this can be particularly challenging. Speaking in front of a group usually causes some level of nervousness in most people. After all, the majority of people have mild to moderate worry, which manifests as trembling, etc. Even when there isn't a physical threat, being focused on and assessed can easily set up fear or fear-related behavior deep within our minds. Some of the actual, bodily symptoms can be experienced by someone who is having communication anxiety. Nausea, vertigo, mouth dryness, clammy hands, sweating, rapid heartbeat, trembling voice, butterflies in the stomach, fear, etc. are the most common potential symptoms.

Fear of negative evaluation

Researchers have discovered that speaking and learning a second language might be traumatizing for certain students (Zheng, 2008). This emotion is frequently related to a variety of factors, including language competency, linguistic challenges, and the anxiety of receiving a poor grade from classmates and instructors. According to Watson and Friend (1969), fear of negative evaluation is characterized by anticipating others' assessments, running away from circumstances requiring evaluation, and assuming that others would judge them poorly. Since peer evaluation is a typical practice in second language classes, students find it unsettling to believe that their teacher and fellow students are watching them (Zhao Na, 2007). As a result, they become more nervous and find it difficult to perform effectively in class.

According to Watson and Friends (1969), pupils in language classes experience a dread of receiving poor evaluations from both lecturers and instructors, as well as from other classmates.

It causes them to feel self-conscious and worry making mistakes while trying to keep a straight face in front of their peers and professors. According to Price (1991), language learners do not feel secure enough to do well in class because of the opinions of others, particularly teachers and friends. One becomes quite insecure and finds it difficult to function well in class when they feel as though others are watching them. Even in small groups, students may experience anxiety due to fear of receiving unfavorable feedback from others, especially their peers, which eventually causes them to become mute and reticent (Ohata, 2005). They attempt to avoid potentially embarrassing circumstances in language classes at the same time because they are afraid of receiving a poor grade, which primarily relates to having to repair mistakes (Von Worde, 2003). In the end, students experience increasingly disheartening failure, particularly when the error correction is completed before they have had a chance to fully compose their response. In addition, learners become distracted when correcting errors, which impairs their ability to concentrate when creating solutions (McIntyre and Gardner, 1991).

General Feeling of anxiety

Generalized anxiety disorder is the most common mental illness, affecting 20% of adults each year. It is typified by excessive, unreasonable, and persistent worry about ordinary matters that can be multifocal, meaning they have to do with money, family, health, and the future. The symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder include tension, fear, worry, and a lingering sense of being overwhelmed. It is severe, almost uncontrollable, and frequently accompanied by a wide range of common psychological and physical symptoms. The primary characteristic of generalized anxiety disorder is intense solicitude. Pasternak, (2020) states that general feeling of anxiety can emerge at several moments during speech and it may happen speaker is under immense stress or anxiety. The general anxieties or personal matters can also cause the speaker feel nervous or stressed while speaking and speaker's body may also tense up in various areas including the shoulders, chest, neck, stomach, lips, tongue, and/or vocal folds. If mind is continuously under certain pressure, it can affect speech output in a way that one may experience lack of fluency, not getting the thoughts out clearly and concisely. The moment of dysfluency may be faced due to dysfunction of speech organs for certain speech to be produced. Tension also cause difficulty in breathing and it prevents speaker from thinking and speaking fluently.

Review on previous studies

There are some researches prior to the current study that are relevant to it. Al-Tamimi's (2016) study sought to identify the major causes and severity of anxiety among Yemeni female students using English as a second language. Thirty-one female English majors, ages 22 to 24, from Hadramout University in Yemen are among the participants. The researcher employed a quantitative approach to gather information on FLCAS, which is a set of 33 items with a 5-point rating system that was taken from Horwitz et al. (1986). According to the results, 14 out of 33

pupils experienced anxiety. The study discovered that fourteen items, spanning three domains—communication anxiety, fear of receiving a poor grade, and test anxiety—had significant effects on the participants. Item 9 (communication anxiety) had the highest mean value ($M=3.5806$, standard deviation = 25.8). Items 3, 13, and 33 (fear of a negative evaluation) had higher mean values ($M=3.8387$, standard deviation = 13; $M=3.5484$, standard deviation = 25.8) and $M=3.5161$, standard deviation = 25.8). Item 12 (test anxiety) had the highest mean value ($M= 3.774$, standard deviation = 16.1).

Zia and Sulan (2015) carried out additional research in which they examined the causes of EFL learners in Afghanistan's fear related to speaking a foreign language. The study comprised 115 first-year English as a foreign language (EFL) undergraduates from Nangarhar University in Afghanistan. The participants ranged in age from 17 to 24 years old, with 30 female and 85 male participants. We employed a quantitative research design. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which was adapted from Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), had 33 items on the questionnaire. The study's findings showed that the mean score for test anxiety on the second factor was $M = 3.3200$ with a standard deviation of (.54327), the mean score for fear of a negative evaluation on the third factor was $M = 3.7130$ with a standard deviation of (.68812). The first factor's mean value was $M = 3.5281$ with a Std. deviation of (.53103). It indicates that out of the three domains on FLCAS, fear of a negative evaluation was the most.

Debreli and Demirkan (2016) conducted the third study, which was titled "Sources and Degrees of University Students' Fear of Speaking English as a Foreign Language in Relation to Gender and Language Proficiency". The goal of the study was to examine the phenomena related to EFL, analyze its level, and identify the anxiety-inducing variables. As part of a mixed-method study, ten participants from an English preparatory school at a university in Cyprus engaged in semi-structured interviews. Based on Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), the Foreign Language Classroom Scale (FLCAS) consisted of 33 items on a 5-point Likert scale. The anxiety levels of the kids were measured using this scale. to assess the level of fear associated with speaking a foreign language. The descriptive results for speaking anxiety at a low level were 55.61, moderate speaking anxiety was 41.32, and high speaking anxiety was 3.06. More than half of the kids reported having little to no speaking fear, according to the percentages. Regarding the anxiety characteristics associated with FL speaking, there were no discernible gender variations. Speech anxiety was caused by a variety of factors, such as poor pronunciation, direct questioning from the teacher, misinterpretation of the teacher's inquiry, etc.

Research Methodology:

The research design of the present study is based on purely quantitative paradigm, one purpose of conducting a survey is to quantify results as they relate to opinions, attitudes, or trends. (Creswell, 2002). As following quantitative paradigm, data is gathered following 5 point Likert scale adapted from Horwitz and Cope (1986), through simple random data collection, however

data is analysed through SPSS version 24, as for as population and participants are concerned, 30 participants studying in part II at a public sector university participated voluntarily in the present study. It is further explained below as:

Population and Participants:

The study was carried out at the Institute of English language and literature, university of Sindh Jamshoro Sindh Pakistan. 30 students studying in part II, participated in the study. As the present study is not based on gender specification therefore the gender ratio is unbalanced. The Institute of English Language and Literature University of Sindh has an extremely low proportion of female students when compared to male students, which is used to justify the situation. Because their consent was officially obtained before administering the questionnaire, the respondents voluntarily participated in the current study. All of the participants were in their 20s to 25s by the age factor.

Instrumentation:

The study's participants' core data were gathered using a survey methodology and a theoretical framework based on Horwitz et al. (1986), well-known theory of target or foreign anxiety in the classroom. The survey's foundation consisted of 33 items and three sub-anxieties: exam anxiety, communication anxiety, and worry about receiving a poor review. There are 11 items in each anxiety. Age, gender, and other demographic bio-data were collected in the first section. On a five-point Likert scale, from "strongly agree" for the amount of anxiety at the top to "strongly disagree" for the level at the bottom, the FL anxiety level was measured. However, strongly agree was given 5 as value and strongly disagree was given 1 as value for measuring the extent of English speaking anxiety among EFL/ESL learners.

Data collection

For the purpose of seeking information the data was gathered in September 2022. Before administering the questionnaire used to obtain the data, the participants received demonstration regarding giving response on the questionnaire. Because the research tool FLCAS required self-reporting of foreign language anxiety, EFL learners were also given the assurance that their replies would remain private. However, some challenging words from the questionnaire, such "tremble," "frightened," and "overwhelmed," were translated into simple English words because some students inquired about their definitions while demonstration. To obtain open and understandable responses from participants, it was voluntarily done.

Data analysis

Using SPSS (V.24), the data was analysed to determine general statistics descriptive. Descriptive statistics' goal is to display students' responses in terms of mean and standard deviation so that

the findings may be deduced and systematically analysed. However the reliability status is also performed of the research questionnaire adapted for the present research.

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.741	33

The table 1 shows .741 reliability statistics of the scale which is significantly acceptable.

The results of statistical findings are as follows:

Table 2 Statistics

Statistics		
es_stress		
N	Valid	34
	Missing	0
Mean		3.2291
Std. Deviation		.38092
Minimum		2.64
Maximum		4.03

The table 2 shows average mean score as 3.2291 which indicates close direction towards positive responses of the participants which ultimately explore the English language speaking anxiety among the EFL learners.

Implications of the study

The current study is significant and impactful since it provides unique, genuine, and trustworthy strategies for lowering students' anxiety levels based on their level of anxiety. It becomes clear to instructors and course designers when to step up the focus or attention. This study increases our knowledge of language anxiety from the viewpoint of the learner and raises awareness among scholars in the field.

Discussion

The purpose of present investigation was to analyze the extent of ELSA among EFL learners studying at university level. A 33 item survey was conducted in which 30 students participated. From the data analysis in this present investigation the average mean score came out as 3.2291 which clearly explores the level of English language speaking anxiety among the EFL learners. In the context of previous researches prior to this study, Al-Tamimi(2016) who discovered the main factors of anxiety in speaking English as a foreign language among Yemeni female students with the age factor 22-24, this present study included both male and female students. Anyhow the gender ratio remain unbalanced due to the high proportion of male students as compared to the female students. The present study mainly focused on the levels of EFL learners' anxiety. The studies show that individual differences among learners also contribute in their anxiety level. The age factor of the participants in this study was 20-25. This factor significantly indicates the positive responses of the participants in their EFL anxiety level. Another previous research study which was carried out by Debreli and Demirkan (2016) intended to analyze the level in EFL anxiety. Low speaking anxiety scores were 55.61, moderate speaking anxiety scores were 41.32, and high speaking anxiety scores were 3.06. The figures show that over half of the children said they had little to no fear when speaking. However, as the aforementioned tables show, the current study's findings also highlight the anxiety that EFL learners encounter.

Conclusion

Language anxiety is a recurrent phenomenon for EFL learners caused by various factors. The present study was conducted to explore the extent of anxiety among EFL learners at university level. Compared to the previous studies which indicated the various factors that cause anxiety and different level of anxiety among learners varying on different age factors, this study revealed the high level of anxiety among students as well. It is concluded that learners even at a university level face language anxiety specifically in the EFL context. This study also assist the teachers and course designers so that all the necessary steps should be taken to overcome the learners' anxiety level.

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